

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2023

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

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

Present: Senators Merkley [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Schatz, Van Hollen, Ricketts, Young, and Cruz.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON

Senator MERKLEY. Good morning. This hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Today we will consider the nominations of five highly qualified individuals for positions of importance and sensitivity for America's interests at home and abroad: Richard Riley to be Ambassador to Somalia, Mark Toner to be Ambassador to Liberia, David White to be Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, Ambassador Herro Mustafa Garg to be Ambassador to Egypt, and Paul Martin to be Inspector General at USAID.

Let me express my thanks on behalf of the committee to you, our nominees, for your dedicated public service and for being here today. And also thank you to your families. I know they share in the celebration of this moment just as they share in the challenges of your service. A grateful nation thanks to you all.

Before I introduce our nominees I will give a few words about what it means to fill these posts. Then I will turn that over to Mr. Young.

In Washington and around the world, including some of the most diplomatically delicate places critical U.S. posts remain empty. They sit empty at a time when democracy, freedom, and rule of law and human rights are under assault by extremists and authoritarians.

Currently, we have a backlog of at least 23 nominees pending on the Senate floor and many more in committee. Many of those nominees are career Foreign Service officers who have served in both Republican and Democratic administrations.

In the coming weeks and months we will inevitably add to that list. To give you a sense of the urgency of this backlog today as conflict engulfs the Middle East the United States currently does not have confirmed Ambassadors in Lebanon, in Egypt, and in Israel.

USAID remains without an assistant administrator for the Middle East and the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism still awaits confirmation.

This is unacceptable. The United States cannot expect to lead the free world if the United States does not even have someone in the room. If we seek to build lasting peace around the world then we need talented and experienced public servants like those with us here today on the job as quickly as possible.

In these difficult times we must take action to expeditiously advance nominees for all of our critical national security posts.

I will now introduce the nominees after which I will proceed to opening statements from Senator Young and then testimonies from the nominees.

Richard Riley currently serves as minister-counselor for economic affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. He is nominated to be our next Ambassador to Somalia, a country confronting many challenges but one which also has made fragile progress over the last decade.

Mark Toner most recently served as a minister-counselor for public diplomacy at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Mr. Toner also serves as Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia—has also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia where he is nominated to be our next Ambassador.

David White currently serves as Special Assistant to the President in the White House Office of Presidential Personnel. He has served on the National Security Council where he facilitated government-wide efforts to resettle nearly 90,000 Afghan allies. He is nominated to be the next Deputy Director of the Peace Corps.

Ambassador Herro Mustafa Garg has served as a U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria and was previously the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Portugal.

She grew up in North Dakota and speaks Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Bulgarian, Portuguese, and, I am sure, English. Ambassador Garg is nominated to be our next Ambassador to Egypt, a critical post in today's turbulent Middle East.

And finally, we will consider Paul Martin, a lifelong public servant who has served as the Inspector General for NASA since 2009. He is nominated to be the next Inspector General at the United States Agency for International Development.

Congratulations again on your nominations and thank you for joining us today and your service to the nation. With that, let me turn things over to Senator Young for his opening remarks.

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

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to thank all of you. I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank your families for being here for this important hearing.

The sacrifices you make by accepting these posts are enormous, I know, and please know that we are grateful for your continued service.

Today's hearing comes at a time of great uncertainty and conflict throughout the world. These conflicts are going to have profound impacts on the posts you will take if confirmed.

In the Sahel and sub-Saharan regions of Africa the danger that is posed by terrorist groups continues to rise. While compounded by democratic backsliding, with our help our allies continue to combat this threat and we must continue to support them to defeat terrorism at its source.

Of course, the conflict in Israel is on the minds of everyone in this room. Many of the nominees here today will have to work with their counterparts to ensure this conflict does not grow to include other actors.

I hope that I can count on all of you to continue to support our ally Israel wherever appropriate. It is critical that we continue to prioritize humanitarian assistance throughout the world. Our aid has to continue to flow to those it is intended to reach and stay out of the hands of those who seek to abuse it.

Especially now we must work to make sure that our programs continue to be effective in promoting American values. The positions you are nominated to fill are some of the most critical we have in supporting U.S. interests abroad.

If confirmed it will be up to all of you to continue to support those interests. The geopolitical landscape of today is one of increasing uncertainty and I am confident that all of you are up to that challenge.

With that, I once again thank our nominees for being here today. I look forward to our discussion.

Chairman?

Senator MERKLEY. All nominees will now be offered the opportunity to provide their testimony. We ask them to be—each of you to be as brief and concise as possible, to summarize your statement within five minutes. Your full statements will be included in the record without objection.

And we will start with Mr. Riley. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD H. RILEY IV, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA

Mr. RILEY. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Senator Young, and distinguished members of the committee.

I am honored to come before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the federal republic of Somalia.

I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. My wonderful wife of 37 years, Cheryl Wong, my sister and brother Lisa Schwarz and Shawn Riley and their families are all watching online. I am also very proud that my beloved daughter Eden Riley is here with me today. I want to thank all my family for their love and support.

Mr. Chairman, I have been privileged to have served in the U.S. Foreign Service for 31 years. I joined in 1986 and have faithfully

served in 12 countries in Asia, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, including two tours in Iraq, three tours in Afghanistan, assistant chief of mission in Kabul, deputy chief of mission in Yemen, and last year as consul general in one of our most remote and dangerous posts the U.S. Consulate General in Peshawar, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

I volunteered for these assignments because I always wanted to serve where our nation's vital interests are most at stake. I believe my extensive experience including senior leadership positions in four Muslim majority countries and four war zones has allowed me to work very successfully with our U.S. military, USAID, and other interagency colleagues to fight against terrorist threats worldwide.

Our work together in all these countries also strengthened good governance, supported democracy, and brought much needed humanitarian relief to millions of people. I believe my three decades of experience has prepared me well to lead our extraordinary interagency team in Somalia today.

Mr. Chairman, Somalia is making progress on its long road to recovery from state collapse. Since the May 2022 election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud we have seen renewed commitment on the part of Somali authorities and the Somali people to rid themselves of al-Shabaab and their extreme ideology.

Local communities supported by the Somali Government, African Union military forces and other international partners including, of course, the United States have retaken more territory in the last 14 months than in the previous several years combined.

Key transportation corridors have reopened, allowing for free movement of goods and services and economic revitalization.

However, al-Shabaab remains a resilient and capable adversary. Recent setbacks against the group have led the federal government to request a pause in the ongoing drawdown of African Union forces scheduled to withdraw completely by the end of next year.

Sustainable gains require the expansion of governance, service delivery, and political reconciliation. Fundamental questions related to federal structures and authorities and the constitution must be addressed.

Economic growth is also imperative to expand employment opportunities for the two-thirds of Somalis who are under the age of 30. Improved oversight of the banking sector, government revenue generation, public sector financial management are vital for the Government to access international financial institutions for lending for infrastructure development and poverty reduction and promote foreign direct investment.

We are encouraged that the Government in Mogadishu agrees these are top priorities and is taking action to address them. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting its efforts to advance good governance and institution building.

The United States has a stake in Somalia's success. We have a shared interest in eliminating al-Shabaab and ISIS from Somalia, which threaten U.S. persons and interests throughout East Africa.

A stable democratic Somalia would enable the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees requiring international assistance. There are strong connections between our peoples with hundreds of thousands of Somali Americans in communities across the U.S.,

many of whom returned to Somalia in recent years to help rebuild and pursue economic opportunities.

Mr. Chairman, the security challenges in Mogadishu remain significant. I have dedicated much of my career to advancing U.S. interest in countries under hazardous conditions and have always made the safety, security, and morale of my staff, U.S. personnel, and Americans my top priority.

If confirmed I am committed to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to enable our Embassy to accomplish our mission safely and effectively.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Riley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD H. RILEY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to come before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am deeply grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

My wonderful wife of 37 years, Cheryl Wong, sister and brother, Lisa Schwarz and Shawn Riley and their families are all watching online. I am also very proud that my beloved daughter, Eden Riley is here with me today. I want to thank all my family for their love and support.

Mr. Chairman, I've been privileged to serve in the U.S. Foreign Service for over 31 years. I joined in 1986 and have faithfully served in twelve countries in Asia, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, including two tours in Iraq, three in Afghanistan, Assistant Chief of Mission in Kabul, Deputy Chief of Mission for Yemen, and last year as Consul General in one of our most remote and dangerous posts—U.S. Consulate General Peshawar, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. I volunteered for these assignments because I always wanted to serve where our Nation's vital national interests are most at stake. I believe my extensive experience, including senior leadership positions in four Muslim-majority countries in four war zones, has allowed me to work very successfully with our U.S. Military, USAID, and other interagency colleagues to fight against terrorist threats worldwide. Our work together in all these countries also strengthened good governance, supported democracy, and brought much needed humanitarian relief to millions. I believe my three decades of experience has prepared me well to lead our extraordinary interagency team in Somalia today.

Somalia is making progress on its long road to recovery from state collapse. Since the May 2022 election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, we have seen renewed commitment on the part of Somali authorities and the Somali people to rid themselves of al-Shabaab and their extreme ideology. Local communities supported by the Somali Government, African Union military forces, and other international partners, including the United States, have retaken more territory in the last 14 months than in the previous several years combined. Key transportation corridors have reopened, allowing for the free movement of goods and services and economic revitalization. However, al-Shabaab remains a resilient and capable adversary. Recent setbacks against the group have led the federal government to request a pause in the ongoing drawdown of African Union forces, scheduled to withdraw completely by the end of next year.

Sustainable gains require the expansion of governance, service delivery, and political reconciliation. Fundamental questions related to federal structures and authorities and the constitution must be addressed. Economic growth is also imperative to expand employment opportunities for the two thirds of Somalis under the age of 30. Improved oversight of the banking sectors, government revenue generation, and public sector financial management are vital for the Government to access international financial institution lending for infrastructure development and poverty reduction and promote foreign direct investment. We are encouraged that the current government in Mogadishu agrees these are top priorities and is taking action to address them. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting its efforts to advance good governance and institution building.

The United States has a stake in Somalia's success. We have a shared interest in eliminating al-Shabaab and ISIS from Somalia, which threaten U.S. persons and interests throughout East Africa. A stable, democratic Somalia would enable the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees requiring international assistance. There are strong connections between our peoples, with hundreds of thousands of Somali Americans in communities across the U.S., many of whom have returned to Somalia in recent years to help rebuild and pursue economic opportunities.

Somalia also continues to suffer the aftereffects of an historic drought that has destroyed the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Somalis. The tremendous generosity of the American people, who have funded the majority of international relief efforts, helped prevent famine and far greater death toll. If confirmed, I am committed to helping to break Somalia's dependency on international humanitarian aid by building the resilience of the Somali people to withstand natural disasters as well as the Somali Government's ability to respond.

The security challenges in Mogadishu remain significant. I have dedicated much of my career to advancing U.S. interests in countries under hazardous conditions and have always made the safety, security, and morale of my staff, U.S. personnel, and Americans my top priority. If confirmed, I am committed to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to enable our Embassy to accomplish our mission safely and effectively.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Riley.
And Mr. Toner?

STATEMENT OF MARK TONER, OF PENNSYLVANIA, 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 LIBERIA

Mr. TONER. Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, other members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia.

I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken and placed in me with this nomination and look forward to work closely with the members of this committee and with your staffs to promote and protect U.S. interests in Liberia.

I would like to begin by acknowledging my family, my friends, my colleagues, all who helped get me here. That includes my parents, both members of the Greatest Generation, my siblings—all five of them—my wonderful daughters—all four of them—my large extended family, but most importantly of all my wife Mimi who is here with me today. She has never wavered in her support and her love through all the ups and downs of foreign service life.

I have a strong personal connection, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, with Liberia having served there as a Peace Corps volunteer in the late '80s. It was a formative experience that kindled my desire to become a Foreign Service Officer.

During that time, I had the privilege to work alongside many dedicated Liberian health professionals, people who showed up every day to work under difficult circumstances without any guarantee of a regular paycheck.

These are the people who continue to inspire me through their commitment, their courage, and their determination.

If confirmed it would be an honor to return now as the next Ambassador—U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia with which United States shares a special bond rooted in our deep historical

ties and preserved through our shared commitment to democracy, human rights, health security, economic prosperity, and regional stability.

Liberia is also a country shaped by years of conflict, terror, disease, and hardship. It speaks to the Liberian people's resilience when in 2017 the country achieved a significant milestone by carrying out the first peaceful transition of power between two elected presidents in over 70 years.

The next—that next or the next test is now underway as Liberians cast their ballots just last week to elect the next president. President Weah and his challengers pledged to hold an election that is peaceful, free, and fair and we, the United States, and our partners are doing everything in our power to hold them accountable for delivering on that commitment.

The United States is the largest bilateral donor to Liberia with more than \$5 billion in bilateral assistance since 2003. That assistance has paid concrete dividends in the economic, education, security, and public health sectors.

But that progress has also been heavily eroded by growing lawlessness and corruption within the current administration. If confirmed I will lead our Embassy's efforts to hold corrupt government officials accountable and keep Liberia on a path to self-reliance so that ordinary Liberians can see the benefits of private-sector growth and accountable government and the country remains the United States' most steadfast partner in Africa.

If confirmed, my team and I will also work to increase investment opportunities for U.S. businesses and to promote inclusive economic development focused on job creation, providing much needed opportunities for a population in which the median age is 19 years.

But the onus ultimately is on Liberia's political leaders to increase transparency and tackle corruption seriously as both are integral to establishing the conditions necessary to attract responsible long-term foreign investment.

We must apply the same approach to human rights as Liberia's justice sector works to address reported cases of gender-based violence, some of the worst forms of child labor and human trafficking, as well as the legacy of war crimes.

These abuses must be confronted for their own sake as well as to ensure a broader system of accountability, good governance, and rule of law.

If confirmed, I look forward to building on the outstanding work the previous Ambassador and his excellent team have done to assist with the many challenges facing Liberia.

I am optimistic the United States can work with its partners in the Liberian Government and the people to help strengthen their democracy and secure a brighter, more prosperous future for the next generation of Liberians.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Toner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK TONER

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. I am grateful for the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me with this nomination and look forward to working closely with the members of this committee and your staff to promote and protect U.S. interests in Liberia.

I would like to begin by acknowledging my family, friends, and colleagues who have helped me get here. That includes my parents, both members of the Greatest Generation; my siblings—all five of them; my wonderful daughters—all four of them; my large extended family, and, most important of all, my wife, Mimi, who has never wavered in her support and love through all the ups and downs of foreign service life.

I have a strong personal connection with Liberia, having served there as a Peace Corps Volunteer—a formative experience that kindled my desire to become a Foreign Service Officer. During that time, I had the privilege to work alongside many dedicated Liberian health professionals, people who showed up every day to work under difficult circumstances without any guarantee of a regular paycheck. These are the people who inspire me to this day through their commitment, courage, and determination.

If confirmed, it would be an honor to return as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia, a country with which the United States shares a special bond rooted in our deep historical ties, and preserved through our shared commitment to democracy, human rights, health security, economic prosperity, and regional stability.

Liberia is also a country shaped by years of conflict, terror, disease, and hardship. It speaks to the Liberian people's resilience when, in 2017, the country achieved a significant milestone by carrying out the first peaceful transition of power between two elected presidents in over 70 years. The next test is now underway, as Liberians cast their ballots last week to elect their next president. President Weah and his challengers pledged to hold an election that is peaceful, free, and fair; and we, the United States, and our partners are doing everything in our power to hold them accountable for delivering on that commitment.

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If confirmed, my team and I will also work to increase investment opportunities for U.S. businesses and promote inclusive economic development focused on job creation, providing much-needed opportunities for a population in which the median age is 19 years. But the onus, ultimately, is on Liberia's political leaders to increase transparency and tackle corruption, as both are integral to establishing the conditions necessary to attract responsible foreign investment.

We must apply this same approach to human rights, as Liberia's justice sector works to address reported cases of gender-based violence, forced child labor, and human trafficking, as well as the legacy of war crimes. These abuses must be confronted for their own sake, as well as to ensure a broader system of accountability, good governance, and rule of law.

If confirmed, I look forward to building on the outstanding work the previous Ambassador and his excellent team have done to assist with the many challenges facing Liberia. I am optimistic the United States can work with its partners in the Liberian Government and people to help strengthen their democracy and secure a brighter, more prosperous future for the next generation.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Toner, and I am sure your experience in the Peace Corps in Liberia will be very significant and in terms of a foundation for understanding the issues in Liberia.

And speaking of the Peace Corps we now have Mr. David White nominated to be Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID E. WHITE, JR., OF NEW YORK,
NOMINATED TO BE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE CORPS**

Mr. WHITE. Thank you.

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, and esteemed members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I want to begin by thanking President Biden for the honor and privilege of being nominated to serve as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. I also want to thank Director Carol Spahn for her leadership of the agency and her confidence and support throughout this process.

I am also deeply grateful to the thousands of Peace Corps volunteers around the world for their service as well as the dedicated career staff who bring their best each day in support of those volunteers.

I would not be here without my family. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my parents, David and Kathy White, for their support, as well as to my wife, Dana McKinney White, for her partnership and so much more.

I also want to acknowledge my mother, my brother Dan, and my in-laws Fred and Ivy McKinney, and friends and colleagues who are in the audience today as well, and I appreciate their support.

"The Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in the world." Those words by Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Peace Corps, remain as true today as they were then.

The Peace Corps' commitment to public service is one that I have long admired and sought to emulate in my own career. I am a proud third-generation military veteran so perhaps it's no surprise that at the age of 17, I began my career in public service as a West Point cadet.

It was there that I deepened my desire to serve something greater than myself and it's where I learned the values of "Duty, Honor, Country."

After graduating from the Academy, I went on to serve as a cavalry officer in the U.S. Army. I had the immense privilege of leading women and men in combat in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Without a doubt, my combat deployment was one of the most formative leadership tests of my career. Each day, I faced new challenges spurred by life in a combat zone—balancing our mission to establish and safeguard a fragile peace with the safety and wellbeing of my soldiers.

My service in Afghanistan cemented my belief that, despite our differences, be they language, culture, or beliefs, all people yearn for the same basic freedoms—that is, safety and security, economic opportunity, an education for their children, and the right to exercise their faith free from persecution.

Of course, this recognition of our common principles is not unique to my service in Afghanistan. As Peace Corps volunteers know first-hand, effective service requires a commitment to move past our differences and reach common ground to achieve a lasting impact.

This expanded worldview and greater mutual understanding benefits not only individual volunteers and their host communities—it benefits all Americans. Over the last 62 years, nearly a quarter of a million volunteers have partnered with local communities on development projects that have substantially improved countless lives.

Their work is evidence of the great importance of pursuing peace and friendship around the world. Whether it be building relationships with remote rural communities or partnering to recover from setbacks caused by COVID-19, the Peace Corps' work is as crucial as ever to meet the challenges of the day and prove the value of American leadership in the world.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with Director Spahn and my colleagues to achieve the Peace Corps' strategic goals of strengthening local capacity, sharing America with the world, and bringing the world back home.

In doing so, we have to recognize that there is more that we can and must do. We must do more to reimagine our approach to service so that volunteers and host communities alike are best matched to make the most lasting impact.

We must do more to build a Peace Corps that draws on the rich skills and experiences of its dedicated staff and volunteers to strive for equity and inclusion throughout our work.

And finally, we must do more to enhance the quality of our systems that support volunteers and deliver consistently on the health, safety, and service commitments we make in each partnership.

In closing, I am deeply grateful for your consideration in support of my nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to lead with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace.

Let us extend America's hand in friendship to show our partners, both old and new, that we are committed to tackling the world's toughest problems together.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions that you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. White follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID E. WHITE, JR.

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, and esteemed members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I want to begin by thanking President Biden for the honor and privilege of being nominated to serve as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. I also want to thank Director Carol Spahn for her leadership of the agency and her confidence and support throughout this process. I am also deeply grateful to the thousands of Peace Corps volunteers around the world for their service as well as the dedicated career staff who bring their best each day in support of these volunteers.

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Over the last 62 years, nearly a quarter of a million volunteers have partnered with local communities on development projects that have substantially improved countless lives. Their work is evidence of the great importance of pursuing peace and friendship around the world. Whether it be building relationships with remote rural communities or partnering to recover from setbacks caused by COVID-19, the Peace Corps' work is as crucial as ever to meet the challenges of the day and prove the value of American leadership in the world.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with Director Spahn and my colleagues to achieve the Peace Corps' strategic goals of strengthening local capacity, sharing America with the world, and bringing the world back home.

In doing so, we have to recognize that there's more that we can and must do. We must do more to reimagine our approach to service so that volunteers and host communities alike are best matched to make the most lasting impact. We must do more to build a Peace Corps that draws on the rich skills and experiences of its dedicated staff and volunteers to strive for equity and inclusion throughout our work. And finally, we must do more to enhance the quality of our systems that support volunteers and deliver consistently on the health, safety, and service commitments we make in each partnership.

In closing, I am deeply grateful for your consideration and support of my nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to lead with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace. Let us extend America's hand in friendship to show our partners, both old and new, that we are committed to tackling the world's toughest problems together.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions that you may have.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. White.

And we will turn from the Peace Corps to the nomination of Ambassador Mustafa Garg to be Ambassador in Egypt. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF HERRO MUSTAFA GARG, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

Ms. GARG. Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee, I am humbled to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

I am grateful to the President and to the Secretary for the confidence they have placed in me to undertake this role. I have tremendous respect for this committee and I have seen firsthand your strong commitment to advancing our national interests and, if confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work closely with you.

My family and I came to the United States as refugees from the Kurdistan region of Iraq when I was three. We had little more than the shirts on our backs and hopes and dreams.

My parents sacrificed so much for me and my siblings to be able to pursue that American dream. That is why I am particularly honored to appear before this committee as the first American Ambassador of Kurdish descent.

The approach of thinking big and maintaining optimism are what have shaped me into the person that I am today and, if confirmed, will guide my vision in Egypt. Family is extremely important to me and I am blessed to have the love and support of so many family members here with me today: my husband, Ravneesh, our two daughters, my parents, my three brothers, my sister-in-law, my niece, and, of course, friends and mentors.

It is with great pride that I have dedicated 25 years to public service, much of this in the Middle East. I studied Arabic in Jordan, worked in the UAE, Lebanon, and Iraq, and helped advance U.S. priorities in the Middle East at the White House under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

If confirmed, I look forward to bringing that experience to this important role in Egypt.

Senators, the remarks I had prepared to deliver earlier this month are different than the remarks I am delivering today. The unprecedented scale of brutality unleashed by Hamas on October 7th has led to an escalation with mounting deaths of Israeli and Palestinian civilians and over 30 nationalities still searching for or mourning the loss of loved ones.

This is truly a tragedy. Egyptians like to refer to their country as Om el Donia, the mother of the world. We are witnessing in real time Egypt's vital role as we strive to protect American citizens, secure the immediate and unconditional release of hostages, prevent harm to civilians, and prevent the conflict from spreading.

We are partnering with Egypt to address urgent humanitarian needs in Gaza and enable the safe passage of Americans and those who are at immediate risk through the Rafah crossing.

Equally important is the U.S.-Egypt partnership on an affirmative vision for a Middle East region focused on peace and security, negotiating a two-state solution and furthering regional integration.

Bilateral security cooperation with Egypt underwritten by FMF assistance for over four decades is an investment in self-reliant, capable, and accountable Egyptian armed forces aligned with U.S. priorities and values.

If confirmed I will implement this cooperation while continuously reflecting that the U.S.-Egypt relationship will be strongest with tangible and lasting progress on protecting human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms, in particular further releases of political prisoners and reforms to pretrial detention.

I pledge to consistently raise these important concerns with the Government of Egypt and to prioritize engagement with Egyptian civil society.

The U.S.-Egypt partnership is multifaceted and constantly adapting to meet present challenges. Today Egypt is the world's largest

wheat importers on the frontlines of the global repercussions of Putin's brutal aggression.

Egypt and the United States have stood together in support for Ukraine, and from my service as Ambassador to Bulgaria I know well how vital our partnerships are to address Russia's destabilizing role.

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo is among the largest in the world with a talented and dedicated team of American and local staff that, if confirmed, I would be proud to lead, and thank you to the staff for their 24/7 work right now. Thank you to them and thank you to their families.

The safety and security of the Embassy team and U.S. citizens in Egypt, if confirmed, will always be my foremost priority.

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

[The prepared statement of Ms. Garg follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HERRO MUSTAFA GARG

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Young, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored and humbled to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me to undertake this role. I have tremendous respect for this committee and have seen first-hand your strong commitment to advancing our national interests. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to consult closely with you in advancing a U.S.-Egypt partnership reflecting our interests and values.

My family and I came to the United States as refugees from the Kurdistan region of Iraq when I was three. We had little more than the shirts on our back and hopes and dreams. My parents sacrificed so much for me and my siblings to be able to pursue that American dream. That is why I am particularly honored to appear before this committee as the first American Ambassador of Kurdish descent. The approach of thinking big and maintaining optimism are what have shaped me into the person I am today and, if confirmed, will guide my vision for achieving success for America in Egypt. Family is extremely important to me, and I am blessed to have the love and support of my family members who are here today.

It is with great pride that I have dedicated twenty-five years to public service, much of this in the Middle East. My work has promoted regional security and peace, energy security, rule of law, and economic growth. I studied Arabic in Jordan, worked in the UAE, Lebanon, and Iraq, and helped advance U.S. priorities in the Middle East at the White House under both Republican and Democratic Administrations. If confirmed, I look forward to bringing that extensive experience to this important role in Egypt.

Senators, the remarks I had prepared to deliver earlier this month are different than the remarks I am delivering today. The unprecedented scale of brutality unleashed by Hamas on October 7 has led to an escalation, with mounting deaths of Israeli and Palestinian civilians and over 30 nationalities still searching for or mourning the loss of loved ones. This is truly a tragedy that underlines the importance of having confirmed ambassadors in place throughout the region, to elevate our ability to maintain sustained engagement and advancement of U.S. national interests.

Egyptians like to refer to their country as "Om el Donia," the Mother of the World. We are witnessing in real time Egypt's vital role as we strive to protect American citizens, secure the immediate and unconditional release of hostages, prevent harm to civilians, and prevent the conflict from spreading. We are partnering with Egypt on a crucial vision for addressing urgent humanitarian needs in Gaza and enabling the safe passage of Americans and those who are at immediate risk through the Rafah crossing. Equally important is the U.S.-Egypt partnership on an affirmative vision for a Middle East region focused on peace and security, negotiating a two-state solution between the Israelis and Palestinians, and furthering regional integration.

Bilateral security cooperation with Egypt, underwritten by Foreign Military Financing assistance over four decades, is an investment in self-reliant, capable, and accountable Egyptian Armed Forces aligned with U.S. priorities and values. If con-

firmed, I will implement this cooperation while continuously reflecting that the U.S.-Egypt relationship will be strongest with tangible and lasting progress on protecting human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms, in particular, releases of political prisoners and reforms to pre-trial detention. I pledge to consistently raise these important concerns with the Government of Egypt, to prioritize engagement with Egyptian civil society, and to support those working to build a prosperous and secure future for all Egyptians.

As this ongoing cooperation reflects, the U.S.-Egypt partnership is multifaceted and constantly adapting to meet present challenges. Today, Egypt, as the world's largest wheat importer is on the frontlines of the global repercussions of Putin's brutal aggression, grappling with spiraling food prices and renewed agricultural supply disruptions since Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Egypt and the United States have stood together in support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a shared urgency to achieve a just and lasting peace. From my service as Ambassador to Bulgaria, I know well how vital our partnerships are to address Russia's destabilizing role.

Amid the costs of Russia's war, the Government of Egypt developed a comprehensive economic reform plan that won support from the IMF last year and, with U.S. backing, unlocked agreement on a \$3 billion support package. If implemented, these reforms would stabilize foreign exchange markets and facilitate private sector-led growth. If confirmed, I will support implementation of these crucial steps to help Egypt weather this crisis, improve the investment climate, and promote even stronger commercial ties for U.S. firms with Egypt, our largest export market in Africa.

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo is among the largest in the world, with a talented and dedicated team of American and local staff that, if confirmed, I would be proud to lead. The safety and security of the Embassy team and U.S. citizens in Egypt will always be my foremost priority.

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

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

And we are now going to turn to Mr. Martin, and Mr. Martin is being nominated to be the Inspector General of AID, the Agency for International Development.

Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. PAUL K. MARTIN, OF MARYLAND,
NOMINATED TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL, UNITED STATES
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. MARTIN. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Young, and members of the committee.

I am honored to be nominated to serve as Inspector General for the United States Agency for International Development. If confirmed I commit to working closely with this committee to provide timely and comprehensive information related to the programs and operations of USAID and the other agencies under the OIG's oversight mandate.

At the outset I would like to recognize my family for their love and support. My wife, Rebekah Liu, and our daughters Anna, Emily, and Grace.

I also want to express deep appreciation to my colleagues at the NASA Office of Inspector General whom I have had the pleasure of working with for the past 14 years.

I have dedicated the bulk of my professional life to public service at three important government agencies: the United States Sentencing Commission, the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and now NASA OIG, and since late March 2020 I have also served as vice chair of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, an entity created by Congress to support inde-

pendent oversight of the \$5 trillion in emergency pandemic federal relief.

As the committee considers my nomination I am energized by the prospect of working with, learning from, and helping lead USAID OIG's dedicated staff located across five continents as the office works to safeguard the integrity and effectiveness of the U.S. Government's international development and global humanitarian assistance efforts.

If confirmed, I would look to increase the OIG's oversight of the tens of billions of dollars in assistance provided by USAID to Ukraine since the onset of Russia's invasion in February '22.

Congress and the American public deserve to know that the OIG is laser focused on ensuring that USAID programs in Ukraine are working as intended and are not compromised by corruption.

Similarly, the OIG must continue rigorous oversight of U.S. foreign assistance programs in many other vulnerable parts of the world through its audits, inspections, and investigations and this would include investigations into misuse of USAID funds programmed through nongovernment organizations and the United Nations.

A high priority would be oversight of USAID programs in Gaza and the West Bank, particularly any allegations that U.S.-provided humanitarian assistance has been diverted to terrorist organizations.

Finally, the OIG must maintain a cooperative yet independent working relationship with USAID leadership while building a professional environment at the OIG that attracts and retains talented employees who have a heart for the office's oversight mission.

I am thankful for and humbled by this nomination and the opportunity, if confirmed, to serve alongside the USAID OIG team to strengthen America's foreign assistance programs around the globe.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Martin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PAUL K. MARTIN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, I am honored to be nominated to serve as Inspector General for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). If confirmed, I commit to working closely with this committee in providing timely and comprehensive information relating to the programs and operations of USAID, and the other agencies under the USAID OIG's oversight mandate: the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), and the U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF).

At the outset, I would like to recognize my family for their steadfast love and support: my wife, Rebekah Liu, a senior attorney at the Securities and Exchange Commission; and our daughters Anna, Emily, and Grace. I also want to express deep appreciation to my colleagues at the NASA Office of Inspector General (OIG) for their professionalism and accomplishments overseeing the world's premier science, space exploration, and aeronautics agency.

I have dedicated the bulk of my professional life to public service. I moved to Washington, D.C. in 1985 after a 3-year stint as a reporter at a South Carolina daily newspaper. At that time, President Reagan had appointed then-U.S. District Court Judge William W. Wilkins, Jr. as Chairman of the newly formed United States Sentencing Commission, and I was fortunate enough to be one of the agency's first employees. I worked alongside Judge Wilkins, then-Circuit Court Judge Stephen Breyer, five other Commissioners, and a handful of staff to create a new agency that developed the initial set of federal sentencing guidelines. Among other roles, I served as the Commission's Deputy Staff Director where I helped supervise a staff

of more than 100 lawyers, researchers, guidelines trainers, and data technicians. Along the way, I attended law school at night at Georgetown University where I received a Juris Doctor but, much more significantly, where I met my wife, Rebekah.

I moved to the Department of Justice (DOJ) OIG in 1998. During my time there, I served in a variety of positions, including Deputy Inspector General for 6 years. I was proud to work with my OIG colleagues in conducting critical oversight of DOJ activities, particularly the transformation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

In November 2009, I was honored to be confirmed by the Senate as Inspector General for NASA where I currently work with 190 dedicated auditors, investigators, attorneys, data analysts, and support personnel to provide high-quality oversight of the nation's civilian space program.

Finally, since late March 2020 at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have also served as Vice Chair of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), an entity created by Congress to coordinate independent oversight of the \$5 trillion in emergency federal pandemic relief spending.

As the committee considers my nomination, I am energized by the prospect of working with, learning from, and helping lead USAID OIG's dedicated staff located across five continents as the office continues to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the U.S. Government's international development and global humanitarian assistance efforts.

If confirmed, I see four main areas where the OIG can continue to add significant value:

- First, the OIG must continue its aggressive oversight of the tens of billions of dollars in assistance provided by USAID to Ukraine and its people since the onset of Russia's invasion in February 2022. Congress and American taxpayers deserve the OIG's full attention to ensure that USAID programs in Ukraine are working as intended, account for risk, and are not compromised by corruption. This likely means increasing the office's tempo of audits, evaluations, and investigations into USAID funds provided to Ukraine and expanding the office's joint oversight efforts with our OIG colleagues at the Departments of Defense and State under the Lead Inspector General authority.
- Second, in addition to Ukraine, the OIG must also continue rigorous oversight of U.S. foreign assistance programs in the many other vulnerable parts of the world. To me, successful oversight is oversight that (1) is helpful to agency management and contains practical recommendations for improvement; (2) provides substantive, timely, and relevant to Congress and the public; and (3) ensures transparency and accountability about how USAID and the agencies under the OIG's oversight purview spend taxpayer dollars. As world events prompt emergency and long-term responses from USAID, the OIG should highlight findings from its past work to inform USAID on the key risks and challenges when it establishes new, or expands existing, programs.
- Third, the OIG, through its global ability to conduct investigations overseas, must continue to ensure the integrity of U.S. foreign assistance efforts by holding accountable those who corrupt or defraud taxpayer-funded programs. This includes investigations into misuse of U.S. aid dollars programmed through both nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations. Against the backdrop of the recent horrific terrorist attacks in Israel, OIG oversight of USAID programs in Gaza and the West Bank, including investigations into allegations that USAID dollars have been diverted to terrorist organizations, must continue to be a priority. These efforts will fall in large measure on the professionalism and expertise of our investigative and audit teams dedicated to the region.
- Finally, in fulfilling its statutory oversight role, the OIG must maintain a professional, cooperative, yet independent working relationship with USAID, MCC, IAF, and USADF leadership and staff. Looking inward, the OIG also must continue to build a highly professional environment that attracts and retains the most talented employees with the right mix of skills and a heart for the OIG's oversight mission.

I am thankful for and humbled by this nomination and the opportunity, if confirmed, to serve alongside the USAID OIG team to strengthen American foreign assistance programs around the globe.

Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Martin. We all know how important the role of inspector generals are, as you

noted, to make sure that the aid gets where it needs to go and does not feed any form of corruption. Thank you.

Before we start our series of five-minute rounds I have a few questions that speak to the importance that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the executive branch and that we will expect and will be seeking from you, and I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

And so I will pose the question, just have each of you respond to it. 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 MERKLEY. Thank you. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MERKLEY. As you imagined, yes is the answer we were hoping from each of you.

[Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. So thank you very much.

We are now going to start our five-minute rounds of questions. I am hoping to get a question in to each of your during my five minutes, which means your answer to complicated things has to be pretty brief—a challenge.

But here we go, starting with you, Mr. Riley. Somalia has not held a one-person one-vote election. Its government institutions are considered weak and sometimes corrupt. The relationship between the federal government and the states remains complicated.

If confirmed how do you intend to help Somalia develop democratic, accountable, transparent, and efficient institutions?

Mr. RILEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your question.

I would focus on the three mutually reinforcing goals that we have with our U.S. policy currently in Somalia and if I am confirmed I will certainly continue to push for achievement of those three goals.

The first is building security. That has to happen. It is continuing to happen as we continue to support a number of ways which I can elaborate later as we start to help the government build up its security forces.

The second overarching goal is to establish good governance. Without good governance you are not going to have the institutions necessary to deliver the services and the things that the people of Somalia need.

And the third goal is to foster inclusive economic growth such that the Government can generate—start to generate its own rev-

enue so that it can wean itself off of international assistance that it is currently dependent heavily on.

So those are the overarching goals that we have in Somalia, Mr. Chairman, and I would continue to push if confirmed to achieve those goals.

I would say that under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who came into office in May of 2022, we are making—they are making progress in all of these areas. There are some fits and starts in all of this but I would say that the president has pushed forward on all of these areas which are synonymous with the approach that we as the United States are taking and trying to assist the president and his government both at the federal level and the federal member state level to achieve these goals.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Mr. RILEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MERKLEY. I did travel to Somalia and I am well aware of the enormous complexities and I know you appreciate them as well.

Mr. RILEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Turning to Mr. Toner, what is your assessment of that recent election process and there is a new round—the final round, I think—coming next month.

You referred to the goal of the elections being peaceful, free, and fair. I think these are the first that are not conducted under U.N. supervision since the end of the civil war.

What is your message to Liberians and to voters as we prepare for this runoff?

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

I hope—respectfully, I hope you will understand my reluctance to pronounce on the conduct of the elections. The first round took place last week. Those votes are still being tabulated by the national electoral committee so I do not want to get out ahead of the process.

Senator, I would only add that our message—the U.S. Government's message has been clear and consistent throughout the election season and that has been that the Liberian people deserve elections that are free, fair, and peaceful.

I would add that the first round seems to have gone off without any real cases of violence and that is encouraging.

If confirmed, Senator, I will make it my priority to work with the new leadership of Liberia on the range of the number of challenges it faces, Senator, which is why it is so important that the Liberian people see that next administration as credible and which is why the process matters so much.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. And I know the elections are being held in the context of some democratic backsliding across the continent and an election with serious deficiencies in neighboring Sierra Leone. A lot of work to do there. The integrity in elections is so important to the legitimacy of the Government.

Mr. White, in your testimony you said that the Peace Corps proves the value of American leadership and has the strategic goals of increasing local capacity, sharing America with the world, and bringing the world back home.

I went to Vietnam this last year and they had their first class of Peace Corps ever. So as I was growing up we had generations of young Americans going to Vietnam to fight a war and now we have a class that is there and a new class arriving—that are arriving and I believe they are only dedicated to English proficiency—supporting English.

Can you give a little sense of how expanding the Peace Corps into Vietnam serves these goals that you have mentioned?

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

I will tell you that I know that my colleagues at the Peace Corps are, of course, very excited about the tremendous progress in Vietnam. In the case such as these, of course, we are looking at models like South Korea and we think of Vietnam's future as being a very bright one.

More broadly, I do believe in the capacity for good of American global leadership. Peace Corps, of course, plays an important role in that. When I think about our national security objectives, our foreign policy priorities, I think about the three D's, so to speak—defense, diplomacy and development.

Peace Corps has a huge role to play in both diplomacy because the volunteers are really grassroots diplomats, if you will, and development as well, from everything from community economic development to sustainable agriculture and so many other respects.

And so, I would say the Peace Corps through Vietnam and other areas in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe has a very large role to play and I thank you for its support.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

My time is up and I am going to ask everyone else if you cannot get—I got that question in just under the five-minute bell. Thank you for your response. And I will ask everyone to stick to the five minutes.

I apologize, Ambassador, that I did not get to you yet, and Mr. Martin, but there may be more opportunity to do so.

Let me hand the microphone over to my colleague, Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman.

Ambassador Mustafa Garg, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza will have consequences throughout the region. Egypt will have an important role to play so I want to first touch on ensuring the safe exit of U.S. citizens and other nationals from Gaza through the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. I know you alluded to this in your testimony.

Ambassador, for starters, if confirmed will you commit to prioritizing this mission and can you tell the committee what on-the-ground actions our Embassy in Cairo can take to support this overall mission?

Ms. GARG. Thank you very much, Mr. Senator, for that very important question.

Absolutely. The safety and security of American citizens is an utmost priority. I am heartened by the fact that the President has nominated Ambassador Satterfield to be our Special Envoy in the region.

Ambassador Satterfield is someone I have known for over 20 years and he is actively working on this issue, and as you have

seen both the President and the Secretary have been actively engaged with all of the parties to find a way forward.

My understanding is that upon his return from Israel the President had a good conversation with President el-Sisi and they have agreed on allowing the humanitarian assistance into Gaza and our citizens out. They are working on the mechanism to do that but the general agreement is there.

Senator YOUNG. Maybe you could unpack some of that. By the way, Ambassador Satterfield, I would say, is an inspired choice. His work was exemplary in Yemen and I know in other areas. So glad you will be working actively with him should you be confirmed.

What role specifically do you believe the United States can play in working with the Egyptians to ensure that this humanitarian access is sustained? What role should the Embassy take in conducting oversight and maintaining control over aid that is provided?

Ms. GARG. So our role a very, very active role. My understanding about the situation on the ground at the border is that it is fluid, it is layered, and the concerns of the Egyptians regarding the influx of the refugees, the border security and, of course, Israel's own security is extremely important.

So all of that combined is, unfortunately, delaying what we would have loved to have seen earlier this week, the aid going in and our citizens coming out along with the other people at risk.

So active engagement with all of the parties and with the U.N. is extremely important to make sure this important mission is achieved.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you. My expectation will be that you and other members of the administration will have the tools they need to be successful.

Ms. GARG. Thank you, sir.

Senator YOUNG. But to the extent that this committee can be helpful I know you—

Ms. GARG. Thank you, sir.

Senator YOUNG [continuing]. And others will let us know as soon as possible.

Mr. Martin, in light of this conflict between Israel and Hamas and Hamas' control over Gaza it is going to increasingly be important for us to impose the strictest scrutiny over our assistance to Gaza but also to the West Bank.

If confirmed do you commit to taking additional steps including onsite verification where possible to ensure that U.S.-funded or enabled assistance to the Palestinian people is not diverted or even used for terrorist activities?

Mr. MARTIN. Absolutely, Senator. It would be one of the highest priorities of the office.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

And then, if confirmed, what actions will you take to pursue a comprehensive and forensic audit of U.S. assistance to Gaza and the West Bank including through multilateral agencies like UNRWA to ensure that past funds have not been diverted or abused by the leadership of the Palestinian Authority?

Mr. MARTIN. Yes, sir. Good question. That is one of the questions I have coming in—if confirmed into the organization.

So I think the USAID OIG has ongoing work in several of those areas and so I look to, if confirmed, understanding what that work is and increasing that work because the transparency through the United Nations and other agencies is critically important.

Senator YOUNG. Well, I am glad you are looking into that. Would you commit to once you get clarity on that matter reporting back to the committee what sort of actions you might be able to take in that regard?

Mr. MARTIN. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Senator Young.

Senator Schatz?

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Mr. White, thank you for your willingness to serve. The United States is trying to build and rebuild goodwill in the Pacific after years of neglect, and people to people ties are central especially in island nations.

I understand at least four countries—FSM, Kiribati, the Marshalls and Palau—have invited the Peace Corps back. Do I have your commitment to prioritize these requests?

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

If confirmed, I will certainly work with you carefully and closely to ensure that we are prioritizing important countries.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you. I also understand that the Solomon Islands agreement has hit some roadblocks. Do you—are you tracking that at all yet?

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator. I am not privy to the details there. But if confirmed, I will certainly get you that information.

Senator SCHATZ. Okay. And I think this is workable but it is a roadblock and I think one of the experiences we have had over the last I would say eight-ish years is that relatively solvable problems fester just from a lack of personal attention and sometimes physical presence in the region.

I know as well as anyone how hard it is to get to Honolulu in 10 hours if you are lucky, and then it is going to be another, in some instances, 10, 15, 18 hours depending on layovers and reliability and all the rest of it.

So I really do think physical presence of the United States Government manifested by the Peace Corps is critical and I am hoping I can have your commitment on that.

Mr. WHITE. Yes, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Ms. Garg, Egypt is ranked 168th out of 180 countries by Reporters Without Borders and is currently imprisoning 19 journalists.

With the challenges posed by wartime misinformation and disinformation I think it is—we have seen in the last couple of weeks how rotten the information ecosystem has become and I would like you to speak both to press freedom but sort of the first cousin of that is just finding a reliable source of information and a dissemination strategy that will actually work because I do not think you can play whack-a-mole with all the nonsense out there.

I think what you have to do is just be reliable and hope that that has its own gravitational pull. So I am wondering if you can give me your thoughts in that area.

Ms. GARG. Thank you very much, Mr. Senator, for that very important question and I am going to respond in two parts.

The first is on the very important rights of journalists and freedom of expression, which throughout my career I have defended so I will continue to do so.

The second is on the misinformation piece, and coming from Bulgaria where that was a very important part of the job as well I agree with you completely that it is incumbent upon us not only to find reliable sources but to be the ones who do the speaking ourselves to talk about the truth, and I will definitely use my podium and Arabic to try to get that message across in the region because it is vitally important that we are also telling our side of the story.

Senator SCHATZ. So I hear your commitment and I appreciate your commitment. But I am—I figured you would say that.

I guess my question is what do we do specifically, because I think everyone operates under the principle that press freedom is essential and especially in times of conflict it is essential to get good information out.

I am interested in, okay, so how do we operationalize that other than every time we have a bilateral talk about press freedom, prioritize imprisoned and imperiled journalists. All of those are things that we currently do but, frankly, the information environment and the press freedom environment continues to deteriorate.

So how do we change course? Do you have any techniques or strategies or even preliminary thoughts along those lines?

Ms. GARG. I can just tell you from previous experience some thoughts on that, sir, which is if confirmed and after working with the team on the ground and evaluating the environment, looking at what additional training might be necessary, looking at which outlets—for example—maybe it is online outlets that might have more reliable sources rather than TV, for example.

So once that survey is done and then it would be to try to use the outlets that have greater credibility in order to get our messages across.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Just one final thought, and I do not mean this in a hectoring or critical way. I do not think we have a theory of the case yet. I do not think we have a theory of the case. I do not think the administration does yet. I think this challenge has emerged so quickly that it is understandable that we are still in a sort of strategy development phase.

But let us develop the strategy because I am unsatisfied with even my own response, which is essentially, hey, what about press freedom. That is fine. But everyone is going to nod and say, yes, press freedom is important and things keep going in the wrong direction.

So I do think we need to rethink all of our strategic approaches to communications generally but press freedom in particular. Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Senator Schatz.

Senator Ricketts?

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank all of our nominees here today for your commitment to serve our great nation and for your past service and to your families and especially Foreign Service folks.

As the previous governor of Nebraska we went on a number of trade missions and the Foreign Service folks who helped us out in all those countries just did a fantastic job and really appreciate the sacrifices you make living away from the country, living away from friends and family and that sort of thing.

And then, Mr. White, thank you for your service to our country in the military. Really appreciate that. And Ambassador Mustafa Garg, thank you for sharing your story about coming to America and your family's story and, again, reminding us what a great country we have where someone who has got big dreams and willing to work and achieve so much. So thank you for reminding us what a great country we have.

Since the brutal and illegal war that Russia launched on Ukraine we have seen the United States Congress appropriate about \$100 billion in aid to Ukraine and this aid has been absolutely instrumental for Ukraine's ability to be able to resist that terrible invasion.

And with that great aid also needs—comes the need for great oversight. We got to make sure that the money is being spent well and especially in the areas if we think about humanitarian and economic aid because it is not as tangible to see the results there or to be able to account for those results.

And the American taxpayers need to know where their money is going and so it is important that we have strong oversight for the amount of dollars that we are spending there.

So I am guessing, Mr. Martin, you know this question is coming to you.

Mr. MARTIN. I was afraid of that.

[Laughter.]

Senator RICKETTS. Obviously, you have got a long career and coming from the private sector—not even everybody in the private sector understands the importance of oversight and auditors. But, obviously, the Inspector General is a very key role that we have to have to be able to make sure the tax dollars are being spent appropriately.

Obviously, you are going to be a part of the joint strategic oversight plan, which is part of what the inspector's duty roles in the DOD and the State Department.

But what are your plans with regard to further oversight in Ukraine?

Mr. MARTIN. Right. Thank you, sir.

So there is individual responsibility for the three offices of inspector generals: State Department, Department of Defense, and USAID OIG. So we each have our individual audits and investigations ongoing.

But then collectively the three offices come together and form what is called Operation Atlantic Resolve, which is this overseas contingency operation mechanism where the three IGs work with Ukrainian officials on the ground to track the funds, both military

and humanitarian assistance, to Ukraine to make sure they are being used for their intended purpose.

Again, if confirmed I would go in, see what the USAID is doing, no doubt increase the efforts that we are doing individually, and then work cooperatively with State and the Department of Defense IG.

Senator RICKETTS. What do you view is going to be the biggest challenges to doing that in Ukraine? What are going to be the obstacles for oversight?

Mr. MARTIN. Yeah, I think it is actually boots on the ground. USAID OIG, as my understanding, has two criminal investigators at the Embassy in Kyiv and we would like to get up to six more auditors and investigators on the ground.

But the number of folks who are permitted at the Embassy is controlled for security reasons by the State Department. So we need more boots on the ground permanently there.

Senator RICKETTS. So is there something Congress can do to be helpful on that? For example, if we create a special investigator general or whatever is that something that—Inspector General, is that something that would be helpful to be able to get more boots on the ground or are there other things we could be doing?

Mr. MARTIN. I actually think creating a special Inspector General for Ukraine oversight would be less helpful.

Senator RICKETTS. Really?

Mr. MARTIN. Because you have the three inspector generals who have the authority and who already have the mechanisms and the agreements with Ukrainian officials. To superimpose a new inspector general on top of that I think would be counterproductive—the amount of time it would take to set that office up, the inevitable conflicts with the other inspector generals who are doing work there. So I think it is best to continue to rely on the three offices of inspector general who currently have jurisdiction there.

Senator RICKETTS. So is there anything else Congress can be doing to be able to be helpful to make sure we are providing you the resources you need for oversight? Because we—I think right now we have supplied about \$13 million to be able to do oversight. Is there anything else we need to be doing?

Mr. MARTIN. No. I think, again, it is the security situation on the ground for us getting more individuals, more auditors, more investigators in there. My sense is that the offices of inspector general are funded well enough at this point but I would suggest that any additional supplemental appropriations to Ukraine have a small sliver for the oversight component as well.

Senator RICKETTS. So it sounds like what you want to do, though, is work with the State Department to get more of those inspectors in there because they are the ones that are the gatekeepers on how many can get in. Is that accurate?

Mr. MARTIN. A hundred percent.

Senator RICKETTS. All right. Great. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Martin. I appreciate it.

Mr. MARTIN. Thank you, sir.

Senator RICKETTS. Mr. Chairman?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Senator Ricketts.

And now we are turning to Senator Murphy.

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

Let me add my thanks to the entire panel for your careers of service and your willingness to continue to serve. None of these are easy places that you are headed to.

I wanted to spend a little bit more time on Egypt with you, Ambassador Garg. Many of us who have received briefings about the inability to flow humanitarian assistance into Gaza have been disturbed at how hard it has been to convince our ally—our ally Egypt—to do the right thing and allow for aid to flow.

This is a country that we, obviously, spend over a billion dollars on second only to Israel in terms of taxpayer commitment to military support.

I was a little concerned about your opening statement in which you said that our security cooperation with Egypt is an investment in, quote, “self-reliant, capable, and accountable Egyptian Armed Forces aligned with U.S. priorities and values.” It does not feel like the Egyptian military is aligned with U.S. values.

This is a military that was willing to do a pretty large-scale deal with Russia, only undone by vigorous, tactical U.S. diplomacy. This is a military that is used by the regime to try political dissenters in military courts.

Reports are that there are upwards of 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 people in jail for their political views and the military is very much a part of that repressive—that campaign of repression.

So I just wanted to ask you to drill down on that statement. It is hard for me to imagine that you believe that the Egyptian military is aligned with U.S. values. Everything we see suggests that they are not, and we need an Ambassador in Egypt who understands that we are in a fight to try to make sure that our dollars ultimately try to press and enact real reform.

Ms. GARG. Senator, I agree with you that this is a significant investment. I would say that there is a tremendous range of administration priorities where Egypt does have a significant role, whether it is in Ukraine, whether it is elections in Libya, whether it is the conflict in Sudan and, of course, what we are seeing in Gaza right now, whether it is counterterrorism in the Sinai, whether it is non-proliferation, and it is hard to imagine a path forward on any of these issues where we bypass Egypt.

Senator MURPHY. So that is not what I am asking. What I am asking is if—I agree, we have a number of important lines of effort with Egypt. My question is do you believe that the Egyptian military shares our values?

Ms. GARG. We do believe that the—on the specific case of what you are talking about in Gaza the Egyptian Government does want to see aid to enter and our citizens and other people at risk to leave.

The mechanism is in discussion right now between us, the Egyptians, the Israelis, and other international organizations. But we do believe they have that same goal. It is the mechanism that is still being worked out.

The President did have a good conversation with el-Sisi yesterday. We do have the commitment for that to happen.

Senator MURPHY. Okay. Maybe—

Ms. GARG [continuing]. On human rights—

Senator MURPHY [continuing]. Okay.

Ms. GARG [continuing]. I share with you, Senator Murphy, the concerns and this is an issue—as you know, is a priority for the administration. It will be a priority for me.

Human rights is a part of national security. They are not two separate things. They are together, and I commit to continuing this discussion with the Egyptians so that we do see tangible progress on these very important issues that will strengthen our relationship in the future.

Senator MURPHY. So before my time—before my time is up—so maybe it is hard to make a broad statement on whether they share our values or not because as you point out there are areas in which we hope that they do share our values like getting humanitarian aid into Gaza.

But on the issue of the treatment of political dissent—let me try to narrow it so that we can come to a conclusion—on the issue of treatment of political dissent do you believe that the Egyptian military shares our values on how we treat military—how we treat political dissent?

Ms. GARG. Senator, there is no doubt there is room for improvement there. There is no doubt on that issue, and if confirmed I commit to doing what I can along with the Embassy to really make progress on that very, very important issue of political dissent.

Senator MURPHY. I think you are in a tough spot. You have to be careful about what you say. I appreciate that. I think you are going to do a great job on the ground. I want our diplomats to tell the truth about what is happening in politically repressive countries and maybe that will be a little bit easier in the future. But I appreciate your willingness to go and do a tough job. I look forward to working with you.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

Senator Coons?

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all five of our nominees today and thank you to your families for their support of your long careers in public service.

I am grateful for your willingness to take on what are often difficult terms of service in challenging and occasionally dangerous places. I will try to briefly address questions to a few of you. I would welcome the chance to question thoroughly all of you but within the boundaries of five minutes it is a challenge.

Mr. White, I am particularly enthusiastic about our making progress here on the committee with Peace Corps reauthorization, something that has not happened in a number of years, and I am excited about our steady reengagement with the world through the Peace Corps.

I think it has, as you mentioned in your opening statement, laid the foundation for more than a quarter million Americans to serve across the world across many decades.

I will never forget my first meeting with the president of Ghana who, before Senator Isakson and I could say anything else, said “I want you to know the only reason I am today president is because of two young Americans who came to my remote village and taught English and science,” and his quote was, “The United States is a

country that became great not by what you took from us but by what you gave to us and that is because of the Peace Corps.”

Your own record of service in our military, your skills and training and experience I think make you well qualified for this role. I would just be interested in how you see us getting to the 10,000 volunteer target, what you think are the barriers to recruitment, and how does increasing Peace Corps engagement in the Global South also help advance some of our strategic interests in terms of competing with other countries that have different values and different priorities?

Mr. WHITE. Well, thank you, Senator, first of all, for the kind words and for the question as well.

I do believe in, of course, American global leadership and its capacity for good and I think some of those examples you gave are so many and I have heard so many other examples of world leaders and everyday people whose lives have been enriched by Peace Corps.

I do think that we need to continue to do great work in recruiting folks to serve in the Peace Corps. As it relates to public service writ large, we are seeing, I think, as we are all aware, less folks who are signing up to serve.

I notice that, of course, different aspects of the military, of course. The Marines seem to do quite well and I have a lot of family members, including a nephew serving overseas, in the Marine Corps.

But I think Peace Corps has taken a really great turn and executed an excellent marketing strategy now with the Go Bold initiative, as you and your colleagues may have seen plastered all around here in D.C., but also in other places around the country, inspiring people to serve, inspiring folks to heed that clarion call that President Kennedy gave so many years ago.

I think it is absolutely vital that we also ensure that we are getting a broad cross section of folks from across this country so we can bring the best of America abroad and abroad back home.

Senator COONS. Thank you. I have just two minutes left.

So briefly, Mr. Toner, if I might. I have been to Liberia four times. It is a country that has a diaspora community in Delaware. Go Irish. Your own education, I think, laid the foundation for your service then in the Peace Corps. I am thrilled you are returning to Liberia.

I would just be interested very briefly in how you think you in your role if confirmed can support democratic institutions in a country that has suffered from an incredibly destructive civil war that really destroyed much of the civil institutions.

I was close to the two-term president who laid a lot of the foundation for that but I am very concerned about the direction, particularly given the dynamics of this election.

Briefly, how would you promote democratic institutions?

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

I think as you noted, Senator, given where Liberia came from in 2003, a lot of progress has been made but there is a lot that needs to be done.

Senator, if confirmed I would focus like a laser beam on corruption. I believe corruption is probably the biggest single impediment

to progress not only on the democracy building front but also on the economic development front and that will be a clear focus for me if I am confirmed.

Senator COONS. Thank you. And I think, frankly, more broadly we do better in the Global South if we were credibly seen as an advocate and ally for those who stand against corruption.

We restrain our businesses with the FCPA. We might as well get more credit for the fact that we do business in the developing world in a cleaner more transparent way.

Ambassador Garg, if I might. I am about to travel to Egypt. It is a country I have been to many, many times and I value deeply our close partnership and relationship.

But as Senator Murphy's questioning highlighted, we have a real disagreement, a real tension, over political prisoners, the suppression of dissent. I intend to raise this again with el-Sisi.

There has been public reporting that Egypt, which is neutral in the war in Ukraine, has considered selling arms to the Russians. Has decided, hopefully, not to. They are an enormous consumer of grain from Russia and Ukraine. They are a critical regional leader. They play an important role in relations with Sudan.

What will you most prioritize in your service as Ambassador and how will you ensure that you strike that right balance between advocating for human rights and civil liberties and sustaining an enduring partnership that is key to Israeli-Egyptian relations and its security?

Ms. GARG. Thank you for that question. I will just say I think human rights are part of our national security and in my previous assignments I have demonstrated that we can accomplish both, as an example in previous assignment, military modernization, energy diversification, and rule of law reform.

Having a confirmed Ambassador on the ground elevates our ability to raise these issues consistently, which is absolutely important, and if confirmed I commit to doing that, sir.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Ambassador Garg. I will have some questions for the record, if I might.

Mr. Riley, Mr. Martin, I apologize for not also engaging with you. Effective and engaged oversight on our robust programming is critical. Somalia is a nation that badly needs a skilled and seasoned representative of the United States.

I hope we will quickly confirm all of the nominees today. Thank you for your patience with my going over, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Senator Coons.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Congratulations to each of you on your nominations and I look forward to working with you if confirmed.

Mr. Riley, I want to begin with you because as Russia has continued its unprovoked war in Ukraine one of the collateral—pieces of collateral damage, sadly, has been that global food prices have continued to rise rapidly. It has had a huge impact not just in the Middle East or in Eastern Europe but also in Africa.

I understand that Somalia has received more than 80,000 tons of wheat from Ukraine last year and it is experiencing record high food prices. So how can we—and one of the other challenges is that many people in Africa and other countries that are affected are

blaming the United States rather than blaming Russia, who should appropriately be blamed for what has happened.

So how can we improve our public diplomacy to communicate with folks about what is really causing the high food prices and the impact on them?

Mr. RILEY. Thank you, Senator, for the question. I think it is an extremely important one in relation especially to Somalia.

The United States remains the single largest humanitarian donor to Somalia. We have given \$890 million in each of the last two fiscal years. We are up to \$1.7 billion in the totality of the humanitarian assistance that we have been—we have given to Somalia and this is because of the situation on the ground.

There is a desperate situation in Somalia with five recurrent rainy seasons that have failed. There has been the longest drought in history. We have—Somalia's population is 17 million people.

According to the statistics I have from all of our aid workers who are there 8.25 million of those are classified in need of humanitarian assistance. That is about half the population.

Senator SHAHEEN. I am sorry to interrupt but I am almost out of time. The question I am really asking, though, I appreciate the dire need that they have for food because of what is happening. But the question that I have is how do we better communicate to people in the region about what is responsible for that.

Mr. RILEY. I will be very succinct. We have to do a lot better. I have worked on a lot of countries where we have given tremendous amounts of aid but we do not do a good job in our public diplomacy in getting that word out.

You have my commitment. If I am confirmed as Ambassador we will leverage every platform, every vehicle that we have, to get the word out to the Somali people that it is the United States of America and our taxpayers who are funding this tremendous amount of aid to the people of Somalia.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. White, I think what is happening with the Peace Corps is very encouraging. New Hampshire is one of the top 10 states in terms of providing Peace Corps volunteers. We are very proud of that.

But how will you ensure that the Peace Corps is fully implementing the recommendations from the Sexual Assault Advisory Council including working with local staff and communities on sexual assault prevention?

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator, for the question and thanks also for your support of the Peace Corps and getting into the top 10.

I would tell you, first of all, safety and security is the highest priority. That includes prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment. We must strive to zero incidents.

Unfortunately, we know we live in a dangerous world. That is true here at home and it is true abroad as well. So when the worst does happen, we need to ensure that the response is victim-centered, treats victims with dignity and respect, the full suite of reporting options, the resources they need to move beyond that and, of course, then pivot, again, towards safety and security.

This is also a recruiting matter and it is also an equity matter. It is a recruiting matter because people need to know that they are safe and secure and that we are going to take good care of them.

And, secondly, as it relates to equity this is something that affects—tends to affect—one particular set of the population and we need to make sure that we are taking care of all people equally.

So, you have my commitment, if confirmed, to work on this as one of my highest priorities, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. We will be watching and if we can be helpful please let us know.

Ambassador Mustafa Garg, can you explain in the 20 seconds that I have left why Egypt is unwilling to open the Rafah crossing?

Ms. GARG. My understanding is that Egypt does want the crossing open.

Senator SHAHEEN. Let me rephrase that. Why they have been so reluctant to open the crossing to date and why there is no commitment notwithstanding the president's statement that there will be ongoing humanitarian aid that will come through the Rafah crossing.

Ms. GARG. I think there is now a commitment.

Senator SHAHEEN. For ongoing?

Ms. GARG. Ongoing.

Senator SHAHEEN. I have heard that they have—they are going to allow 20 trucks in.

Ms. GARG. As the first tranche.

Senator SHAHEEN. But I understood that they were still negotiating and the question is really why. Why did it take them so long and why are they so reluctant?

Ms. GARG. My understanding is that the situation at the border is very fluid and layered. They have been concerned about, again, the influx of the refugees, also the security at the border.

But they are also working with the Israeli side. Both sides had concerns and until both sides could reach an agreement on the mechanism that border was not opening. There is now an agreement and we are cautiously optimistic that we will soon be seeing that flow in both directions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I hope so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Garg, as you know the U.S.-Egypt relationship has been damaged over the past week in the aftermath of the war that Hamas launched against Israel.

A summit with President Biden, Egyptian President Sisi, and other Arab leaders was just canceled. On Tuesday night a rocket fired by a Palestinian terrorist fell short of Israel and landed instead in the parking lot of a hospital in Gaza. Palestinian officials in Gaza, which means Hamas, immediately announced that it was an Israeli airstrike and that 500 people had been killed.

Their propaganda was then parroted and amplified by American corporate media—Reuters, the New York Times, MSNBC, and CNN.

Anti-American riots broke out across the Middle East. Mobs marched on American embassies. The corporate media's rabid anti-Israel reporting that was false endangered the lives of Americans across the region including our diplomats.

That libel continues to reverberate in Egypt. The Egyptian Government and public continues to peddle the lie and they blame America.

How do you intend to navigate in this environment in Egypt? What can be done specifically?

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

I believe strongly that having a confirmed Ambassador in place helps elevate our engagement and our ability to advance our U.S. interests.

In this case it is also building the relationships and the trust, which is extremely important for us to do, and being active in terms of telling our side of the story and the truth, which I think is also very important to do.

Senator CRUZ. Do you believe that this sort of anti-Israel media disinformation undermines American national security interests?

Ms. GARG. I can say, Mr. Senator, an issue that has come up several times today, which I think is vitally important, is disinformation in general and how we as a U.S. Government need to think more strongly about how we deal with disinformation across the globe and in particular in the Middle East.

Senator CRUZ. Well, unfortunately, many in the media allow their hatred of Israel to color their coverage and, indeed, in this instance to cause them to peddle outright falsehoods.

But the media is not alone. I want to ask you about another source of anti-American and anti-Israel incitement in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood has in the past seized control of the Egyptian Government and they remain influential and dangerous. The Egyptian Government has imprisoned prominent Muslim Brotherhood figures.

I want to ask you about one in particular, Salah Soltan. As you know, Soltan is a Muslim Brotherhood leader and a hate preacher. He has called for the eradication of Jews. He has called for, and this is a quote, "obliterating America." He has called it divine law.

Now, when you and I met in my office we discussed this case. The Biden administration bizarrely has been pressuring Egypt to release Soltan and has even brought up his case to withhold assistance to Egypt.

Some of my colleagues here in the Senate and on this committee agree with that pressure. I would ask for your judgment. I understand there are genuine concerns about Egypt's imprisonment and treatment of political prisoners.

However, Soltan is not an American citizen and is in fact an anti-American radical who preaches the murder of Americans and the murder of Jews.

How on earth does it make sense that the Biden administration is trying to free a rabid ant-Semite who hates America and preaches violence against both Israel and America?

Ms. GARG. Thank you, Mr. Senator, for that question and thank you from our last meeting. You highlighted a few of the actual

cites, which I did watch in Arabic to make sure that nothing was lost in translation and I condemn in the strongest sense and I think everyone on this committee condemns the comments that I did hear Mr. Soltan make on public TV in Egypt.

That said, the United States Government, this administration, is pushing for rights across the board for those in prison to have medical access. He is 80 years old. He has been in prison for a long time—

Senator CRUZ. So with respect—with respect—it is not medical access. There are members of this committee that are trying to write into law that America should free this man.

My time has expired but I just want to read two quotes from him to understand who it is the Biden administration is trying to free.

Here is one quote: “We will fight Israel and all those who are behind it. Allah is present in this equation and he is capable of obliterating America and any other oppressor. This is a divine law.” That is one quote.

Here is another quote: “As someone who has studied Islamic law specializing in Islamic jurisprudence I am calling to kill the Israeli Ambassador, not just expel him. Any Zionist tourist or other who enters Egypt must be killed.”

I asked my Democrat colleagues is this someone that we should be fighting to release from jail to be able to follow through on exactly what he has pledged he wants to do, which is murder Jews and murder Americans.

Senator MERKLEY. Senator Cardin?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, first, let me thank Senator Merkley and Senator Young for chairing and arranging for this hearing. Getting our nominees’ hearings and confirmation votes is one of our highest priorities and I want to thank the cooperation of Senator Risch and Senator Young in accommodating this hearing.

I want to thank all five of our nominees for their willingness to serve our nation. We know it is a family event so I thank your families as well because they will be required for the sacrifices.

I know some of you are for different confirmations and some are countries, some are not. I recognize that. When we have a hearing we would like to get as many as we possibly can in but we want to make sure we have an opportunity to give members a chance to ask their questions.

I am going to just make a general comment as well and I welcome your response, particularly as it relates to Egypt, but that our policies need to be wrapped in our values.

President Biden has said that frequently, that we can have strategic relations with other countries. Egypt is a very important country for the United States. It has normalized its relationship with Israel.

It is a critical partner in regards to humanitarian needs in Gaza. It has an incredibly important role to play in regards to peace in that region and the expansion of normalization.

But Egypt has very serious human rights violations by its government. It is still operating basically under the autocratic rule as a result of the challenges they have had from violence in their country.

So my question to each of you is how will you make sure that American values—international values—for protection of human rights are embedded in your responsibilities representing the United States either in country or the positions that you have been nominated for?

So we can start first with—

Ms. GARG. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman, and human rights are part of our national security. They are not two separate paths.

They are together, and I want to say thank you for your cooperation in Bulgaria and this is an example that I would like to highlight where we were by working together with you and your team able—we were able to make significant progress on rule of law thanks to the authority that—the authority that you have given on the Global Magnitsky Act, for example.

And so, moving forward, it is important for us to not only look at the range of authorities and the tools but to continue to work together to try to promote them.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Martin, I am curious as to how you in the role as an inspector general can advance—I understand you are mainly concerned with complying with law but how do you make sure also that there is sensitivity to the mission of USAID, which is very much our values?

Mr. MARTIN. Very much so. So I think the word accountability is key to promoting the democratic values of this country as the world's largest donor nation and I think that shows the spirit of the American people.

But I think we need to have proper checks and balances and accountability to make sure that those funds are going into the right hands and having the desired effect.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that.

Mr. White, you are being nominated for one of my favorite organizations in the world. There are days I would like to trade spaces—places and be in the Peace Corps rather than here. It seems like it would be a nice place to be.

Mr. WHITE. We are recruiting, Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that. I might have some time after next year so I will let you know how I am doing.

Mr. WHITE. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. But if you could just tell me how you see American values in the Ambassadors we have under the Peace Corps, how we can strengthen that relationship.

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just say briefly that we have to live our values. It is really the power of our example and looking at volunteers as grassroots diplomats that is going to make the difference here.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MERKLEY. Senator Booker, thank you for your patience. It is now your turn.

Senator BOOKER. Truly grateful, and I will always give deference to our Chairman, Senator Cardin. Always, sir. Always, sir. You look so dubious at me.

First of all, I just want to say thank you to the five of you. It is extraordinary that you are here. Your careers, each individual—your bios read to such deep patriotism and that does not just go—I have gratitude towards the five of you but I want to give gratitude to your families. It really is a sacrifice to do the jobs that you do.

Clearly, you are not doing it for the money. But you are, to me, demonstrating the best of human values, which is a commitment to service and service in this case to the country.

Ms. Garg, you have been getting a lot of action. I have a lot of thoughts. I look forward to working with you. But I am going to let you take a pause on my round at least.

Mr. White, it has been a frustration to me that we have not seen a lot of progress over my years in the Senate on diversity in the State Department.

When I would travel around I would see the face of America, these incredibly dedicated public servants, but I would not see that many people of color, religious diversity, and the like.

I do not know the data for the Peace Corps, but I am wondering—as you all look to ramp up recruiting I am wondering how do you keep this conscious that it is actually important that those people that are abroad doing such incredible work reflect the rich diversity of our country?

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator, for the question. It is vitally important.

It is very important to Peace Corps' mission, of course, of promoting peace and friendship. When a volunteer goes overseas they have to have a level of cultural competence to be effective and, of course, the world is a very diverse place.

And so just like with my colleagues here who served in the Foreign Service it is important that volunteers represent a broad cross section of folks who serve. That is in the more traditional characteristics of diversity when it comes to race, but it is also important in terms of geographic diversity, making sure we are getting folks from the heartland, from the coasts, from all over, because that is what makes us a stronger organization, at the end of the day.

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that at a time that I am seeing so much pushback on ideas of diversity. With the State Department we have seen a lot of great progress with paid internship programs and more conscious recruiting. I really appreciate that you are—that you are focused on that.

Mr. Riley, I am really excited about what you are getting a chance to do in a country that, to me, is so vital to U.S. interests. I know Senator Shaheen rightfully talked a lot about the humanitarian effort but, obviously, is related to the challenges we have been having with al-Shabaab.

Now, there has been a lot of great progress made and I am wondering if you could describe to me how you think as the African Union's mission transitions, they are moving out and I am wondering if that progress with al-Shabaab is tenuous, given some of the humanitarian concerns.

Does that make it more urgent that we have to be really worried despite what the U.N. and the African Union seem to be thinking about the direction of our work against al-Shabaab?

Mr. RILEY. Thank you very much, Senator.

In regard to al-Shabaab in Somalia, obviously, they are a malignant and persistent terrorist threat to the Somali people, to the country, and to the broader region there in East Africa and to U.S. personnel in the region. We all know that.

What I am heartened by understanding and knowing is that there has been progress against al-Shabaab. They do not have widespread popular support within the country given how virulently extremist they are and how they persecute their own people, and they are one of the wealthiest affiliates of al-Qaeda in the world.

So they are a malignant and a real threat that must be faced. What I am heartened to see and understand is that through all of the support that we have given and our partners in the Quint have given in terms of standing up the Somali security forces and the progress that has been made in that area.

Progress is being made. More territory has been regained in the last, I think, it is 14 months than in the previous five years against al-Shabaab, which is a real, real success. That has to continue.

We know that there was some setbacks last month in Galmudug in that offensive. We all recognize that. But as you also know the federal government together with the African Union have asked for a pause briefly for 90 days for that scheduled drawn down to the ATMIS forces. That is for 90 days through to the end of the December.

But the scheduling of the drawdown of ATMIS and the stand up of the Somali security forces will proceed apace. There is still the goal of having the Somali security forces securing the country with ATMIS not there by the end of next year.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you. I am going to stop you there because I want to get a question to Mr. Toner. I just will say that I am hopeful for the elections in '24.

Mr. RILEY. Yes.

Senator BOOKER. It is an issue I would love to explore with you at some point.

Mr. Toner, I am excited about your position. I have got a lot of DNA from West Africa and Liberia is, obviously, a country that for its history with the United States and especially African-American diaspora has been extraordinary.

I think the questions already asked about corruption were really key. I have some humanitarian concerns as well. There are places of great food insecurity there.

The one thing I just want to ask—and I am treading upon the generosity and kindness of Senator Kaine who I am just a warm up act for—but I just want to ask you I am really concerned about the competition with China and I am wondering if you can just in my last question just tell me how you see that competition. They are, obviously, playing very hard in the country—in a country that is—we are probably their most valuable partner, but I am concerned about Chinese influence.

Mr. TONER. Thank you for the question. I do not think we can ever be complacent about the PRC and their involvement throughout West Africa and Africa in general.

I would argue, though, Senator, and to your point, our voice matters there. Our involvement matters there. I think the fact that we just got Peace Corps volunteers back in the country that we remain—we have a robust public engagement program, public diplomacy program.

We are still the country that Liberians look to for guidance and for a model and, sir, I will make it my priority to continue those efforts.

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

Senator MERKLEY. Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to the nominees.

Mr. White, I want to talk to you a little bit about Peace Corps personnel issues, following up on some that Senator Booker raised.

The Peace Corps is currently the subject of a federal lawsuit that accuses it of discriminating against applicants with disabilities in violation of the Rehabilitation Act and in particular this is a lawsuit that is also consistent with some constituent outreach to our office.

People apply to get into the Peace Corps. They get an offer made to them. They undergo a medical clearance process and then they find that their offers are rescinded, some because they have sought mental health counseling in the past, some because they take anti-anxiety medication or anti-depression medication.

The gist of the lawsuit is that folks are being discriminated against on the grounds of seeking mental health support, which we should not be discouraging. We should be encouraging.

We know that we have a lot of stigma issues surrounding mental health and people do not seek treatment sometime when they need it. But the fact that they might need mental health treatment is no different than I might need cholesterol medication or something like that and people should not be punished or believe that they are going to be punished in employment because they are seeking assistance on mental health issues.

I do not want you to comment on the lawsuit but I do want you to tell me that should you be confirmed that you approach this responsibility with an understanding that there is nothing wrong with seeking mental health treatment and that should not be a bar to serving in the Peace Corps or in any other public service or private sector job, for that matter.

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate the question. I think you are absolutely right. It is important that people seek help when they need that.

I would tell you that as an Army veteran I find it incredibly important. I talk to a number of my former colleagues who are veterans and encourage them to seek help when they need it.

We need to destigmatize seeking help, and as far as I see needing help for mental health purposes is no different than breaking an arm or needing to get your cholesterol down.

So it is important that we get that help when we need it and it is important that there is a system at play that takes into account volunteers' safety and security while at the same time encouraging that people get help, and if confirmed, I will certainly get under the

hood on that and work with your office to make sure that we are striking the right balance.

Senator Kaine. Please do. I like the broken arm analogy. If somebody walks in to a hearing with a cast I will usually say, oh, what happened and can I sign your cast and it is a very easy conversation and conversations about mental health should be equally as easy. We all have to work to make sure that is the case in whatever capacity.

I worked in Honduras as a missionary many years ago when the Peace Corps was really active in Honduras. Peace Corps pulled out of Honduras in 2012 for legitimate concerns over safety at the time—extensive violence in the country—and the Peace Corps also pulled out of some other countries in the Northern Triangle including El Salvador.

The Peace Corps announced, I think, earlier this year that they are going to come back to El Salvador, which I view as a positive. I do not know if you know anything about status with Honduras.

In my discussions with Honduran businesses and governmental leaders they have expressed interest in the Peace Corps starting up again in Honduras. Do you know anything about the status of that right now?

Mr. White. Thank you, Senator.

I am not privy to the inner workings, but I do know that Peace Corps takes very seriously its responsibility to safety and security of the volunteers and it is really an ongoing assessment, as I understand it, and if confirmed, I would be committed to working with your office to ensure that we get you the latest information and thinking on that.

Senator Kaine. That would be great. I mean, and I know that the Peace Corps coming back it begins with the request of the Government and I have not talked to President Castro to know whether there has been an official request for the Peace Corps to come back.

I have talked to other government officials and private sector leaders in Honduras that hope that might come back. The Honduran violence rates are not that different and, frankly, I think they are a little bit less than those in Salvador and with the Peace Corps back in El Salvador I hope there might be a way to come back into Honduras because I think it has been a really important relationship.

The last question I want to ask is to Mr. Toner and it is about domestic violence. Gender-based violence in Liberia is commonly at the top of the charts in terms of polling about what people want to see done—what problem that people want to see action on.

In 2019 Liberia passed a domestic violence act. That is laudable but implementation of the act still needs a lot to be desired.

Should you be confirmed how could you work with Liberia to make sure that we strengthen implementation and take additional steps and set an example to try to demonstrate the importance of reducing gender-based violence?

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

If confirmed, obviously, human rights would be among my priorities and as you noted, Senator, gender-based violence, including fe-

male genital mutilation, are among the concerns that I have cited in the annual State Department Human Rights Report.

I think—a two-pronged approach if I may, sir. I think we need to—I need to work with the Government leadership to make sure that they understand this is a priority. Equally, we need to work with civil society and engage.

And, Senator, I am always an advocate for shining a light on these issues as much as our voice can get out there. It offers solace and it offers a symbol to others who are looking for that.

Again, I am fully cognizant of the great power that American influence has on Liberia so as much as we can be a model and be a voice and an advocate for change I plan to do that, sir.

Senator KAINE. Thanks for that answer. I yield back.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. No time is left to yield back but thank you.

[Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. Senator Van Hollen?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Merkley, and congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

Mr. Martin, it is good to see a Marylander in the group and I want to pick up on some of the comments that Senator Kaine said with respect to the Peace Corps.

And, Mr. White, congratulations on your nomination. I try to make it a point whenever I am overseas in an official capacity to meet with our Peace Corps volunteers. I come from a Foreign Service family and deep appreciation for what they do and our other Foreign Service—and Foreign Service officers do.

But on the Peace Corps I was recently in Vietnam with Senator Merkley. We made a point to meet with the Peace Corps volunteers and I also—which is a first, as you probably know—I am sure you know—and then in Sri Lanka recently getting the Peace Corps back in the end of the year.

At both stops I got a chance to see the new Peace Corps group in action in Vietnam and the preparations being made in Sri Lanka. So I look forward to working with you as you—as you move forward, assuming you get your confirmation, which I do support.

Mr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. If I could, Ambassador Mustafa Garg, I would like to use the time to better understand exactly what is going on with respect to desperately needed humanitarian relief in southern Gaza.

And I realize that you have been nominated. You have not been confirmed. But I also assume that you have been following this issue very closely.

And we are trying to untangle exactly what the obstacles are. As I understood your testimony you believe an agreement has been reached to provide sustained humanitarian relief across the border.

Ms. GARG. My understanding is that an agreement has been reached to open up the border. The mechanisms are being worked on all three sides. By that I mean the U.N., Israel, and with Egypt, and as the President said this first tranche will go as long as Hamas does not try to confiscate that first tranche. Then we hope there will be additional tranches.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So the first tranche meaning the 20 trucks. Is that what you are talking about?

Ms. GARG. Yes, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. And when it comes to—so the Egyptians as you understand have cleared that. The Israelis have cleared that subject to what kind of other requirements?

Ms. GARG. Yes. My understanding is there has been a general agreement reached in terms of the situation on the ground at the border, which is fluid and layered.

First of all, I would say that on the Gaza side they need an authority to organize the people who would go across and that authority is not Hamas. In addition to that, it is making sure that the goods that go in are inspected to also make sure—

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. I do not have a lot of time. Just trying to figure out that information.

Ms. GARG. Exactly. This is—

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. So there is no other—right now, obviously, Israel is prosecuting its war against Hamas.

Ms. GARG. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. We support them getting rid of Hamas. But so what other authority would there be in southern Gaza? Are we talking about the United Nations? What are we talking—what could that possibly be?

Ms. GARG. So this is—these are all the complexities that are involved in the area and why we have sent David Satterfield out to the region to focus on exactly this issue, sir.

Because that situation is fluid, because of the war, details such as having to repave the roads on which the trucks will enter are the details that the parties are working out.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. Well, one of the—one of the most desperate situations right now of all the humanitarian needs is access to water because right now Israel has turned off the water except, for my understanding, is one pipe in southern Gaza, which is where it is turned on only for a few hours a day.

So what you are telling me is that it is going to take potentially a lot more time to get bottled water in convoys across the Gaza-Egypt border. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. GARG. I think the situation is very complex and, if confirmed, I commit to following up closely. I do not have all the details on the time lines.

I do know that there is a commitment definitely from our side and in the great work of Ambassador Satterfield but also in the President's conversation with President el-Sisi he did receive that assurance. So this is an issue, if confirmed, I will give utmost importance.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. I understand you do not have this responsibility yet. All I can say is, there is really no time. According to all the U.N. officials they are down to about one liter a day in rations for water in southern Gaza, which is not enough to support human life.

You have Gazans flooding into the south because that is where they were told to go—innocent Gazans. And so it just underscores the need, in my view, to have Israel turn on the water because

your answer to me is that this is going to take even longer to try to get out the dynamics around the border crossing.

And even then I am not sure why we should have to have convoys and convoys of trucks bringing bottled water across when we need to take tents, food, medicine, and other urgent needs.

So I look forward to following up with you even before the confirmation vote just to make sure I understand what your thinking is and what you would do as our Ambassador to address all the other issues.

And I want to second the things that Senator Murphy and others have said. But this is an immediate humanitarian need so I look forward to working with you on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much.

Senator, did you have any follow-up questions you wanted to ask? Senator Young?

Senator YOUNG. I do not.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. I am glad that you said that.

[Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. Senator Cardin has given a speech on the floor of the Senate on July 27th, 2023, regarding the individual Salah el Deen Soltan, who was referred to earlier in the testimony. He has asked that his speech and the attachment be put into the record.

In his speech Senator Cardin lays out the history and also quotes the letter that Mr. Soltan wrote and it was smuggled out of prison in Egypt, and I think it is powerful enough that I would like to read that clause in which Mr. Soltan wrote:

“My previous statements and stances are wrong and the best of us are those who reflect, hold one’s self accountable, and repent. Here I am reflecting and seeking forgiveness from God for the harm that may have been inflicted upon anyone.

“I apologize to everyone harmed by what I said and called for. I leave behind these prison walls all forms of anger, hate, and coarseness. I bear the burden of upholding the sanctity of human life, speaking truth and defending it wherever it may be.

“I had only intended to stand up for justice but what I did resulted in the exact opposite of the intent and became a reason for further oppression, suffering, and marginalization of the innocent. In fact, my oppressors use my decade-old stances to justify and fend off pressure from concerned Western parties about my release.”

And I encourage anyone who would like to look into this further. This is a powerful statement by Chairman Cardin and the attachment.

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

Senator MERKLEY. If there are no more questions, which there are not—thank you—the record for the hearing will remain open until close of business Friday, October 20th, 2023. I would encourage our nominees to answer questions for the record fully and expeditiously so the committee can consider your nominations as soon as possible.

Thank you to all nominees for your willingness to serve. I have really appreciated learning more about your records and your vision for the future in each of these positions.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO RICHARD H. RILEY IV BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

The Bilateral Relationship

Question. In your view, what are the top three priorities for the U.S. bilateral relationship with Somalia that you will advance or maintain as U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, the top three U.S. priorities I will seek to advance as U.S. Ambassador are to: 1) eliminate the threat that al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups pose to U.S. persons and to regional stability; 2) help the people of Somalia build a peaceful nation with a stable democratic government that can provide security and services for its citizens and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms; and 3) foster inclusive economic growth and build resilience to climatic shocks, which fuel large-scale humanitarian needs, to reduce Somalia's dependence on international aid and improve the lives of its citizens.

Democracy

While the current focus of the U.S.-Somalia relationship is—once again—the push to defeat al-Shabaab militarily and associated efforts for the Federal Government in Mogadishu to take control of liberated territory, the United States has previously made considerable investments in supporting universal suffrage, democratic governance, anti-corruption and public financial management, debt relief and institutional capacity building, many of which have yet to bear fruit for the Somali people.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, if confirmed, how will you engage with the Federal Government in Mogadishu, as well as Somalia's Federal Member States, on difficult but critical issues including democracy, corruption, and weak governing institutions that have little control over territory and resources?

Answer. Promoting democracy, fighting corruption, and strengthening government institutions are vital to advance peace and stability in Somalia. If confirmed, I will work to advance the federalism and political reconciliation processes by encouraging regular dialogue between Mogadishu and the federal member states. I will prioritize strengthening good governance and accountability structures, including holding more democratic and inclusive elections and fighting corruption by improving public sector management. I will also promote inclusive economic growth, job creation, and government revenue generation efforts, which are necessary to ensure governing institutions have sufficient resources to deliver services to the people of Somalia.

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2023 report ranked Somalia as not free, with the exception of the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland which Freedom House ranked as partly free. After significant delay, the abandonment of one-person-one-vote direct elections, and political and constitutional crisis, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was named Somalia's president in May 2022 through an indirect selection process. Somaliland, despite delays, will hold national elections in November 2024.

Question. What is your view of the role of a U.S. Ambassador in supporting democratic institutions and democratic governance in Somalia?

Answer. Supporting democratic institutions and governance are integral to U.S. efforts to promote peace and stability in Somalia. If confirmed, they will be among my highest priorities as U.S. Ambassador. Somalia remains in the early stages of recovery from government collapse and has myriad challenges it must overcome on the path to becoming a stable democracy, to include agreeing on and implementing

a democratic electoral process, improving its record on media freedom, strengthening the rule of law, and establishing an independent judiciary. I will work closely with the Government, civil society, and international partners to encourage progress towards these and other democracy goals.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you acknowledge the differing levels of capacity, democratic culture, and citizen freedoms in different Federal Member States and regions, including Somaliland, in engaging on issues of democracy and governance?

Answer. I strongly believe that all Somalis should have the benefit of representative governance and fundamental freedoms, regardless of where they live. However, the current reality is that there are significant disparities among Somalia's regions and federal member states in terms of their levels of governance capacity, democratic development, and overall stability. Somaliland has successfully held democratic elections on multiple occasions. Earlier this year, Puntland held one-person, one-vote elections at the district level for the first time. By contrast, electoral processes in Jubaland, South West State, other federal member states, and at the national level have been significantly less democratic. If confirmed, I will tailor my engagement in support of democracy and good governance in Somalia's federal member states and regions in accordance with their relative level of advancement and based on where U.S. engagement can have the most beneficial impact.

The security environment in Somalia, lack of political will for democratic reforms, an inability to hold one-person-one-vote elections for 50 years and limited freedom of movement of Somali and implementing partners makes democracy, human rights and governance programs difficult to implement and expensive.

Question. What adjustments in strategy, as compared to the strategy pursued from 2017–2022, do you think need to be made to ensure that investments of significant democracy, human rights and governance funds in Somalia achieve results?

Answer. I strongly believe that U.S. investments in democracy, governance, and human rights assistance can only be effective with the active support and cooperation of local partners that share those objectives. I understand from 2017 to 2022, the Somali Government under then-President Farmaajo did not consistently demonstrate a shared commitment to making progress in these areas. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has stated he is committed to advancing democracy and good governance, while also focusing on the fight against al-Shabaab. If confirmed, I will absolutely advocate reallocation of funding if it is not producing the desired results. I consider one of my most important obligations and responsibilities as U.S. Ambassador to be a trustworthy steward of American taxpayers' money.

Question. Do you feel that the conduct of one-person-one-vote elections in Somalia should continue to be a priority for U.S. diplomatic engagement and for USAID's democracy and governance programs in Somalia? If yes, why. If no, what should the revised approach be?

Answer. I believe it remains important for the United States to advocate for inclusive, transparent, and democratic elections at all levels of Government in Somalia, including supporting the aspirations of the Somali people for one-person, one-vote elections. We have seen progress in that direction at the district level in Puntland earlier this year. However, achieving President Hassan Sheikh's goal of universal suffrage elections at the national level may not be achievable by the 2026 election cycle given ongoing security challenges, continuing lack of consensus on an electoral model, and the technical preparations that need to be put in place. If confirmed, I will urge the federal government to focus on putting in place the political, technical, and legal preparations for the 2026 election cycle as soon as possible to avoid the need for another flawed indirect selection process.

Question. Given the Biden administration's focus on counter-terrorism efforts in Somalia, what do you believe is the best way for the U.S. to support legitimate state institutions to provide services and project control over territory liberated from al-Shabaab?

Answer. I believe that incorporating stabilization planning into military operations is the most effective way to ensure sustainable, legitimate governance over territory liberated from al-Shabaab. I understand that, given the Somali Government's significant resource limitations, U.S. and international partner financial support plays a critical role in stabilizing liberated territories. It is also important that assistance, including humanitarian assistance, support for community reconciliation

dialogue, or economic development projects, be tailored to the needs of the local communities.

African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)

ATMIS is currently in drawdown and due to fully withdrawal and hand over to the Somali Government by the end of 2024. On September 19, the Somalia Government requested a 90-day delay of the drawdown of 3000 African Union troops from ATMIS scheduled to occur by September 30, which the U.N. Security Council supported on September 28.

Question. Understanding that the Somali Government has aspirational goals for the defeat of al-Shabaab, do you think it is reasonable and realistic for the United States to provide support in the United Nations and in bilateral engagement for a full drawdown of ATMIS by the end of 2024?

Answer. The end of 2024 is an ambitious goal for ending ATMIS. I anticipate Somalia will continue to need some forms of external security support post-2024 as it builds the institutions and capabilities required to consolidate and build on progress. At the request of the Federal Government of Somalia, the United States and other international partners, we are co-sponsoring a security conference in New York in December to take stock of Somalia's progress on the security transition and assess requirements for 2024 and beyond. I understand we have asked Somalia to develop a comprehensive and credible plan for international partners to consider based on a realistic assessment of Somalia's security capabilities. This will help inform our position on the ATMIS drawdown timeline in the U.N. Security Council when the ATMIS mandate next comes up for renewal in December 2023.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, how will you engage with the Somali Government, regional and international partners to ensure that plans and requests for ATMIS are realistic while also continuing to plan for ATMIS to responsibly end?

Answer. If confirmed, I will meet regularly with the Somali Government, ATMIS leadership, individual troop contributors, and other international partners to gain a ground truth assessment of the security situation and the degree to which Somali security forces are capable of assuming security responsibilities. When necessary, I will challenge plans and requests that do not comport with my assessment and propose alternate courses of action. I will also consult closely with the U.S. Department of Defense and interagency partners for their assessment of Somali plans and preparations.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with State/IO and U.S.-U.N. on continued engagement with Congress on this issue?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I am committed to working with State/IO, U.S.-U.N., the Africa Bureau, and other State Department bureaus and offices as appropriate on continued engagement with Congress on this issue.

Question. Do you commit to engaging in good faith with appropriate congressional committees regarding any change in posture for ATMIS?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I am absolutely committed to engaging in good faith with appropriate congressional committees regarding any change in posture for ATMIS.

Humanitarian Aid

In July, the committee was notified by USAID that it had become aware of post-distribution diversions of humanitarian food aid in Somalia. This disclosure by the U.N. to USAID came on the heels of the discovery by USAID of widespread and systematic diversion of humanitarian food aid in Ethiopia. There are many challenges faced in the distribution of humanitarian aid in Somalia, particularly given the extremely difficult security situation. However, regardless of the circumstances, we have an obligation to the U.S. taxpayer and humanitarian principles to ensure that humanitarian aid provided by and paid for by the United States reaches its intended beneficiaries, that they are not further victimized by virtue of receiving U.S. humanitarian aid, and that U.S. assistance does not fall into the hands of terrorists, security services, or corrupt individuals seeking personal gain.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you work with USAID/Somalia and the Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs, WFP, UNOCHA, implementing partners and other stakeholders to ensure that assistance provided by the United States is accompanied by adequate monitoring and oversight efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with all of our offices and implementing partners to maintain the highest levels of assistance monitoring and oversight. Pre-

viously, I have served in countries receiving significant amounts of U.S. aid such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Pakistan. I fully understand the position of trust and stewardship that my team holds regarding the proper use of U.S. assistance. My team will work diligently to maintain oversight of U.S. taxpayer funds and ensure those resources are applied in a manner consistent with upholding U.S. strategic goals.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, how will you engage with the Government of Somalia, Federal Member States, and local authorities to prevent, identify, and mitigate humanitarian aid diversion?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with USAID, the U.N., and other humanitarian partners to engage closely with Somali authorities at all levels to ensure humanitarian aid is reaching its intended recipients and to detect and prevent aid diversion. I understand a U.N. report earlier this year uncovered a post-distribution aid diversion in internally displaced persons settlements in Somalia and that Somali authorities are working with the international donor community implement corrective measures. I am fully committed to working closely with Somali authorities, USAID, and its international humanitarian partners to prevent future diversion.

Somaliland

The United States has pursued a range of policy approaches toward Somalia since the early 1990s given state collapse, significant security threats and challenges, and U.S. efforts to support Somalia to defeat al-Shabaab and effectively govern its territory. Currently, the Administration is continuing to follow its Single Somalia Policy, with a strong focus on support and engagement with the Federal Government in Mogadishu, alongside a significant investment—financially and with U.S. boots on the ground—to defeat al-Shabaab once and for all. I have been vocal that I feel the focus on the Federal Government in Mogadishu, at the expense of relationships with other actors, including the Government of the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland, is short-sighted and takes strategic opportunities for the United States off the table.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador, how will you approach a relationship with the Government of Somaliland, and other Federal Member States?

Answer. The United States recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia within its 1960 borders, which includes Somaliland. If confirmed, I am committed to working within this framework to engage with Somaliland and federal member states on issues of mutual interest. I believe strongly that it is in the U.S. interest to maintain a positive relationship with a broad range of political actors in Somalia at the national and subnational level, including the authorities in Somaliland. If confirmed, my plan upon arrival in Somalia is to travel as soon as possible, as time and security circumstances will allow, to the other Federal Member States to make my own assessment of those States and to get to know the leadership and the situation on the ground as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Traveling to Somaliland will be my top priority.

The Chinese military base in Djibouti is 25km as the crow flies and less than 35km by road to the Somaliland border, and the Government of Somaliland is an outspoken friend and partner to Taiwan—one of the only in Africa. Despite challenges, Somaliland has one of the strongest democracies in the Horn of Africa. At the same time, the Department of State and the former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia has taken an approach to Somalia that significantly diminishes the opportunity for partnership with Somaliland, and which has been overtly antagonistic at times.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, if confirmed, how will you engage with Somaliland as a partner in countering China and as a friend to Taiwan?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to actively working and engaging with Somaliland within the framework of our single Somalia policy to counter malign Chinese influence and to support Taiwan. This will include support for Somaliland's efforts to prevent illegal, unauthorized, and unregulated fishing by PRC vessels in the Gulf of Aden and strengthening cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. I will also look for opportunities to coordinate with Taiwan's assistance office in Somaliland, including on democracy, humanitarian, and development initiatives, consistent with our one China policy. As mentioned in my response to the previous question, if confirmed, I will hold it as a top priority to travel to Somaliland as soon as possible to make my own assessment of the situation on the ground and to en-

sure we are not missing any opportunities to optimize U.S. interests in that Federal Member State.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, if confirmed, do you commit to regularly travelling to Somaliland and engaging with the Government of Somaliland in Hargeisa?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to regularly travelling to Somaliland and engaging with the Government of Somaliland in Hargeisa, security conditions and resource requirements permitting.

Question. On July 5, Under Secretary Nuland respond to a question for the record submitted by me that “there are reports that al-Shabaab members are present and operating in Laascaanood and Eastern Somaliland.” Given the United States’ strong support of efforts to defeat al-Shabaab in Somalia, how will you engage with the Government of Somaliland in defeating al-Shabaab?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the authorities in Somaliland to advance U.S. counterterrorism goals, to include countering the threat posed by al-Shabaab. I understand the threat from al-Shabaab remains most serious and prevalent in southern Somalia, but that its members have freedom of movement through the country, including in Somaliland. I will work closely with Somaliland authorities to address credible reports of al-Shabaab activities.

Trafficking in Persons

In the State Department’s 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Somalia remained a “special case” for the 21st year in a row. This lack of progress over two decades is concerning.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Somalia prioritize anti-trafficking efforts in country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the U.S. Government’s interagency commitment to working with the Somali federal and member state governments to help build the capacity of Somali institutions to prevent trafficking, prosecute those engaged in the illicit activity, and protect victims.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you instruct your mission to take with regards to anti-trafficking work on the ground?

Answer. As highlighted in the 2023 TIP Report, interagency and intragovernmental coordination are essential in combatting the scourge of human trafficking. If confirmed, my team will adopt a whole-of-government approach to implement and enforce national trafficking laws more effectively, provide protection and services to survivors, coordinate prevention activities, address information gaps, incorporate survivor- and trauma-informed approaches, plan and pace strategic national initiatives, and streamline or coordinate on overlapping efforts.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reporting the reality of the trafficking situation in Somalia in the annual trafficking in persons report as well as directly to congress and the appropriate congressional committees?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, my team will give the utmost care and effort to reporting completely and honestly in the annual Trafficking in Persons Report.

State Management and Oversight

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, you will face unique challenges in managing U.S. personnel working on Somalia from both Mogadishu and Nairobi, Kenya, including the USAID Somalia mission. How do you envision your role as U.S. Ambassador and Chief of Mission given limitations on the number of U.S. personnel who can physically be in Mogadishu at one time, and the challenging nature of managing extensive humanitarian and development aid programs remotely?

Answer. I have served in senior leadership positions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Pakistan since 2006. This has included serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in both Afghanistan and Yemen, Consul General in Peshawar, Kyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and leading PRT teams in both Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these postings were in either active war zones or in areas under the most intense threat from active and lethal terrorists. I am thus very familiar with the nature of these danger and hardship posts, and the challenges one faces in leading an interagency team that is often not co-located as one would wish, given the security imperatives. I faced this both as Consul General in Peshawar just last year, where half of my team, including all of my POL/ECON, PD, and USAID team members lived and worked in Islamabad while I was in Peshawar. The same when I was PRT Team Leader in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan from 2011–2012, when I had a team of 50 U.S.

personnel spread across the province operating off of five different Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). I found the two keys to effective leadership in all of these difficult environments were 1) to ensure clear, open, and constant communication with the team, every single day, to ensure everyone understood our mission and acted accordingly in concert with one another, and 2) that every team member knew they could trust me implicitly, as their team leader, to do whatever I needed to do to protect and safeguard them in every way and to provide them with the resources they needed to succeed. I also prioritize good, trusting, and highly effective personal relationships with all interagency partners with whom I and my Department of State colleagues worked closely to achieve our mission, especially our wonderful and dedicated colleagues in the U.S. Military, USAID, and the IC.

Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years, in large part due to COVID.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Somalia?

Answer. Since my nomination by the President this past March, I have been in regular communication with both the previous U.S. Ambassador on the ground in Mogadishu (until his departure from post in May), and with the current Chargé d’Affaires, Shane Dixon, who will be my DCM if I am confirmed as Ambassador. I have also consulted extensively with the Somalia desk in the Department and colleagues in AF/EX, which provides all management oversight and support for our U.S. Embassy in Somalia. My understanding from these conversations is that morale within U.S. Mission Somalia, including both contingents of employees on the ground in Mogadishu and operating out of Embassy Nairobi (primarily our USAID colleagues) is very good at this time. I know from past experience, and from talking with CDA Dixon, that all of our current employees volunteered for these hardship roles at U.S. Mission Somalia and they are actively working in a very dedicated and focused manner to achieve our USG goals in Somalia. While there will inevitably be one or two cases each year where some personnel issues may arise, and I know of one such that has already been resolved satisfactorily in recent months, Embassy Mogadishu is currently in a good state in terms of high morale and productivity.

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

Answer. In all my experience leading teams in expeditionary diplomacy settings, I have found that morale is the highest when you have two things at play: 1) Ensuring that every team member clearly understands his or her role within the Mission, feels well-equipped, guided, and mentored to successfully fulfill her or his role, and feels that he or she is valued not only by me as the team leader, but by his or her colleagues as well; 2) ensuring that there is a strictly adhered to work/life balance for all team members. I know this has become an overused cliché, but work/life balance is critically important in high threat posts, and it is often neglected. I ensured in all of my past leadership roles in war zones and danger posts that every team member knew my priorities, which included ensuring that everyone took R&Rs throughout the year to ensure proper rest, and that no one stayed in the office any longer than necessary each day to get the work done. I have chased folks out of their office at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. on many occasions to ensure they got the rest they needed. I take it as a core responsibility of leadership to set the best possible example in this regard. Finally, I have found that making available ample social opportunities for our teams was vitally important. We are, in a very real sense, a small “family” in these intense, dangerous environments, and as much opportunity as we can make available to folks to gather together, share a meal, play cards or a board game, exercise, etc. or just to socialize regularly really goes a long way to ensure high morale.

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

Answer. My first step upon my arrival in both Nairobi and then Mogadishu as Ambassador, if confirmed, will be to meet individually with all section/department heads to ensure they fully understand our USG policy priorities in Somalia and that they have a gameplan for their sections/departments to meet those priorities. I will meet with them, listen to all they have to tell me about their ongoing work, and then discuss with them individually our ideas for moving forward together to success. I will not hesitate to tell any of these section or agency heads if I see something they are currently doing that does not comport with our overall USG priorities, but I will work with them closely and collaboratively to get things back on course, if indeed there are any issues. I also very much prize face-to-face engagement with our entire team as often as possible, and another top priority for me will be to hold a townhall both with our team members working out of Embassy Nairobi

and our team in Mogadishu within my first few days at post. Townhalls provide not only the leader a chance to meet the team in its entirety at one time, but also gives every team member a chance to ask any questions they may have of the new leader. I think such engagements, early on, go a very long way in establishing trust for the entire team.

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

Answer. I would describe my management style as “lead by example.” I will never ask any of my team members to do anything that I myself am not willing to do. That includes working as hard or as long as necessary to accomplish a particular task against a tight deadline, or going out to a risky location to accomplish a key mission priority, if the risk/reward calculus dictates that mission is essential, or going the extra mile to have yet another meeting, external engagement, or attend a social event if it’s important to do, no matter how tired you may be at the moment. I also believe “leading by example” encompasses being supportive, thoughtful, and compassionate towards everyone. I have no tolerance for and will not accept unkind behavior towards other people. I expect all of my team members to be thoughtful and constantly supportive towards all their colleagues. That doesn’t mean “hand holding” everyone at all times. It just means being considerate of others’ feelings, looking out for one another, and lending a helping hand whenever you think your colleague needs your support.

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

Answer. No. Our greatest resource at the State Department is our people. Treating my team with respect and dignity is at the core of maintaining that resource.

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

Answer. Absolutely. Providing my team with timely, constructive feedback is key to mission success at any U.S. mission but especially at a post as unique and challenging as Somalia.

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

Answer. Yes. Timely, accurate, and direct feedback is paramount to success in a mission with a high operational tempo like Somalia.

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

Answer. In my experience, U.S. diplomats travel outside Embassy walls as often as the security situation in a given country allows. Regrettably, the security situation in Mogadishu remains a significant impediment to engaging Somalis outside the security of Aden Adde International Airport compound. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with the Diplomatic Security Service both to ensure the safety and security of U.S. personnel and to take advantage of opportunities to expand our engagement as circumstances allow. In all of my years working and operating in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Pakistan, I have always valued most highly the professionalism of our Diplomatic Security colleagues and I trust their judgment on security implicitly. I also highly value the information provided by other agency partners that regularly provide essential insights into our operational security environment. I will always hold the safety and security of all my team members as my highest priority, but will also never shy away from moving out into the operational environment in Somalia whenever we have a critical mission to perform and our intelligence and expert opinion from our DS Security professionals tell me we can accomplish the mission with an acceptable level of risk. I take these movement decisions for U.S. personnel to be the most important decisions I will make during my tenure as U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed.

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

Answer. Engaging diplomatically throughout Somalia is critical to advancing our foreign policy and national security objectives in East Africa. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to ensure sufficient security measures are in place to conduct such engagements safely and effectively.

Question. As Chief of Mission, how will you balance the significant security challenges associated with working in Mogadishu with the need for our diplomats to be present and engaged with our partners?

Answer. If confirmed, the safety of U.S. citizens in Somalia and of U.S. Embassy personnel will be my highest priority. I will work with the Diplomatic Security Service to maximize the ability of our diplomats to advance our goals and interests through engagements throughout Somalia whenever possible through effective risk mitigation and management decisions. I will ensure we remain able to engage effectively with all levels of the Somali Government as well as with our international partners, many of whom are also located on the Mogadishu International Airport compound.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO RICHARD H. RILEY IV BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. Even as we see heinous atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent Israeli citizens, the CCP is still publicly blaming Israel instead of Hamas for the violence. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. 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 strongly against the People’s Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problematic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Somalia ties.

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

Answer. 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 Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC.

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

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

Question. The United States has conducted military strikes against terrorist groups in Somalia for more than 15 years. If confirmed, besides military actions against the terrorist groups operating in Somalia, what other actions will you undertake to finally defeat these groups?

Answer. Defeating terrorist groups requires a combination of military, diplomatic, and development tools to counter near term security threats while addressing the underlying conditions that allow terrorist groups to take root. To complement security efforts, if confirmed I will: assist Somali-led efforts to advance political reconciliation processes, including regular dialogue between national and sub-national levels of government; strengthen good governance and accountability structures, including holding more democratic and inclusive elections; support efforts to stabilize and promote recovery in conflict-affected areas; promote inclusive economic growth and job creation; and build the resilience and capacity of the Somali people to withstand climate shocks and decrease their dependence on external aid.

Question. How will you incentivize a government, with a history of pervasive corruption, to continue power sharing with rival clan and sub-clans, to support U.S. goals in the region regarding security and reform?

Answer. Corruption and fiscal mismanagement remain serious concerns in Somalia that impede political reconciliation, undermine counterterrorism and stabilization efforts, and stifle economic growth. President Hassan Shiekh Mohamud has acknowledged these concerns and committed to improving public sector financial management and transparency while pursuing military operations against al-Shabaab and governance and economic reforms. If confirmed, I will work to hold the federal government of Somalia to these commitments and to support and strengthen Somali financial management institutions and practices.

Question. How would you advance U.S. support for Israel and the Abraham Accords in Somalia, given its regional Middle East relationships, if confirmed?

Answer. The United States strongly supports the Abraham Accords and other efforts like the Negev Forum. If confirmed, I will explore opportunities to incorporate Somalia into these and other regional efforts that include Israel.

Question. The Chinese military base in Djibouti is 25km as the crow flies and less than 35km by road to the Somaliland border, and the Government of Somaliland is an outspoken friend and partner to Taiwan—one of the only in Africa. Despite challenges, Somaliland has one of the strongest democracies in the Horn of Africa. At the same time, the Department of State and the former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia has taken an approach to Somalia that significantly diminishes the opportunity for partnership with Somaliland, and which has been overtly antagonistic at times. As U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, if confirmed, how will you engage with Somaliland as a partner in countering China and as a friend to Taiwan?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to actively working and engaging with Somaliland within the framework of our single Somalia policy to counter malign Chinese influence and to support Taiwan. This will include support for Somaliland's efforts to prevent illegal, unauthorized, and unregulated fishing by PRC vessels in the Gulf of Aden and strengthening cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. I will also look for opportunities to coordinate with Taiwan's assistance office in Somaliland, including on democracy, humanitarian, and development initiatives, consistent with our one China policy.

Question. Would formal recognition of Somaliland advance U.S. interests? Why or why not?

Answer. I do not believe formal recognition of Somaliland would advance U.S. interests. No country or international organization has recognized Somaliland's assertion that it is an independent state. Recognition of Somaliland could further destabilize Somalia by encouraging other Somali regions or federal member states, such as Puntland, to pursue independence. It could also ignite conflict between Somaliland and Puntland and within the contested Sool and Sanaag districts, which would further exacerbate already dire humanitarian conditions and create an opening for extremist groups like al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia to exploit.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO MARK TONER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In your view, what are the top three priorities for the U.S. bilateral relationship with Liberia that you will advance or maintain as U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, beyond serving and protecting U.S. citizens, the top priorities I will seek to advance are to promote a secure, stable Liberia with enhanced rule of law, foster broad-based economic development, promote private sector-led growth, and improve the country's human development situation. These objectives can only be achieved if the Government of Liberia shares and actively prioritizes these goals. Currently these goals are being actively undermined by rampant government corruption, which makes exposing and countering corruption fundamental to success in Liberia.

Question. In your testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on October 19, you stated, "Liberia is a country shaped by years of conflict, terror, disease, and hardship." Please elaborate on Liberia's history with threats and acts of violent extremism and terrorism.

Answer. Liberia's 1989–97 and 1999–2003 civil wars were marked by massacres, rape, torture, and the use of child soldiers among warring factions, leaving the population terrorized and traumatized. Liberia today is rated low for terrorism, but a real and growing threat of regional terrorism exists due to the operational presence of known terrorist entities in West Africa's Sahel region. U.S. security assistance and cooperation with Liberian military and law enforcement in Liberia aim to increase those institutions' readiness to respond to violent extremism and acts of terrorism should they arise.

Liberia and the United States have shared a "special relationship" since Liberia's founding in 1847. This friendship has remained strong through a multitude of challenges, including during and following Liberia's brutal civil wars and the 2014 Ebola outbreak. However, Liberia faces significant challenges to development, democratic governance, and fighting rampant corruption. A run-off presidential election is scheduled for November 7.

Question. As U.S. Ambassador to Liberia, if confirmed, how will you approach the "Special Relationship" with Liberia?

Answer. Because of the "Special Relationship" with Liberia, Liberians look to the United States as a model and respect our leadership: what we say matters. If confirmed, I intend to use that voice to advance U.S. policy priorities and put pressure on the Government of Liberia to hold corrupt actors accountable and to deliver on its commitment to the Liberian people to work toward a stable, prosperous society that upholds the rule of law and respects human rights.

Question. How will you ensure that the U.S. relationship, including with the next Administration, results in positive change for the Liberian people, including in difficult areas like transitional justice and reconciliation, and fighting corruption?

Answer. Impunity for the atrocities and human rights violations committed during Liberia's civil wars has a lingering impact on hope among Liberia's citizens for a better future. It is easy to draw a line from impunity for those atrocities to many of the challenges Liberia faces today. Allowing people who have committed the most heinous crimes to remain in power fosters mistrust, insecurity, and corruption. The United States believes the process of holding a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was meaningful for many Liberians, and the United States has stood, and will continue to stand, with the Liberian people. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report could be a foundation for future progress, but this process must be Liberian-led and must include both government and civil society actors. I will continue our policy to use all tools at our disposal to promote justice and respect for human rights.

Equally, if confirmed, I will continue to reinforce U.S. values to address corruption, including promoting good governance, fiscal transparency, improved public financial management, and inclusive economic growth in my interactions with the next Liberian administration. I will continue to use all tools at our disposal to promote transparency and accountability for corrupt actors, including sanctions when warranted.

Question. How can the United States recalibrate its 'special relationship' with Liberia to optimize our influence in facilitating crucial reforms by the Government, all while avoiding the risk of creating excessive reliance on U.S. aid and support?

Answer. If confirmed, my top priority will be to bolster our efforts to address systemic challenges by holding the Liberian Government accountable to commitments it has made to improve infrastructure, combat corruption, and ensure the responsible and productive use of foreign assistance.

Question. The Liberia run-off election offers a chance to reassess and reset aspects of the U.S.-Liberia relationship. Do you agree? If so, which areas would you prioritize for resetting under President Weah's second term or President Boakai's first term?

Answer. The strength of the relationship is currently being tested by the Liberian Government's rampant corruption, which undermines its commitment to achieve real and long-lasting democratic and economic progress. Regardless of who wins Liberia's presidential election, I will, if confirmed, continue to promote transparency, accountability, and rule of law with all the policy tools at my disposal, whether that means applying sanctions or ensuring the responsible and productive use of foreign assistance.

Democracy

Question. What is your view of the role of a U.S. Ambassador in supporting democratic institutions and democratic governance?

Answer. I view the role of a U.S. Ambassador in supporting democratic institutions and democratic governance as four-fold. First, the U.S. Ambassador should work in tandem with like-minded partners to advocate with political actors—both inside and outside of government—for strengthening democratic institutions and democratic governance consistent with democratic values and human rights. In doing so, the U.S. Ambassador should advocate for transparency and accountability in government decision making and space in which political parties, civil society, and independent media can operate freely. Second, the U.S. Ambassador should work closely with independent, host country pro-democracy voices to help amplify their calls for review and reform of democratic institutions and democratic governance practices and to press for debate, consideration, and, as appropriate, enactment of reforms. Third, the U.S. Ambassador in a post-electoral environment should be pressing government institutions, opposition parties, and civil society to review and act upon the recommended reforms contained in national and international observation reports on the electoral contest to ensure that future contests are free and fair. Finally, the U.S. Ambassador should be working with the Country Team and Washington to assess the democracy and governance programs in which the U.S. Government is involved and to ensure such programs are adequately working to provide technical support for strengthening of key democratic institutions—both governmental and non-governmental.

Question. In your view, how can the United States better support the democratic aspirations of the people of Liberia?

Answer. The lack of independence of key election-related institutions, insufficient judicial independence, insufficient legislative oversight, and endemic corruption stand out as some of the most significant challenges to the democratic aspirations of the Liberian people. To better support these aspirations, I would work, if confirmed, with Liberian pro-democracy stakeholders and like-minded international partners to use Liberia's 2023 national elections as a catalyst to encourage the Government, political opposition, civil society, and other stakeholders to embark on a national reflection on the state of Liberia's democratic institutions. The United States should advocate that the recommendations from the 2023 international and domestic election observation reports—particularly those related to the politicization of key electoral institutions—form a key part of that reflection and resulting reforms. Available U.S. democracy and governance funding should be used to support the long-term strengthening of institutions identified for genuine reform and to further develop an independent judiciary, democratic political parties, and effective and independent civil society and media institutions.

Trade and Investment

Question. If confirmed, how would you practice commercial diplomacy on behalf of U.S. investments in Liberia?

Answer. I understand that Liberia's economy has significant potential for private sector investment, with abundant mineral resources, large areas of fertile land, well-stocked fisheries, and tourist development potential. If confirmed, I would work with Embassy Monrovia's Deal Team to enhance our efforts to link U.S. firms with business opportunities in Liberia, whether through the International Trade Administration (ITA)'s Express Leads system, reverse trade missions, or other commercial di-

plomacy tools. I would ensure that our economic officers leverage our substantial economic toolkit, which includes Prosper Africa, Power Africa, U.S. Trade Development Agency (USTDA), the Export-Import Bank (EXIM), and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to help support U.S. businesses seeking to invest in or trade with Liberia. If confirmed, I would utilize DFC and other trade development tools such as USTDA and EXIM to offer viable alternatives to PRC-proposed debt-financed infrastructure projects. I would meet regularly with U.S. companies doing business in Liberia and those interested in entering the market to understand investment and trade impediments in Liberia, advocating for their removal using USAID trade and investment policy development tools as appropriate to support the Government of Liberia in such reform efforts. Given the comparatively small size of the Liberian market, I would advocate for Liberia's further economic integration into the wider West African marketplace and for continued reduction in tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade with its neighbors.

Question. What is your assessment of Liberia's greatest barriers to increased two-way trade and investment with the United States?

Answer. Although the Government of Liberia has a generally favorable attitude toward two-way trade and investment with the United States, and generally treats U.S. companies in a non-discriminatory fashion, U.S. businesses face obstacles, including corruption, low human capital development, poor infrastructure, and intermittent rule of law concerns. In addition, the small size of the Liberian domestic economy deters some U.S. businesses from the cost of entry into this new market. If confirmed, I would continue to urge the Government of Liberia to improve on these investment and trade climate issues to strengthen their economy and make it more attractive to U.S. businesses, including through continued pursuit of full economic integration with other West African states.

Question. What is your understanding of the tools at your disposal—including through Prosper Africa—as U.S. Ambassador to Liberia, if confirmed, to support addressing barriers to trade and investment in the enabling environment, including the need for economic and political reforms?

Answer. If confirmed, I understand that I would be able to access expertise within the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Commerce, including through Prosper Africa, to support addressing barriers to trade and investment in the enabling environment, including the need for economic and political reforms. Each of these agencies has programs that could potentially be utilized to assist the Government of Liberia in analyzing barriers to trade and investment and in developing reform strategies to address such barriers. In addition, I would be able to use the full-range of U.S. Government trade and investment development agencies—including USTDA, EXIM, and DFC—to provide direct USG assistance to U.S. companies looking to expand trade and investment in Liberia. Such assistance could help overcome barriers to trade and investment such as project financing and political risk. My understanding is that Prosper Africa serves as a one-stop shop through which U.S. and African companies can access USG assistance for expanded two-way trade and investment.

Question. How will you work with Prosper Africa leadership to ensure that Liberia can benefit from Prosper Africa resources, tools and expertise?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to identify through consultation with the U.S. business community active in Liberia those areas in which U.S. Government expertise could be most beneficial to removing barriers to trade and investment in Liberia. I would work with Prosper Africa leadership and the Liberian Government to identify ways in which Prosper Africa could engage on such issues and provide technical assistance to advance necessary reforms. I would also anticipate a regular dialogue with Prosper Africa leadership, both in Washington D.C. and on the continent, to identify resources, tools and expertise that are best fitted to Liberia. Moreover, I would look to expand contact between the Embassy Deal Team and Prosper Africa to ensure that Prosper Africa was fully aware of emerging opportunities in the Liberian marketplace with an eye to bringing its tools, resources, and expertise to bear in identifying and assisting U.S. companies to take advantage of such opportunities—particularly in cases where an alternative to PRC investment is required.

Question. If confirmed, will you prioritize working with the Liberian Government to make a reasonable decision regarding the proposed amendment to the Mineral Development Agreement (MDA) with ArcelorMittal?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate with the Government of Liberia to stand by its commitments to and agreements with investors.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that Embassy Monrovia does not hinder the efforts of any commercial actor or firm that works to safeguard commercial or investment interests in Liberia, particularly in the mining sector, not aligned with the People's Republic of China (PRC)?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate with the Government of Liberia to stand by its commitments to and agreements with investors as well as working with the Government to improve its investment climate, including making improvements in infrastructure, and in the legal and regulatory climate.

RESPONSE TO RESUBMITTED QUESTION

The question above asked if you commit to ensuring that Embassy Monrovia does not hinder the efforts of any commercial actor or firm that works to safeguard commercial or investment interests in Liberia, particularly in the mining sector, not aligned with the People's Republic of China (PRC)? While I appreciate your personal commitment to advocate with the Government Liberia to stand by its commitments, can you please respond directly to the question?

Answer. I will, if confirmed, ensure that Embassy Monrovia will not hinder the efforts of any commercial entity that safeguards our commercial and investment interests in Liberia. I will promote investments by credible firms that align with our private sector-led, free enterprise economic model, push back against corrupt and unfair practices, and encourage the Government of Liberia to manage responsibly plans to grow their mineral sector. I will, if confirmed, work to ensure that not only deals get done quickly, but that the sector remains viable and sustainable to maintain and grow these crucial investments.

Trafficking in Persons

In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Liberia was ranked as Tier 2 for another year.

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

Answer. I understand that the State Department's Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons has provided a grant to the University of Georgia to work with the Government of Liberia and non-governmental organizations to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking in persons, specifically the sex and labor trafficking of children. This program would carry out similar, integrated work in other regional countries and would, if successfully implemented, help address many of the recommendations contained in the Liberia Trafficking in Persons report. If confirmed, I would press the Government of Liberia to take full advantage of this assistance, to adopt the legal and procedural reforms recommended as part of it, and to cooperate fully with regional partners in combating trafficking. I would also meet regularly with implementors of this grant on-the-ground to ensure effective implementation.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador, do you commit to reporting the realities of the trafficking situation in Liberia in the annual trafficking in persons report as well as to the appropriate congressional committees?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reporting the realities of the trafficking situation in Liberia in the annual trafficking in persons report as well as working with the Department's legislative office to report to the appropriate congressional committees.

Religious Freedom

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom report, Liberia is noted as generally having societal and governmental 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 Liberian constitution provides for the separation of religion and state and stipulates all persons are entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, except as required by law to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the rights of others. It also provides for equal protection under the law and prohibits religious tests for office and the establishment of a state religion. If confirmed, I would continue the Embassy's longstanding advocacy for religious tolerance and freedom, and engagement with members of all faiths in Liberia. I would work close-

ly with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and Office for International Religious Freedom so our approach in Liberia to promoting religious freedom is informed by the most recent guidance and best practices.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to personally engage with civil society on promoting religious freedom.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would use my position to host religious leaders for roundtable discussions, and I would meet with religious leaders during in-country trips to emphasize the important role they can play to prevent and mitigate conflict. I would leverage our Public Diplomacy programming and exchanges to find opportunities to expose young leaders to religious freedom issues. I would also seek opportunities for U.S.-based experts on religious freedom to visit Liberia and interact with various audiences in and out of the capital.

State Management and Oversight

Question. How do you intend to work with senior leadership at the State Department to address acute staffing challenges at Mission Liberia?

Answer. If confirmed, I would address acute staffing challenges in several ways. First of all, to attract talent to a post like Mission Liberia, I will have to actively recruit and network. Depending on the vacancy, I would work with the Deputy Chief of Mission and relevant personnel at post and within the Department to identify possible candidates and then engage directly with them to address their concerns as well as their aspirations. In other words, the personal touch can go a long way in building a cohesive and competent team at a post like Mission Liberia. As a senior FSO, I have always sought to empower my team to engage in innovative ways to advance our foreign policy priorities. Cultivating that ethos is paramount to getting the best talent to consider bidding on Mission Liberia, a place where there are numerous challenges but also the opportunity to move the needle on key foreign policy issues. Just as importantly, I will emphasize diversity, as it is critical our missions reflect the American society and culture they represent.

I will also strive to establish an environment amenable to those with families, which means ensuring those with school-age children have access to excellent educational and extra-curricular activities. I will work to cultivate a strong work-life balance for all employees, one that allows ample time to decompress and pursue activities outside of the workplace.

In sum, recruiting the very best requires actively networking to identify and recruit talented individuals by ensuring their tours will be fruitful professionally and personally.

Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last several years, in large part due to COVID.

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Liberia?

Answer. My understanding is that morale is strong at Mission Liberia despite the challenging environment and the lingering impact of stress from COVID-19. Embassy personnel in Monrovia have a strong sense of purpose and mission, which is evident in their output (reporting cables, public diplomacy engagements, assistance programs, etc.) as well as through the consultations I have had thus far. It is critical they see the results of their work and see the rewards, including through promotions, and I will make it a priority to see that continues. I have been impressed by those I have spoken with, and it speaks to the previous and current leadership at the Embassy that morale is solid. I will strive to ensure we continue to cultivate an overall ethos that values professionalism; provides necessary support for families; and nurtures a strong sense of community and teamwork.

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

Answer. My tours overseas have taught me the importance of being attentive to each employee's professional development and ensuring that they know how their work fits into the Embassy's mission and achievement of Department goals. It also is important to take care of the needs of Eligible Family Members through employment, quality education, and activities that bring the community together. Creating and maintaining an environment free of harassment and bullying is a hallmark of my leadership style and essential for employees to flourish. If confirmed, I would model the importance of work-life balance and ensure our managers know how to set priorities and negotiate deadlines to avoid employee burn out and promote resil-

ience. I would advocate with Washington to ensure that assigned workload and deadlines are appropriate for a post of Liberia's limited size and would seek to ensure that assigned workload dovetails with our agreed-upon policy objectives in Liberia.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would be leading a U.S. Government team comprised of personnel from multiple agencies. This means ensuring all agencies understand the mission and activities of others and discussing the tradeoffs that often need to be made on foreign policy goals or Embassy operations together. I have found that a structured approach should include weekly Country Team meetings, weekly meetings with agency leaders that include the Deputy Chief of Mission to discuss programs and events, and mission-wide participation in the Integrated Country Strategy and Mission Resource Request planning cycles. Mission-wide off-sites and professional development days would be used to review our progress and develop our workforce skillsets and build a sense of community and mission. Finally, if confirmed, under my leadership, Mission Liberia would review our goals and achievements as we update our Integrated Country Strategy. This is an effective tool to keep all agency activity in-line with our mission goals.

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

Answer. I believe strongly in empowering those I supervise to be innovative and take ownership of their issues, all while remaining engaged and informed so that I can provide any guidance needed to ensure quality and efficiency. This approach requires frequent one-on-one or small group meetings in addition to larger gatherings. As much as possible, I want to establish a personal relationship with employees, learn about their interests, their aspirations, and their concerns. Moreover, I strive to maintain a workplace atmosphere where mistakes are turned into learning opportunities. I would coach our employees through decision-making processes to develop their leadership skills and provide regular mentoring and support. I am decisive, but inclusive of a wide range of views and will communicate the "why" of a decision to make sure those who were involved and those not involved understand what the Executive Office will be doing and the rationale for it. If confirmed, the Deputy Chief of Mission and I would be attentive to workplace issues and create an environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either privately or publicly. In fact, such behavior almost certainly has a corrosive effect on morale. Performance and conduct management needs to be a regular and ongoing process. Mistakes, when they occur, should be treated as learning opportunities and correcting them should be an inclusive, constructive process that is done in private or, if appropriate, in coordination with an individual's direct supervisor.

Question. How do you envision your relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. From my time serving as an acting Deputy Chief of Mission, I understand what it takes to establish and nurture a strong, collaborative relationship between the Ambassador and DCM. If confirmed, I would listen and learn from the experience of the current DCM and respect the relationships she has established with Liberian officials and within the mission. I view the DCM role as a force multiplier and as someone who must be ready to step in during my absence, so she will be involved in key internal and external meetings. I would expect her to always provide her honest, frank opinion so that together we can make the best decisions possible. I would create an environment in which she can feel free to disagree with me when we consider options or suggest course corrections but would ensure that we present a united front to the mission once a decision is made. Leadership at the top must be proactive, consistent, and fair. If confirmed, I am confident the DCM and I would be able to create a positive work experience for our team in Monrovia.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) is arguably the most difficult position at post. If confirmed, I would leverage my own experience as an acting DCM at a large Embassy to establish a strong and symbiotic relationship to oversee mission operations and conduct our foreign policy. If confirmed, as I lead the mission,

I would need to be able to work with and through the DCM to ensure that we are protecting U.S. Government resources across agencies, running an efficient Inter-agency Cooperative Services platform, and supporting our personnel needs. The DCM would play the role of chief operating officer of the mission but also be involved in our foreign policy agenda. I would include her in meetings with government officials and in communications with Washington. She would ensure that performance management, budget oversight, and human resources platforms are performing effectively, and our operations soundly steward U.S. Government resources. I would expect her to develop her managerial skills across all aspects of mission life and would coach her as needed. I also would ensure that the DCM and our other employees share in our representational activities to expand our outreach activities. I would expect the DCM to oversee our leadership, mentoring, Family Advocacy, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility programs.

In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking

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

Answer. Yes. I believe that establishing open communications between employees and their supervisors is at the core of effective performance management. Throughout my career, I have mentored supervisors on how to provide effective feedback and write employees' performance reviews and counseling documents. If confirmed, I would continue to pay close attention to developing the performance management skills of our supervisors and the employee's understanding of how the system benefits their professional development. I would seek to ensure that top performers are rewarded and that those with performance challenges receive the appropriate, constructive feedback and support required to address them.

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

Answer. Yes. I believe that establishing open communications between employees and their supervisors is at the core of effective performance management. Throughout my career, I have mentored supervisors on how to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback and write employees' performance reviews and counseling documents that include such feedback. If confirmed, I would continue to pay close attention to developing the performance management skills of our supervisors and the employee's understanding of how the system benefits their professional development. I would seek to ensure that top performers are rewarded and that those with performance challenges receive the clear, accurate, and direct feedback and professional development support required to address them.

It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.

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

Answer. I believe that Mission leadership largely sets the tone and the expectations that determine whether U.S. diplomats sufficiently get outside of our Embassy walls. Throughout my career, especially as a Public Diplomacy officer, I have consistently modeled going outside of the mission walls to meet and cultivate a wide range of contacts in the Government, media, private sector, and in civil society in and beyond the capital and major cities. I do not believe it is possible to be effective as a diplomat without doing so. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to get outside the Embassy walls, travel to the different regions and counties and would encourage all Embassy staff to do likewise as time and resources permit. To enable these efforts, I would work closely with my DCM and the Regional Security Office to ensure that we are managing any associated risks smartly and proactively and that we identify and receive the resources necessary to support robust Mission in-country travel.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage and support in-country travel with adequate security resources and mentor employees on thinking-outside-the-box on how to engage more frequently and efficiently at the local and grass-roots level. I would also ensure our employees are maintaining contacts with regional leaders at all lev-

els and meeting with them in their areas and when they come to the capital. This also means ensuring that employees are using representational events and funds to cultivate contacts and promote mission goals. I would support cross-cultural learning from our Locally Employed Staff and U.S. employees as well as the basic learning of local languages (greetings and pleasantries) as a way to show our interest in and respect for their culture.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MARK TONER BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is expected to grow Africa's cumulative GDP by \$450 billion in the next decade and comprise the largest single market in the world. AfCFTA will also diversify global supply chains, leading to new opportunities for American businesses and consumers. So far, 47 African countries have ratified AfCFTA, seven countries have signed but not yet ratified it, and only one country (Eritrea) has yet to sign. While Liberia has signed the AfCFTA, it has not fully ratified the agreement.

Question. What are the existing barriers to full ratification in Liberia and how can the U.S. support Liberia in this effort?

Answer. The international community, including the United States, continues to work with the Government of Liberia to increase understanding and awareness of the AfCFTA and spur the Liberian Senate to ratify the agreement.

Question. How would full ratification of AfCFTA strengthen U.S. economic interests in African countries?

Answer. By increasing market access and reducing barriers to intra-African trade, the AfCFTA will help its members grow manufacturing, industrial development, tourism, and intra-African cooperation, as well as strengthen economic transformation and the economic and commercial relationship between Africa and the rest of the world. A more prosperous Africa will make African countries better commercial partners for the United States. The AfCFTA would create a larger, more efficient marketplace. Liberia and other AfCFTA members would benefit from increased easier trade with their neighbors on the continent, which would catalyze growth by incentivizing infrastructure development and improving business climates.

Question. What actions should the United States take to support the implementation of AfCFTA in countries like Liberia?

Answer. The United States can support Liberia in implementing the AfCFTA through economic growth assistance programs and forceful U.S. Embassy advocacy that reduce barriers to trade and improve the business and investment climate.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MARK TONER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People's Republic of China is the "only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. Even as we see heinous atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent Israeli citizens, the CCP is still publicly blaming Israel instead of Hamas for the violence. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence testified that "the CCP represents both the leading and most consequential threat to U.S. national security and leadership globally." Under President Xi, the CCP has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad, seeking to undercut U.S. influence and alliances. If confirmed, I would advance U.S. national security interests and push back against People's Republic of China (PRC) efforts to expand its problem-

atic influence, through robust and forthright diplomatic engagements, public diplomacy, and commercial advocacy to bolster U.S.-Liberia ties.

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

Answer. The Administration assesses the Chinese Communist Party (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 CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment's notice? If so, please explain.

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

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

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

Question. What is your assessment of the scope of China's economic and other ties in Liberia?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a significant lender, donor, and investor in Liberia, and the Government of Liberia has signed a memorandum of understanding with the PRC to cooperate through the Belt and Road Initiative. The PRC has constructed high-visibility public infrastructure projects in Monrovia, such as a Senate office building, a Ministerial Complex, a television studio, roads, and health facilities. It also broadcasts English-language radio programming and provides scholarships for Liberian students.

Strategic competitors that do not share the U.S. emphasis on transparency and good governance continue to find an open door in Liberia, particularly among corrupt government officials who seek out financial benefits from PRC-funded projects. In addition, PRC-based companies, including state-owned enterprises, continue to win World Bank infrastructure projects, which is a growing concern.

Question. The Journal of the Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy, an authoritative Chinese publication, said in 2018 that Chinese peacekeepers should "use the patrol line to increase patrols of Chinese-funded areas" in Liberia. If true, this would mean the PRC has used its leverage over the U.N. peacekeeping system to advance its economic interests in Liberia. Are you aware of this allegation?

Answer. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which included PRC peacekeepers within its ranks, ceased its peacekeeping operations in March 2018. We are unaware of any allegations that PRC peacekeepers misused their presence in Liberia under U.N. auspices. We would be concerned if any country used participation in the U.N. peacekeeping system to advance economic interests.

Question. How can we ensure that Beijing does not abuse international mechanisms to advance its own economic interests in Liberia?

Answer. In 2022, Liberia was one of very few African countries to sign a joint statement to support accountability for the PRC's human rights abuses in Xinjiang, demonstrating a willingness to go against Beijing in order to uphold their values and national interest.

Question. What are the major points of friction in the U.S.-Liberia partnership which we need to improve to compete with the CCP funded projects in Liberia?

Answer. U.S. partnership with Liberia has the ability to solidify Liberia's rejection of the PRC's authoritarian, state-centric model of development. Through continuing to offer viable private sector infrastructure development alternatives and investing in democratic institutions that deliver effective services to the Liberian people, the United States can advance the democratic reforms and free-market development model desired by most Liberians, undercut PRC inroads in West Africa, advance global health security, and advance prosperity for both Americans and Liberians. If confirmed, I would focus on the strengthening of democratic institutions, development of Liberia's public health sector, and advancing U.S. investment in and trade with Liberia in order to further the U.S.-Liberia partnership.

Question. Are there any specific DFC opportunities you would work on with Liberian officials if confirmed?

Answer. I understand the Embassy has robust engagement with Liberia on project identification and financing and that DFC representatives visit Liberia often to determine how to support possible U.S. investment in local projects. If confirmed, I would direct our Deal Team to enhance our efforts to link U.S. firms with opportunities in Liberia appropriate for DFC financing, whether through the International Trade Administration (ITA)'s Express Leads system, reverse trade missions, or other commercial diplomacy tools. I would pay particular attention to utilizing DFC to offer viable alternatives to PRC-proposed debt-financed infrastructure projects. If confirmed, I would meet regularly with U.S. companies interested in expanding their presence in Africa to discuss opportunities in Liberia and to underscore DFC as a potential tool to support their businesses.

Question. The U.S. is a global competition with China, including Africa for access to critical minerals and materials. HPX, an American company, has been granted advocacy status by the U.S. Commerce Department for the development of its Nimba mine in Guinea, which is one of the world's richest deposits of iron ore. However, production is currently stalled because the Liberian Government is not providing HPX with access to its railways to transit iron ore from Nimba to the Buchanan Port. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure the Liberian Government permits American companies to freely compete and trade in and through Liberia?

Answer. I understand that Beijing's engagements in Africa are expanding, including in Liberia. I also understand that the PRC continues to exploit—both legally and illegally—Liberian resources, particularly in the fisheries, forestry, and minerals sectors. I am gravely concerned that such PRC activities and the PRC's proposed infrastructure investments in Liberia are not being carried out in line with internationally accepted standards, such as those spelled out in the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. If confirmed, I would seek to identify and promote socially responsible foreign investment alternatives to those being pushed by the PRC—particularly U.S. investment—that promote sustainable development and respect for human rights of all individuals.

Question. How would you advance U.S. support for Israel with Liberia, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would build on the shared values that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship to advance support for Israel. Liberia is one of our most loyal partners in Africa and has been one of our strongest allies at the U.N. General Assembly, voting with the United States on important votes 70 percent of the time last year.

Question. Should an LGBT agenda come before national security, American prosperity, or access to critical minerals when engaging with Liberia?

Answer. Respect for human rights as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a central goal of United States foreign policy, including for members of marginalized populations, and is a key element of the positive model we offer that makes the United States a partner of choice, including for Liberia.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO MARK TONER BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

The Chinese Communist Party takes a whole-of-government and often whole-of-nation approach to advancing its national security interests, includ-

ing by using national diplomatic, economic, and even military resources to provide advantages to Chinese companies globally. It is in the vital national security interest of the United States to ensure open and competitive access to critical minerals and materials, including iron ore. The United States has sought among other things to bolster multi-user regional infrastructure linking Guinea and Liberia, and Liberia's October 2022 Executive Order 112 is in line with those efforts and provides for multi-user access on Liberia's railways.

One critical project involves an existing rail line that runs to Buchanan Port, and would be used by an American company, High Power Exploration Inc (HPX), to move ore from the Nimba district. Liberia has not made multi-user access available, and according to public reports the dynamic has endangered HPX's project, made Chinese seizure a possibility, and put Liberia is at risk of lawsuits and arbitration. State Department officials recently met with relevant parties on this issue.

Question. What is your assessment of Liberia's commitment to providing multi-user access to its railways?

Answer. Meaningful progress on implementing multi-user access to Liberia's railways will likely be delayed until after the inauguration in January 2024 of the winner of Liberia's on-going presidential election—of which the second round of voting takes place in November. Nonetheless, if confirmed, I will advocate both before and after the election for multi-user access.

Question. What diplomatic options are available to ensure that the Government of Liberia makes multi-user access available for railways?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate with the Government of Liberia to stand by its commitments to and agreements with investors, including HPX.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DAVID E. WHITE, JR. BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your understanding of morale throughout the Peace Corps?

Answer. I am heartened by the integrity, compassion, and dedication that Peace Corps staff and volunteers bring to their work each day. Development work in the best of times is challenging, and this fact is more salient given that the setbacks caused by the pandemic require urgency to recover lost ground and achieve greater results. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the team in my role as Deputy Director.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale within the Peace Corps?

Answer. I believe that effective leadership requires leaders to get out from behind their desks and into the field to see first-hand the conditions in which their teams operate. If confirmed, I plan to meaningfully engage with Peace Corps staff at home and abroad, as well as with volunteers at their posts, to better understand and appreciate the constraints and challenges they face in their work and how I can best support them in achieving the Peace Corps' goals. If confirmed, I intend to approach this fact-finding process without preconceived notions and in an objective and unbiased manner that enables me to best respond to feedback with clear and decisive action. In short, I believe that leaders must listen and carefully review all relevant facts before implementing new practices or solutions.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the Peace Corps?

Answer. The best organizations are inspired by a common mission and achieve that mission by operating through a set of shared values. For example, when I served in the U.S. Army, our mission statement was simple yet powerful—to fight and win our nation's wars. We accomplished that mission by living the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Although I have been out of uniform for nearly a decade, I carry with me the lessons I learned in the Army about inspiring others in service of a shared vision. Like the Army, the Peace Corps also has a simple yet powerful mission—to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps accomplishes that mission through the three goals set out in the Peace Corps Act: helping countries interested in meeting their need for trained people, helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and helping promote a better understanding of other people on the part of Americans. These goals inspire staff and volunteers to drive

tangible results on behalf of the communities they serve. If confirmed, I will partner with Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn to ensure that all agency staff and volunteers continue to understand and embrace the Peace Corps' mission and vision and are best supported to achieve it.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for agency executives. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in treating all people with dignity and respect regardless of their rank or position. I also believe that all people in an organization are equal, even if they have different duties and responsibilities, and that teamwork, collaboration, and robust communication across the entire organization are essential to its success. Growing up, my father taught me that as a leader you must always inspect what you expect, which means that you set high standards and then hold folks accountable for meeting those standards. Moreover, in my experience, organizations achieve their greatest results when the whole team is "bought in" and fully committed to an objective, and earning buy-in among your colleagues requires careful listening and thoughtful consultation.

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

Answer. No. I believe that leaders and managers should always treat their subordinates, peers, and superiors with dignity and respect. As a West Point graduate and lifelong fan of the New York Giants, I believe that Coach Vince Lombardi put it best when he said, "praise in public; criticize in private." And even when a manager provides criticism, I believe that such criticism should be delivered in a professional manner with specific, constructive, and actionable feedback that enables personal growth and professional development.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy?

Answer. If confirmed as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, I will treat all colleagues with dignity and respect, and work collaboratively and professionally with the agency's senior staff to ensure that the Peace Corps realizes its full potential.

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

Answer. If confirmed as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, I will partner with Director Spahn to ensure that my leadership duties and responsibilities are carefully tailored to my skills, capabilities, and experience as well as to the needs of the agency. Given that the Peace Corps has been without a Senate-confirmed Deputy Director since January 2017, if confirmed, I intend to bring much needed management capacity to the agency and greater enable its staff and volunteers to achieve its strategic objectives.

"Anomalous health incidents", commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome", have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. Yes. The health, safety, and security of Peace Corps staff and volunteers must always be the agency's top priority.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Peace Corps employees and volunteers about this serious issue?

Answer. Yes.

Question. There have been several public incidents presenting major safety and security concerns regarding Peace Corps volunteers. What steps has the Peace Corps taken in the last three years (since the global evacuation in March 2020) to address this short fall, and how have safety and security measures improved for those re-entering service? Please be detailed.

Answer. My understanding is that during the pandemic and the concomitant suspension of volunteer activities abroad, the agency devoted a significant amount of time, effort, and investment in strengthening its safety, security, and health systems for the benefit of its volunteers. If confirmed, I will strongly support efforts to ensure the agency has the resources necessary to maintain and further enhance these improved systems, including by addressing and implementing outstanding Office of Inspector General recommendations.

Question. Sexual assault of volunteers continues to generate significant public and congressional attention. Thanks to the 2011 Kate Puzey Act and the Farr-Castle Act, the Peace Corps was given new tools to curb this scourge. Please explain the Peace Corps efforts to continue to combat sexual assault of volunteers in the field.

Answer. The health, safety, and security of volunteers must always be the Peace Corps' first priority. The agency must strive to prevent all acts of sexual assault and sexual harassment completely and totally. However, I am acutely aware that the world is a dangerous place, at home and abroad, and so when a sexual assault occurs, the agency must employ a victim-centered approach. Such approach should focus on treating victims with empathy, dignity, and respect, providing them with all appropriate medical care and other resources, ensuring that they understand the full suite of reporting options, and finally, supporting them in their return to service or the next step in their personal journey.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with new countries who are asking for the Peace Corps to return to their communities?

Answer. I understand that there is high demand for Peace Corps volunteers in many countries around the world. If confirmed, I will work to support and strengthen the great work that Director Spahn has led in returning volunteers to service, which will include visiting prospective posts and engaging directly with foreign government leaders.

Question. There has been significant Congressional concern about the Peace Corps returning to closed and/or unsafe missions. Please explain the safety protocol for such decisions.

Answer. The Peace Corps must be committed to the safety and security of its volunteers above all else. As a nominee, I am not privy to the specific and detailed safety and security protocols relating to when, where, and how volunteers serve around the globe. However, I am aware that the agency takes its responsibility to safeguard volunteers very seriously and that it diligently and consistently applies a careful and country-specific analysis to each volunteer mission. If confirmed, I will study the agency's safety and security protocols in great detail and work to ensure that such protocols are sufficient and relevant to the fast-paced and evolving nature of volunteer service in developing countries and implemented appropriately.

Question. Do you commit to informing Congress appropriately of any safety and security issues in a timely and efficient manner?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What do you believe is the Peace Corps biggest challenge in 2023?

Answer. The pandemic has disproportionately affected many developing nations, especially as it relates to their economic, health, and development goals. Under Director Spahn's leadership, the Peace Corps has successfully returned thousands of volunteers to service in partner nations around the world. More recently, through its "Bold Invitation" campaign, the Peace Corps aggressively seeks to recruit and deploy volunteers as expeditiously as possible to restore the agency's strength to pre-pandemic levels as well as meet increased demand from new partner nations.

Given the United States' vital interests in the Indo-Pacific, I believe that we must expand the role of development work and people-to-people exchange in the region, which is a task that the Peace Corps is uniquely suited to accomplish. However, operating in the Indo-Pacific comes with certain funding requirements and logistical challenges, and if confirmed, I would welcome your support in securing the necessary resources to enable the Peace Corps to maintain and increase a significant and visible presence in this critically important region.

Question. In your view, is the Peace Corps principally an international development program that also builds cultural ties within its areas of operation, or a cultural exchange program that also advances international development within its areas of operation?

Answer. I believe that the Peace Corps is a development organization that achieves its mission of promoting world peace and friendship through people-to-people engagement of American volunteers living and working in host communities, where they learn from each other. This grassroots diplomacy benefits partner nations and communities in which volunteers serve as well as the American people. I have been inspired by countless stories about lives improved and communities transformed through Peace Corps volunteers' efforts. As just one example, U.S. Ambassador John Nkengasong was taught science by a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon during his years in secondary school. Amb. Nkengasong now serves as the Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator of U.S. Government Activities to Combat HIV/

AIDS Globally and Special Representative for Global Health Diplomacy at the Department of State.

Question. The Peace Corps is funded by a direct appropriation, but also received significant levels of programmatic support through transfers from other agencies. If confirmed, how will you account for all of the funds managed by the Peace Corps?

Answer. The Peace Corps must always be a good steward of taxpayer funds and government resources. If confirmed, I expect to work closely with the agency's chief financial officer and other colleagues to ensure that all funds are properly accounted for and managed appropriately.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete compliance with current law, which prohibits the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas? Will you commit to ensuring volunteers are both aware of and compliant with these statutory restrictions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will comply with all applicable laws and require that all Peace Corps staff and volunteers do the same.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that Peace Corps staff, country directors, and volunteers consistently uphold the highest ethical standards, including by holding them personally accountable for violations of U.S. and local law?

Answer. Yes.

Question. As written in the (but not-yet-passed) Peace Corps Reauthorization Act (S. 1203), there is currently a provision providing suspension without pay for any Peace Corps employee or volunteer who engages in serious misconduct. If confirmed, do you commit to adhering to this policy regardless if the Act becomes law? Please explain.

Answer. As a nominee, I have not had the opportunity to study the current version of the Peace Corps Reauthorization Act with the benefit of full context and appreciation of the impact of the legislation's proposed provisions, including this one, should they be enacted. However, if confirmed, I will familiarize myself with all relevant information, and I am fully committed to working with you and your office to understand this proposed policy and how the agency can ensure that it upholds the highest ethical and professional standards among its staff and volunteers. In addition, if confirmed, I will comply with all applicable laws.

Question. Peace Corps' plans for virtual service is counter to its mission as defined in U.S. Code. Please provide your views on virtual service and if such service will continue should you be confirmed.

Answer. Given the limited information available to me as a nominee, I have only a limited understanding of the Virtual Service Pilot. Based on such limited knowledge, I understand that the Virtual Service Pilot is a distinct opportunity that provides private citizens the opportunity to donate their time by engaging virtually to contribute to the mission of the Peace Corps. I also understand that the Virtual Service Pilot is a complement to, and not a substitute for, traditional in-person, in-country volunteer service. Moreover, I understand that the Virtual Service Pilot is just that—a pilot. If confirmed, I will carefully study the results of the Virtual Service Pilot, meaningfully consult with you and your office, and ensure that in-person, in-country volunteer service remains the Peace Corps' crown jewel.

Question. If confirmed, will you support the re-opening of Peace Corps Mission China? Please explain why or why not.

Answer. No. If confirmed, I will not support re-opening the Peace Corps' program in China due to, among other reasons, the high demand for volunteers from other countries and the limited resources available to meet such demand.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO DAVID E. WHITE, JR. BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

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

gases in the world today. Even as we see heinous atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent Israeli citizens, the CCP is still publicly blaming Israel instead of Hamas for the violence. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. As articulated in its 2022 National Security Strategy, I support the Administration's "invest, align, compete" strategy toward the PRC. Investing in our domestic economy is critical to enhancing our competitiveness abroad. Working closely and thoughtfully with allies and partners who are aligned with our priorities and values is critically important, and in addition to carefully managing our bilateral relationships with such allies and partners, the United States must also make good use of strategic security dialogues and intergovernmental fora, including, among others, the Quad and the G7. The U.S. must compete with the PRC in a tough yet responsible manner, especially in the Indo-Pacific, coastal West Africa, and closer to home in Latin America.

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

Answer. The CCP exists to further the PRC's interests, which at times are inimical to the United States' interests. The U.S. must do everything it can to fiercely defend its interests and deliver on behalf of the American people.

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

Answer. Given the PRC's size and influence, they are a necessary partner in confronting certain global challenges. The U.S. should therefore cooperate when it can and compete when it must. However, whenever the U.S. and PRC's interests are aligned and thus enable cooperation on pressing issues of global concern, the U.S. must never sacrifice its values and always work prudently to seek to hold the PRC accountable for human rights violations and abuses.

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

Answer. I am not aware of any potential joint activity with organizations or representatives of the PRC as it relates to the Peace Corps. The Administration's approach toward the PRC focuses on competing with the PRC when our interests and values diverge, and cooperating when they align. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's policy on the PRC.

As publicly reported, the Peace Corps program in China has closed and, if confirmed, I will not support re-opening the Peace Corps program in China.

Question. Since inception in 1961, more than 240,000 volunteers have served in 143 countries to promote world peace, help others understand American culture, and share volunteers' experiences with Americans back home. Currently the Peace Corps works in 51 countries focusing upon economic and agricultural development and sectors such as education, health, and the environment among others. These goals have remained unchanged since inception. How effective do you believe the Peace Corps has been as a development organization?

Answer. The Peace Corps has a storied legacy as an effective development agency, and as an American, I am proud of its work on behalf of our country. Looking ahead, I am confident that the Peace Corps has a bright future, and that the relevance of its mission is even more salient today than in years past. As global development needs evolve, so too must Peace Corps' capabilities to meet such needs. If confirmed, I will prioritize reimagining the Peace Corps' approach to service so that volunteers and host communities alike are best matched to make the most lasting impact, and in doing so, I plan to consult with you and your office.

Question. Given the Peace Corps was created during the Cold War to confront communist related programs, does Congress need to review the Peace Corps mandate to effectively counter our current global competitor Communist China?

Answer. I believe the Peace Corps' mandate is as strong today as it was at the agency's inception. The Peace Corps is an independent federal agency and maintaining the integrity of its independence is critical to volunteer safety, security, and effectiveness. However, the Peace Corps also has an important role to play in the United States' leadership in the international community. I strongly believe in the power of America's example and its capacity for good. Peace Corps volunteers are among our country's best ambassadors of American values and ideals abroad—their

grassroots diplomacy cannot be matched by the PRC or other strategic competitors. If confirmed, I will work closely with you and your office to ensure that the Peace Corps achieves its fullest potential.

Question. If confirmed, how will you expand Peace Corps programs in Indo-Pacific countries to carry out your mandate?

Answer. The Indo-Pacific is critically important to the United States' strategic interests. As a country, we must have a visible and sustained presence in the region and invest in our relationships with allies and partners who share our priorities and values. As publicly reported, the Peace Corps returned volunteers to the Pacific Island nations of Fiji in 2022, Tonga and Samoa in 2023, and plans to soon return volunteers to Vanuatu. In the broader Indo-Pacific region, volunteers are presently serving in Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and plan to soon return to Sri Lanka. If confirmed, establishing a more robust presence in the Indo-Pacific will be one of my top priorities. Given the funding requirements and logistical challenges inherent in the Peace Corps operating in the Indo-Pacific, if confirmed, I would welcome your support in achieving this priority.

Question. The Peace Corps has reported a decrease in volunteer applications and appears to be falling short of its recruitment targets. If confirmed, how do you plan to meet volunteer numbers given the U.S. job market and requirement that volunteers must be vaccinated to COVID-19 and must wear a mask in public?

Answer. Speaking broadly, I believe that we need to reinvigorate public service opportunities for all Americans, especially as it relates to our next generation of leaders. As to the Peace Corps specifically, I have been heartened by its "Bold Invitation" campaign, which aggressively seeks to recruit and deploy volunteers as expeditiously as possible to restore the Peace Corps' strength to pre-pandemic levels. If confirmed, I will prioritize recruiting talented and diverse Americans to bring the best of our country abroad and contribute to partner countries' important development needs. In addition, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to host a Peace Corps recruiting event with you in Florida.

Question. The safety and security of Peace Corps volunteers should be your number one concern when looking at any programs or initiatives. What are the most important recent steps taken by the Peace Corps to protect volunteers, something it has unfortunately failed to do in the past?

Answer. I whole-heartedly agree that the safety and security of Peace Corps volunteers must be the agency's top priority. My understanding is that during the pandemic and the concomitant suspension of volunteer activities abroad, the agency devoted a significant amount of time, effort, and investment in strengthening its safety, security, and health systems for the benefit of its volunteers. If confirmed, I will strongly support efforts to ensure the agency has the resources necessary to maintain and further enhance these improved systems.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Could you provide your perspective on Egypt's role in facilitating the readmittance of Assad into the Arab League and its participation in the Jordanian-led working group to rehabilitate Assad? How will you use your position to ensure Assad is held accountable for killing thousands of Syrians?

Answer. I find everything about the Assad regime abhorrent. He has brought nothing but misery and destruction to his people. Egypt has recently taken steps to reestablish high level interactions with the Assad regime. At the same time, Egypt continues to insist that Syria take steps towards a political solution in line with UNSCR 2254.

The United States has made clear in our diplomatic discussions with partner countries that we do not support normalizing relations with the Assad regime. If confirmed, I will continue to strongly underline that position, as well as underscore the need for accountability for the Assad regime's horrific atrocities against Syrians and that anyone seeking to invest in Syria would risk sanctions exposure. The United States maintains that stability in Syria can only be achieved through a political process in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, and will continue working with allies, partners, and the U.N. to ensure that a durable political solution remains within reach.

Question. The Biden administration negotiated the Arab Gas Pipeline, which would supply gas to Lebanon via Syria. Please provide an analysis on the pipeline's compliance with the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019.

Answer. I understand that no final determination has been made about the U.S. sanctions implications of that proposal. The Administration received provisional contracts for both the electricity and gas deals last year. The final financing terms and contracts are still being discussed by the parties and the World Bank. The Departments of the Treasury and State will need to review details of the final financing terms and contracts to assess any relevant sanctions concerns. Only at that time will the Administration have the information needed to make any final determinations. The Administration will comply with the Caesar Act.

Question. As the Syrian portion of the Arab Gas Pipeline is refurbished and maintained by Russian state-owned industries, notable Gasprom, please provide an analysis of the pipeline's compliance with Russia and Ukraine sanctions.

Answer. I understand the Administration has not waived Caesar or any other sanctions, which remain an important tool to press for accountability for the Assad regime's atrocious record of human rights abuses and violations. I also understand that no final determination has been made about the U.S. sanctions implications of that proposal. The final financing terms and contracts are still being discussed by the parties and the World Bank. The Departments of the Treasury and State will need to review details of the final financing terms and contracts to assess any relevant sanctions concerns. Only at that time will the Administration have the information needed to make any final determinations.

Question. The State Department has made a commitment to Senator Risch provide a briefing and determination on Caesar sanctions compliance for the Arab Gas Pipeline before issuing comfort, pre-assurance, licenses or waivers to Egypt or in support of activating the pipeline. Does Senator Risch have your commitment to do the same?

Answer. Absolutely. As Ambassador to Bulgaria, I had an excellent working relationship with your staff and would welcome the opportunity for regular briefings if confirmed for Egypt.

I understand the Administration remains committed to implementation of the Caesar Act and has not lifted its Syria sanctions or any other sanctions. The Departments of the Treasury and State will need to review details of the final financing terms and contracts of the proposal to assess any relevant sanctions concerns. Only at that time will we have the information needed to make any final determinations. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Departments of the Treasury and State to keep Congress informed about progress on this proposal.

Question. The administration recently granted a waiver for Egypt to receive \$235M in Foreign Military Financing tied to concessions on key U.S. national security priorities and human rights. This FMF is currently subject to Congressional holds. What are the implications of the holds on the United States' strategic relationship with Egypt?

Answer. I understand the Secretary's decision to exercise the national security waiver authority with respect to \$235 million in FY 2022 FMF for Egypt reflects Egypt's specific and ongoing contributions to U.S. national security priorities. As a result, the Department has obligated a total of \$1.215 billion in FY 2022 FMF funding for Egypt. If confirmed, I will continue to engage closely with the Egyptian Government and Congress about how FMF assistance will be used, consistent with our commitment to a U.S.-Egypt strategic partnership that advances our shared vision for a secure and prosperous region, and supports tangible and sustained progress on human rights.

Question. The administration continues to prioritize Egypt's human rights record as one of our primary national security interests. While human rights are essential, they are only one component of the national interest. Provide your assessment on whether the Biden administration has struck the appropriate balance with Egypt between human rights and other national security interests.

Answer. There are a number of Administration priorities where Egypt has a role, from support for Ukraine, to elections in Libya, a ceasefire in Sudan, and addressing the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. I will actively engage on these regional and international strategic issues.

The Administration has also made clear that making progress on human rights is a key element of our national security interests. Administration officials have affirmed the bilateral relationship is stronger when there is tangible progress on human rights issues. These priorities are not separate. If confirmed, I will continue

to press the Egyptian Government to make progress on human rights and other national security interests.

Question. With border checkpoints strained due to the Sudan conflict, how do you assess Egypt's commitment to keeping the border open? What implications does this have for regional stability and trade?

Answer. I understand the State Department has long coordinated closely with Egypt on Sudan policy and has intensively engaged the Egyptians since the breakout of the conflict April 15 to urge coordinated outreach to the parties on reaching a ceasefire in Sudan and to promote a coordinated humanitarian response. Egypt has considerable influence in Sudan and hosted a summit of Sudan's neighbors.

Approximately 350,000 Sudanese have already arrived in Egypt since April 15. If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with our ambassador to Sudan.

Question. There have been rumors of Egyptian foreign fighters' involvement in the Sudan conflict. What measures should Egypt take to ensure it remains uninvolved and maintains its credibility with its allies?

Answer. I understand the State Department has long coordinated closely with Egypt on Sudan policy, and has intensively engaged the Egyptians since the breakout of conflict April 15 to urge coordinated outreach to the parties on reaching a ceasefire in Sudan and to promote a coordinated humanitarian response. Egypt has considerable influence in Sudan and hosted a summit of Sudan's neighbors in July. Cairo's voice is a crucial one in advancing diplomatic efforts toward a durable cessation of hostilities. The Department has closely coordinated with Egypt and a number of other regional partners, including the African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other neighboring states, in support of a harmonized international response.

If confirmed, I will coordinate closely with our ambassador to Sudan.

Question. Egypt has warned of the possibility that "all options are open" if Ethiopia proceeds with the GERD without Egypt's consent. How will you engage with Egypt to ensure another regional conflict is not escalated over the dam?

Answer. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Mike Hammer remains actively engaged in supporting Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan in reaching a diplomatic solution that advances the interests of all parties. The Administration is committed to helping the parties find a durable solution that contributes to a more peaceful and prosperous region. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Egypt in support of that goal. I will also work closely with Mike Hammer and our ambassadors to Sudan and Ethiopia.

In the State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report, Egypt was listed as Tier 2 Watch List for its lack of commitment to eliminating human trafficking.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Egypt prioritize anti-trafficking efforts in country?

Answer. My first assignment in the Foreign Service was as a political officer responsible for the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. This is an issue I care about deeply.

According to the most recent TIP report, the Government of Egypt did show progress in the fight against trafficking in certain areas, such as approving a new national strategy to combat trafficking and more than doubling convictions of traffickers. However, according to the report, the Government of Egypt continued to have gaps in the identification and referral to services of foreign trafficking victims, had a decrease in victim identifications and investigations, and had insufficient services and shelter for victims. If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of Egypt to continue making progress on combating trafficking in persons in those areas. I will work with relevant government officials, international human rights NGOs, and members of Egyptian civil society toward that end.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you instruct your mission to take with regards to anti-trafficking work on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the work of our Embassy to encourage the Government of Egypt to continue to increase efforts to address gaps in the identification and referral to services of foreign trafficking victims, increase victim identifications and investigations, and increase services and shelter for victims. I will also continue the work of our Embassy with relevant government officials, international human rights NGOs, and members of Egyptian civil society toward that end.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reporting the reality of the trafficking situation in Egypt in the annual trafficking in persons report as well as directly to congress and the appropriate congressional committees?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reporting accurate information on the topic of trafficking in persons in Egypt via our annual, Congressionally-mandated Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report and will work closely with the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to encourage collaborative efforts with the Government of Egypt to combat human trafficking.

In the State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report, Egypt was listed as generally lacking government and societal respect for religious freedom, particularly for religious minorities.

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. I understand Egypt has a long tradition of religious co-existence and has made a number of improvements on this front, including reducing obstacles to church building and registration and the ongoing process of reforming educational curricula to stress religious tolerance. If confirmed, I will work with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom and maintain regular contact with Egyptian religious leaders as part of my commitment to engage Egyptian civil society.

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

Answer. Throughout my career I have been a champion for civil society. If confirmed, I will maintain contact with Egyptian religious leaders and continue to encourage improvements to Egypt's treatment of religious minorities, as part of my commitment to engage Egyptian civil society.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Egyptian Government to encourage reform of Egyptian blasphemy laws, which are currently actively enforced. I would also work with the Egyptians to encourage granting equal citizenship rights to people without discrimination based on religious belief. One important step would be to remove the religious designation from national identity cards.

In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights Report, Egypt was listed as having a significant number of human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, harassment of civil society actors and journalists, as well as other infringements on internationally-recognized human rights.

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

Answer. Engagement with civil society is a critical component of the Administration's efforts to advance human rights in Egypt, both so that we are cognizant of local priorities on human rights and so that our annual report to Congress is informed by these local perspectives. If confirmed, I commit to lead by example through robust personal engagement with Egyptian human rights defenders and other civil society.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to personally engaging with civil society on this issue.

Question. In 2021, according to the bureau of International Organizations, Egypt voted with the U.S. on 27 percent of roll call votes in the U.N. General Assembly. On Israel-related votes, that number is 0 percent. If confirmed, how will you engage with the host government on issues relating to international organizations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the work of the Embassy team and consistently and at high levels engage the Government of Egypt on issues relating to international organizations. I will also seek to engage our U.N. missions more in Egypt.

Question. How can you, if confirmed as Ambassador, work alongside IO and USU to recruit and retain talented Americans for placement within the U.N. system either in appointments, elections, or other roles?

Answer. In my last two assignments as a member of the Embassy Front Office, I actively engaged with local counterparts on behalf of our Americans competing for senior roles in the U.N. system. Active and early engagement is key.

Question. What is your understanding of morale at Embassy Cairo?

Answer. I look forward to working with the talented team of diplomats in Cairo, if confirmed. I understand that challenges, such as power and internet disruptions as well as heavy traffic and pollution, take a daily toll on our team. In every assignment where I have had a leadership role, whether that was as the head of our reconstruction team in Mosul, Iraq or Political Minister Counselor in New Delhi, India, or DCM in Lisbon, Portugal, to Ambassador in Bulgaria, I take morale very seriously. In previous posts, I conducted regular Embassy wide surveys of my leadership and Embassy morale to check the pulse of the mission. I found this to be useful and welcomed and, if confirmed, will continue to carry out this practice.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Embassy Cairo?

Answer. My understanding is that morale at post is impacted by some administrative hurdles, including delays in receiving household effects and personal vehicles, due to the host government's lengthy procedures. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team, and especially the community liaison officer, to ensure that morale stays high and work with the management team to press for continued progress in resolving these administrative concerns.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for Chiefs of Mission. Answer. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as compassionate, with a high bar on ethics, EEO compliance, security, and management controls. In a May 2018 Office of Inspector General inspection of Embassy Lisbon, the OIG report wrote "The DCM received consistently high marks from all sections for forging a 'one team, one fight' spirit to the Embassy's efforts to advance its objectives and for her attention to staff development."

A May 2022 Office of Inspector General Report of Embassy Sofia described me as modeling integrity, encouraging interagency collaboration, and leading by example. It reported Embassy staff described me as optimistic, friendly, and down-to-earth, and told OIG that I asked for and took seriously their advice on policy issues.

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

Answer. I do not believe it is an effective management strategy to berate subordinates either in public or private. This is unacceptable behavior and, if confirmed, I will instruct all supervisors at Embassy Cairo to show respect for their subordinates. I will make it clear that I will judge their effectiveness by how well they mentor and develop their own staff.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)?

Answer. If confirmed, I believe in a strong front office team and an empowered DCM who works with me to ensure a high standard on management controls, ethics, security, and strong interagency collaboration. I am fortunate that the current DCM is someone I have known since my very first day in the Foreign Service and I have full confidence in her abilities. I will encourage her to build on post's existing mentoring programs for our entry and mid-level staff from all USG agencies, as well as regular discussions with Egyptian local staff to improve teambuilding, and instill a sense of personal accountability in each member of our large team.

"Anomalous health incidents", commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. I understand the issue of anomalous health incidents is an absolute priority for the Department, including its most senior leaders. If confirmed, I commit to taking this threat seriously as I did as Ambassador to Bulgaria. There is no higher priority than to protect and care for our people.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Peace Corps employees and volunteers about this serious issue?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as I can to Peace Corps employees and volunteers about this serious issue.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. Following intense U.S. diplomatic efforts, Egypt has reportedly agreed to open the Rafah crossing to allow an initial 20 trucks to enter Gaza to deliver humanitarian assistance. However, at this point, none of these trucks have yet transited into Gaza, as the “mechanisms” of this agreement are still being worked out. Even once this initial tranche moves forward, I remain deeply concerned about the urgent need to provide millions of people in Gaza access to essential commodities to sustain life, including water, food, medical supplies, and fuel. What are the parameters of the reported agreement to allow an initial tranche of humanitarian assistance into Gaza?

Answer. While I am not involved in these discussions, I understand that the United States is engaging closely with the Governments of Egypt and Israel to facilitate the movement of humanitarian goods into Gaza via the Rafah border crossing. Special Envoy David Satterfield is in the region coordinating these efforts. I understand humanitarian supplies will be distributed to civilians in need through trusted international organizations and NGO partners, in coordination with Egyptian and Israeli authorities. The initial 20 trucks are intended as just that—an initial effort to move humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Question. How will you work with the relevant stakeholders in Egypt, Israel, and Gaza to ensure sustained humanitarian assistance can reach civilians in immediate need in Gaza?

Answer. I understand the United States is working closely with the Governments of Egypt and Israel to improve humanitarian conditions in Gaza, including by establishing a mechanism by which humanitarian assistance can reach the civilian population of Gaza. Special Envoy David Satterfield, whom I have known for over twenty years, is in the region coordinating these efforts. If confirmed, it will be my priority to continue working closely with the Government of Egypt and other partners, including trusted international organizations and NGOs, to address humanitarian needs in Gaza.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In May 2022, Secretary Blinken said that the People’s Republic of China is the “only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly holds the reins of power in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and has used this power to commit genocide in Xinjiang, flood our communities with fentanyl, and emit, by far the largest quantity of greenhouse gases in the world today. Even as we see heinous atrocities committed by Hamas against innocent Israeli citizens, the CCP is still publicly blaming Israel instead of Hamas for the violence. With their absolute control of Chinese society and industry, the CCP could stop all of these destructive actions tomorrow if they so choose. Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. 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.-Egypt ties.

Question. Does the CCP 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 CCP that would constructively work with the United States in good faith, knowing that at any

moment Chinese interlocutors with U.S. representatives could be disappeared at a moment's notice? If so, please explain.

Answer. 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.

I have dealt with some aspect of China's aggression in almost every assignment I have had my 25-year Foreign Service career, from China's border encroachments in India and Bhutan, to its attempts to control the Sines port in Portugal, to its flooding of the telecommunications market in Bulgaria. I am proud of our Embassy's efforts to move China off the backburner. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of State's new Office of China Coordination to advance U.S. objectives and counter harmful behavior by the PRC and other actors in the Middle East.

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

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be advancing U.S. interests in Egypt 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 Egypt and the region.

Question. Besides the size of its population, its peace treaty with Israel, and the presence of the Suez Canal, what other reasons are there for the U.S. to continue investing resources in Egypt?

Answer. There is a wide range of U.S. priorities where Egypt can play an important role, from support for Ukraine amid Russia's war of aggression, a ceasefire in Sudan, and addressing the Israel/Gaza crisis and its humanitarian fallout. Egypt is also a strong partner in counterterrorism, countering human trafficking, and maritime security. Egypt is the sixth largest contributor of peacekeepers in the world. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. support for Egypt continues to strengthen this partnership.

Question. How would you characterize the current state of U.S.-Egyptian relations?

Answer. The United States' relationship with Egypt is multifaceted. Egypt has been an important strategic partner for 40 years. The decades-long U.S.-Egypt defense partnership has been a pillar for regional security. Egypt is a significant player in regional affairs, and as the Arab country with the largest population, its role is key to regional de-escalation, such as in Libya and Sudan. At the same time, the Administration continues to underscore that tangible progress on human rights, including by releasing political prisoners and implementing reforms to pre-trial detention, is crucial to enabling the strongest possible U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

Question. Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel remains significant for overall Arab-Israeli peace. Egyptian Governments have increased their cooperation with Israel against Islamist militants in Gaza prior to the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas. In your opinion, how will Israel's war against Hamas be seen by Egypt given its role in the Arab world as peace broker in the region?

Answer. The United States and Egypt share an unwavering commitment to a negotiated two-state solution as the only path to a lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and equal measures of security, prosperity, and dignity for Israelis and Palestinians. Egypt has played a positive role in responding to attacks by Gaza-based armed factions in the past and continues to play a critical role today. While I am not involved in these discussions, I understand that the United States is engaging closely with Egypt to enable U.S. citizens to leave Gaza and facilitate the movement of humanitarian goods into Gaza via the Rafah border crossing. These humanitarian supplies will be distributed to civilians in need through trusted international organizations and NGO partners in coordination with Egyptian and Israeli authorities.

Question. What role does Egypt need to play with regard to Palestinian refugees attempting to flee Hamas?

Answer. I understand that Egyptian efforts are currently focused on bringing humanitarian supplies to civilians inside Gaza, where this aid will be distributed

through trusted international organizations and NGO partners and in coordination with Israeli authorities. I understand the Government of Egypt made available ambulances and mobile clinics near Rafah. Civilians are not to blame for Hamas' horrific terrorism.

Question. Multiple administrations have described Egypt as a "strategic partner." Recent reporting has brought to light concerning efforts by Egyptian intelligence to corrupt our political system. Do you believe bribing U.S. politicians is typical behavior of a "strategic partner"?

Answer. I have no comment on an ongoing prosecution.

Question. If confirmed, how will you demonstrate to the Egyptian Government that these efforts are unacceptable?

Answer. This is an active and ongoing legal matter, so you will understand I have no comment on it. While I cannot speak to this case specifically, as a general matter we are taking steps both domestically and globally to better prevent, deter, and combat corruption, guided by our National Strategy on Countering Corruption. This includes working through bilateral and multilateral engagement, foreign assistance, sanctions, international legal cooperation, and many other tools.

I worked actively as Ambassador to Bulgaria to counter corruption. Working with Congress, we imposed the first Global Magnitsky sanctions on Bulgarian corrupt officials. Our efforts raised the profile of these issues and eventually led to new legislation to enhance Bulgaria's efforts to counter corruption.

Question. How would you advance continued support for Israel and the Abraham Accords in Egypt, if confirmed?

Answer. I fully support the Abraham Accords. Building on Egypt's transformational peace with Israel, the United States and Egypt have long partnered to foster a shared vision for the promise of greater regional integration, including through the Negev Forum process. As Secretary Blinken has said, the events in Israel and Gaza since October 7 underscore there are two paths for the region: a path of greater integration, greater stability, and a resolution of the challenges between Israelis and Palestinians, and the path of Hamas terrorism.

In Bulgaria, I worked towards bringing the signatory countries of the Abraham Accords together to celebrate the anniversary of the accords via a public event on culinary diplomacy. I think it would be a good idea for all our embassies to use the anniversary of the accords to try to organize some type of event bringing the countries together.

Question. With more than 90 percent of this ally's population practicing the Muslim faith, if confirmed, will you promote an LGBTQ agenda in Egypt?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the work of my predecessors and colleagues to promote respect for human rights in Egypt, including working to reduce violence against LGBTQI+ persons and working toward decriminalization of same-sex status and conduct.

I will also continue U.S. advocacy for the release of any LGBTQI+ persons held on so called "debauchery" charges and press the Egyptian Government to end forced anal examinations and other abusive practices against LGBTQI+ persons.

Question. Does the LGBTQ agenda come before national security or American prosperity?

Answer. National security and American prosperity must include all U.S. citizens, regardless of background. Goals around these matters cannot be achieved if we exclude specific groups of people. Explicitly attempting to exclude any group jeopardizes both goals, and we have learned that inclusiveness of all groups only strengthens our national security.

Question. The U.S. has provided significant security assistance to Egypt, however, we have seen Egypt increase closer relations to Russia and China regarding military-to-military and trade relationships away from the U.S. Could Egypt become more reliant upon China and Russia on security, economic, and political matters?

Answer. I understand that Egypt actively seeks trade and investment from a broad range of global partners. However, Egypt is cautious about becoming overly reliant on any one partner, including the PRC and Russia. The PRC plays a significant and growing role in large segments of Egypt's economy, including infrastructure, IT, and renewable energy. Egypt has significant ties with Russia in energy, agriculture, and tourism, as well as with regard to Egypt's efforts to diversify its defense suppliers.

Question. If confirmed, how will you discourage such moves?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that U.S. commercial, development, and diplomatic officers at our Embassy in Cairo work closely with their Egyptian counterparts and the State Department's Economic and Business Affairs Bureau to promote U.S. exports, protect U.S. commercial interests, and improve the business climate in Egypt for U.S. companies.

I will support the Administration's efforts to offer, in terms of the U.S. partnership, access to trusted and reliable vendors and also leverage our energy and security relationships to make clear the compelling case for our partnership.

Question. Security assistance to Egypt is currently conditioned based on Egypt's human rights record due to legislation I championed in 2017. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that Egypt respects the human rights of its own people?

Answer. This Administration has made human rights a priority in U.S. foreign policy worldwide, including with Egypt. If confirmed, I commit to continue the Administration's engagement with the Egyptian Government to seek concrete progress on human rights, which I believe will strengthen our strategic relationship. Securing tangible human rights progress in Egypt requires consistent engagement. If confirmed, I commit to make human rights a priority in my engagement with the Government, to press for concrete and enduring human rights reforms, and to consult with Congress on these important issues.

Question. Given the importance of other partners, such as Taiwan, should security assistance that is not given to Egypt on account of its human rights violations be redirected to Taiwan?

Answer. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Egypt is not provided at the expense of other partners. The Department is always assessing the right levels of foreign assistance, including through FMF, to support our national security interests, partner capacities, and validated requirements.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. The Ministry of Defense in Egypt recently procured \$25M in networking equipment from Huawei, a Chinese company whose equipment is known to Congress to be a threat to U.S. national security. Given this, how would you prioritize ensuring U.S. firms continue to have access to the network marketplace in Egypt?

Answer. As Ambassador to Bulgaria, I faced a similar issue, as the Bulgarians' 4G network was built with Huawei and the Chinese aggressively pushed Huawei for 5G. We should not cede any ground to China. The Bulgarian Government signed a 5G MOU with us and then we pressed aggressively for trusted vendors. We succeeded in winning many contracts for American companies.

If confirmed, I will ensure that U.S. commercial, development, and diplomatic officers at our Embassy in Cairo work closely with their Egyptian counterparts and the State Department's Economic and Business Affairs Bureau to promote U.S. exports, protect U.S. commercial interests, and improve the business climate in Egypt for U.S. companies.

Question. How should United States policy, including the provisions of Foreign Military Financing to Egypt, adapt when the Egyptian MOD procures and installs Huawei equipment in its networks that interoperate with sensitive U.S. networks, posing a threat to U.S. national security?

Answer. The Administration cautions its partners about PRC investments that could compromise their sovereignty, security, and data privacy. If confirmed, I will continue activities that have proven successful in my other positions, such as active engagement with the Bulgarian Government on behalf of U.S. companies and providing viable alternatives to PRC options.

Constant and close engagement allows us to demonstrate that the United States is a preferable technology partner.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. How would you characterize the bilateral relationship between Egypt and Russia?

Answer. Egypt has significant ties with Russia in energy, agriculture, tourism, and defense. Russia is building a \$30 billion nuclear facility in Dabaa on the Mediterranean coast and Russian tourists are a major source of hard currency. At the same time, Egypt has been impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, destabilizing global wheat markets, including Egypt, which provides subsidized bread to the majority of its citizens. Egypt is a U.S. strategic partner with a crucial voice in efforts to advance a just and lasting peace for Ukraine and has taken steps to support U.S. national security goals, which include ensuring a strategic defeat of Russia's war on Ukraine.

From my service as Ambassador to Bulgaria, I know well the Russian grip and how vital our partnerships are to address Russia's destabilizing role. I am proud of our Embassy's efforts in Bulgaria on military modernization and energy diversification away from Russia.

Question. What is the extent of Egypt's involvement in Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Answer. Egypt has no role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Egypt is a U.S. strategic partner with a crucial voice in efforts to advance regional peace and stability, including key U.S. national security goals in advancing a just and lasting peace for Ukraine. Egypt has taken steps to oppose Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, including voting at the U.N. General Assembly and International Atomic Energy Agency in 2022 and 2023 on resolutions condemning the invasion and criticizing Russia's actions. At the same time, Egypt abstained on a resolution to suspend Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Question. Is U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt still in the U.S. national interest? Why or why not?

Answer. Egypt is a strategic U.S. partner that contributes to advancing regional peace and stability. Egypt is playing a critical at this moment in the conflict between Hamas and Israel, supporting U.S. efforts to secure the release of American and other hostages held by Hamas; secure the safe exit of American citizens from Gaza; and convey urgently needed humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.

U.S. security assistance to Egypt helps to improve and modernize Egypt's capabilities, including countering terrorism, such as in the Sinai Peninsula, that could endanger the U.S. homeland or allies. The United States also supports U.S.-Egypt military interoperability and Egypt facilitates security for, and expedites transit of, U.S. military vessels through the Suez Canal.

U.S. assistance to Egypt also promotes economic growth, education, climate, and governance objectives that align with U.S. interests, including increasing opportunities for small and medium enterprises, responding to food insecurity challenges related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, providing opportunities for Egypt's large youth population, and shoring up efforts to combat climate change and facilitating Egypt's transition to a green economy.

Question. Do you support reinstating all of the U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt? Which U.S. financial assistance is the most critical to the Government of Egypt?

Answer. U.S. assistance to Egypt supports longstanding U.S. strategic interests to advance regional peace and security and promote interoperability with U.S. forces. Egypt is a strategic partner and I understand the FY 2024 Foreign Military Financing request reflects the Administration's plan to support U.S. national security interests in Egypt, including for maritime security, border security, and counterterrorism.

The Administration continues to believe that maximum flexibility in our foreign assistance provides the Administration with the widest range of tools to advance U.S. objectives.

Question. What conditions need to be attached to U.S. foreign assistance to the Government of Egypt?

Answer. I understand the Department seeks maximum flexibility in its approach to Egypt FMF, so the Administration has the widest range of tools to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives in Egypt, including with respect to human rights. As I have not yet been confirmed, I have not been a part of the decision-making process on foreign assistance to Egypt.

If confirmed, I commit to make it a priority to work to secure tangible progress on human rights in Egypt.

Question. Is the Government of Egypt at risk of default?

Answer. The external shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted in rising food prices that have revealed deep-seated structural issues with Egypt's economy.

If I am confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on Egypt's economic situation after I have been on the ground and able to assess Egypt's economic outlook.

Question. What issues must be addressed by the Government of Egypt in order to stabilize their internal security and improve their economic growth?

Answer. Egypt developed a set of reforms and secured an IMF program in December 2022 to preserve macroeconomic stability, restore buffers, and pave the way for inclusive and private-sector-led growth. My understanding is that Egypt is committed to removing some state control from the economy and transitioning to a flexible exchange rate.

I understand the United States was supportive of Egypt securing its IMF program and continues to encourage Egypt to fully implement the needed reforms, including by liberalizing the exchange rate and continuing to privatize state-owned enterprises.

If confirmed, I will work with Egypt to implement its reform plan.

Question. What is President Sisi's vision for the future and top priorities?

Answer. The Administration has an affirmative vision for the Middle East and North Africa demonstrating our commitment to work with our partners, including with Egypt, to bring about the positive changes we all hope to see as we build a stable, more prosperous region.

Egypt is an important strategic partner. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to align our countries' approaches on U.S. national security interests, such as support for Ukraine, regional security and integration, and great power competition.

Question. How would you characterize the current state of religious freedom, freedom of speech, right to assembly, and the rule of law in Egypt?

Answer. I understand Egypt has a long tradition of religious coexistence and has made some improvements on this front, including reducing obstacles to church building and registration and reforming educational curricula to stress religious tolerance. If confirmed, I hope to continue the U.S. Embassy's regular engagement with diverse Egyptian religious leaders and encourage improvements to Egypt's treatment of religious minorities.

There is no doubt of the need for significant progress more broadly on human rights in Egypt, and if confirmed, promoting tangible progress on human rights, including religious freedom, and good governance, will be among my highest priorities. I have demonstrated in my previous roles that we can secure concrete improvements on human rights even as we pursue other U.S. national security goals, and if confirmed, I will approach human rights challenges in Egypt similarly.

Question. What is your assessment of the current Egyptian judicial system?

Answer. The Department's annual Human Rights Report for Egypt details a number of serious concerns about Egypt's judicial system. I understand that the State Department continues to urge Egypt to address these significant human rights concerns relating to its judicial system, including by releasing political prisoners, halting new politically motivated arrests, and implementing reforms to pre-trial detention. If confirmed, I commit to making tangible human rights improvements among my top priorities.

Question. What actions has the Egyptian Government and judicial system taken to end mass trials and sentencing?

Answer. In 2022, the Government of Egypt began the release of hundreds of prisoners, established the Presidential Pardon Committee, and launched a national political dialogue that is expected to address pre-trial detention reform, among other political, social, and economic issues.

At the same time, I understand that politically motivated arrests continue and outpace releases, which is of serious concern. Egypt also has yet to make much-needed structural reforms to protect human rights, including reforms to pre-trial detention, and does not allow civil society to operate freely and independently. If confirmed, I commit to making support for these tangible human rights improvements among my top priorities.

Question. What actions would you take to address the continued use of mass trials and sentencing in Egypt?

Answer. This Administration has made human rights a priority in U.S. foreign policy, including with Egypt. I understand the scope of the problem of political prisoners in Egypt is vast, and much work remains to be done. I understand some releases have taken place due in part to sustained U.S. engagement on this issue. If confirmed, I commit to make human rights among my top priorities in my engagement with the Egyptian Government and to press for concrete reforms to improve protections for human rights, including by releasing political prisoners and implementing reforms to pre-trial detention. I also commit to engage regularly with Egyptian human rights defenders and other civil society; and to consult with Congress on these important issues.

Question. Will Egypt joining BRICS affect their relationship with the U.S.? If so, how?

Answer. The United States has reiterated our belief that all countries may choose the countries and groupings they associate with. However, it is important for countries, including Egypt, to assess whether a grouping embodies compatible values, whether it destabilizes or enhances global security, and whether it advances the common good or narrow agendas.

Question. What is the most significant impact of Egypt joining BRICS?

Answer. The United States will continue to work closely with all of our partners, including those that are members of BRICS and those who have received invitations. While we have no formal association with BRICS as a grouping, we will continue to work with existing and aspiring BRICS members in bilateral, regional, and multilateral fora to strengthen our shared prosperity and uphold global values.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HERRO MUSTAFA GARG BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Question. How do you intend to navigate in this environment in Egypt? What can be done specifically?

Answer. This is a heartbreaking human tragedy playing out due to Hamas' brutality. I hope to have active engagement with the Arabic speaking media in order to get the USG message across, if confirmed.

I understand that Egypt, the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel, remains committed to a two-state solution. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would support Egypt in continuing to play a positive role, including the critical support it is offering now during the conflict.

If confirmed, it will be my priority to leverage our relationship with Egypt to support delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in need in Gaza and secure the safe departure of American citizens, including hostages, from Gaza.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

In a previous round of QFRs, I asked you whether you believe that it is an appropriate use of American diplomatic resources to pressure Egypt in order to secure the release of Salah Soltan. In questioning we had discussed that he is not a U.S. citizen. You answered that the Department of State has "raised Mr. Soltan's case with Egyptian authorities" and "has encouraged the Government of Egypt to provide Soltan with medical care," neither of which answer my questions.

I also asked if you had evaluated a video of Soltan speaking at a 2013 Muslim Brotherhood rally, at which he appears to have administered a so-called "martyrs' oath" to supporters, and if so whether you considered his speech to be incitement to violence. You answered "I was not aware of videos relating to Rabaa square. If confirmed, I will investigate further." Soltan's case has repeatedly been raised by the United States in the context of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and if confirmed you would be expected to conduct diplomacy in that context, and so it is important that these questions are addressed before you are confirmed. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb7kK1XzxZY>.

Follow-Up

Question. Do you believe it is an appropriate use of American diplomatic resources to pressure Egypt in order to secure Soltan's release?

Answer. From my understanding of the issue, the U.S. Government has not pressured Egypt in order to secure Mr. Soltan's release. I understand

that U.S. officials have encouraged the Egyptian Government to ensure Mr. Soltan and all detainees have access to appropriate medical care, and to rights guaranteed to them under Egyptian and international law.

Question. Do you believe that this sort of anti-Israel media disinformation undermines American national security interests?

Answer. Ensuring the distribution of accurate information is a crucial part of mitigating the spread of disinformation. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the U.S. Embassy in Egypt regularly engages with our partners on best practices in countering harmful disinformation, including by building networks of fact-based narrative reporting by strengthening journalists, local fact checkers, and content creators to counter information manipulation. The U.S. Government is focused on countering efforts from malign actors such as Russia, Iran, and foreign terrorist organizations, among others, which are attempting use this moment of strife to manipulate information to their advantage and undermine U.S. interests. If confirmed, I hope to have active engagement with the Arabic speaking media in order to get the USG message across.

Follow-Up

Question. Please describe the meetings and contexts in which the State Department “raised Mr. Soltan’s case with Egyptian authorities,” including when those meetings occurred and what the State Department requested.

Answer. As I was not part of any such discussions, I am unable to speak to specific conversations. As a general matter, I understand that U.S. officials have encouraged the Egyptian Government to ensure Mr. Soltan and all detainees have access to appropriate medical care, and to rights guaranteed to them under Egyptian and international law.

Salah Soltan is a Muslim Brotherhood leader and hate preacher. He has called for the eradication of Jews and “obliterating America,” which he called it a “divine law.” Beginning in summer 2013, Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Egypt held protests across the country, including at Rabaa Square. There are credible allegations that Muslim Brotherhood members tortured opponents at the Rabaa Square protest, including those documented in an August 2013 Amnesty International report. There is also video of Soltan administering what a so-called “martyrs’ oath” to supporters at the rally (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb7kK1XzxZY>). The Biden administration has been pressuring Egypt to release Soltan and has even brought up his case in the context of withholding assistance from Egypt.

Question. Do you believe it is an appropriate use of American diplomatic resources to pressure Egypt in order to secure Soltan’s release?

Answer. I viewed the video you referenced and join you in condemning his antisemitic comments. The Administration supports further strengthening the United States’ strategic partnership with Egypt while seeking tangible improvements by the Government of Egypt on human rights. In that context, the Department of State has raised Mr. Soltan’s case with Egyptian authorities, as well as on a humanitarian basis. I understand the Department of State has encouraged the Government of Egypt to ensure all detainees, including Mr. Soltan, have access to appropriate medical care, the ability to meet with family members and lawyers, to rights guaranteed to them under Egyptian law, and to treat these detainees consistent with Egypt’s human rights obligations and commitments.

Follow-Up

Question. What is your understanding of Mr. Soltan’s citizenship status? Is it the State Department’s understanding that he is a citizen or legal permanent resident?

Answer. I understand he was a Legal Permanent Resident at the time of his detention. I would have to defer to the Department of Homeland Security for specific information on his immigration status.

Question. Does the United States Government assess that Muslim Brotherhood supporters tortured political opponents at Rabaa Square?

Answer. The Department of State’s annual human rights report states that on August 14, 2013, the Ministry of Interior forces supported by military units used lethal force to disperse large Muslim Brotherhood (MB)-organized sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Cairo and Nahda Square in Giza. The interim government justified its actions with accusations that sit-in participants possessed weapons, committed acts of violence, including torture, and interfered with transportation and

commerce. The Justice Ministry's Forensic Medical Authority stated that 11 bodies found on August 14 at the Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda Square sit-in sites bore signs of torture. Domestic media reported that Morsy supporters tortured at least 10 persons, including a policeman and a soldier, at the sit-ins.

Follow-Up

Question. Have you evaluated Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square? If not, why not?

Answer. Yes, I have evaluated the video clip that you sent me.

Question. What documentation does the United States have relating to allegations of torture at Rabaa Square?

Answer. According to the Department of State's 2013 Human Rights Report, the Justice Ministry's Forensic Medical Authority stated that 11 bodies found on August 14 at the Rabaa al-Adawiya and Nahda Square sit-in sites bore signs of torture. Domestic media reported that Morsy supporters tortured at least 10 persons, including a policeman and a soldier, at the sit-ins.

Follow-Up

Question. If you have evaluated the speech, please transmit the documentation you reviewed, including English-language translations.

Answer. Yes, I have evaluated the video clip that you sent me, in the original language.

Question. Have you evaluated Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square? If not, why not? If so, please transmit the documentation you reviewed, including English-language translations.

Answer. I viewed his interview that aired on al-Aqsa TV on March 31, 2010. I was not aware of videos relating to Rabaa square. If confirmed, I will investigate further.

Follow-Up

Question. In your judgment, does Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square constitute incitement to violence?

Answer. I strongly condemn any language calling for violence. I find it abhorrent. I am not in a position to offer a specific legal judgment on whether this speech constitutes incitement to violence.

Question. In your judgment, does Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square constitute incitement to violence?

Answer. It is my understanding the 2014 Egyptian constitution says that "discrimination and incitement of hatred is a crime punished by law." I find Salah Soltan's antisemitic comments abhorrent, and strongly condemn such displays of antisemitism. If confirmed, I would investigate this issue further and be happy to provide a briefing.

Follow-Up

Question. In your judgment, does Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square constitute incitement to violence under your understanding of Egyptian law?

Answer. I do not have expertise in Egyptian law regarding such matters.

Question. In your judgment, does Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square constitute incitement to violence under your understanding of Egyptian law?

Answer. I have not assessed the content of Soltan's 2013 speech in Rabaa Square. I find Salah Soltan's antisemitic comments abhorrent, and I strongly condemn antisemitism. If confirmed, I would investigate further and be happy to provide a briefing.

A STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN WITH A LETTER
WRITTEN BY SALAH EL DEEN SOLTAN TO HIS GRANDSON SALAH BINYAMEEN

STATEMENT OF THE
HONORABLE BENJAMIN L. CARDIN (D-MD)
July 27, 2023

Mr. President,

I rise today to speak of the importance of Holocaust education and engagement that can help us push back against the rising tide of antisemitism we are seeing nowadays, in our country and across the world.

As the Special Representative on Antisemitism, Racism and Intolerance for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as many of my colleagues know, I have made it a personal priority to address the rise of antisemitism. As antisemitism is increasing at home and abroad, it is important to come together to address antisemitism, and call out the hate when we see or hear it before it becomes more ingrained in our society.

At the same time, we should celebrate those occasions when a person with a history of making anti-Semitic statements sees the light and realizes the error of his ways, renounces his past statements and vows never to repeat them. Happily, we have an example of just such a case that I would like to bring to the attention of Senate and the American people.

I would like to submit into the Congressional Record a noteworthy letter from Salah el Deen Soltan, a US person, who wrote last month to his newest grandson, to be shared with other grandchildren – most of whom he hasn't met after a decade in wrongful detention in Egypt.

As Human Rights Watch stated in a report published on May 3, 2023, calling for Soltan to be released from his unjust imprisonment in one of Cairo's most notorious jails:

Before moving to the United States, Soltan was a professor of Islamic Law at Cairo University. He later founded and served as the president of the Islamic American University in Dearborn, Michigan from 1999 to 2004. As a legal US permanent resident, Soltan lived and worked in the US for over a decade before his arrest in Egypt in September 2013 for opposing the military's ousting of elected president Mohamed Morsi. A court sentenced Soltan to life in prison in September 2017 in a mass trial marred by extensive due process and fair trial violations. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined in 2018 that his arrest was arbitrary, as the authorities failed to provide credible evidence of wrongdoing, and that his prosecution violated the right to political participation and freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.

In the coming weeks, Soltan will have served a full decade in Egyptian jails. During this time, he had time to reflect on his personal history of making crude and cruel antisemitic statements to his students and followers over the years. So he wrote a letter, that has been smuggled out of prison and delivered to his family.

In this letter, Soltan addresses his previously held antisemitic positions and remarks, apologizes for them and disavows them. In solitary confinement, Soltan reflects on his past, corrects the record for his grandson, and lays out how he would like to be remembered in case he never gets the opportunity to meet his grandchildren.

As he writes – *“My previous statements and stances are wrong and the best of us are those who reflect, hold oneself*

accountable and repent. Here I am, reflecting and seeking forgiveness from God for the harm that may have been inflicted upon anyone. I apologize to everyone harmed by what I said and called for. I leave behind these prison walls all forms of anger, hate and coarseness. I bear the burden of upholding the sanctity of human life, speaking truth and defending it wherever it may be. I had only intended to stand up for justice but what I did resulted in the exact opposite of the intent; and became a reason for further oppression, suffering and marginalization of the innocent. In fact, my oppressors used my decade-old stances to justify and fend off pressure from concerned western parties about my release.”

It is never too late for remorse and redemption.

In 2020, we saw several Muslim-majority Middle Eastern governments normalize diplomatic relations with Israel with the historic announcement of the Abraham Accords. And in the years since, there has been a real thawing of the hostility toward the Jewish state in some of the neighboring countries. Overcoming decades of official hostility toward the government and people of Israel, broadcast through official media outlets and often imbued with blatant antisemitism, will take time. But a journey begins with a single step. And the reconciliation of the peoples of the region begins with one person.

Together, we can choose peace and forgiveness, rather than be prisoners of past differences. In that spirit, and consistent with the Jewish tradition of Teshuva, in which people can see the error of their ways and vow never to repeat that which has offended the Creator, I welcome and embrace Salah Soltan's change of heart. Especially given his difficult circumstances, I find it refreshing and notable that he has taken the time and the trouble to send a heartfelt message to his grandchildren. He has accepted

responsibility for his previous hateful words, and is seeking forgiveness from those harmed by it.

This September, Soltan will have been imprisoned for a decade in Egyptian prisons where human rights organizations have estimated there to be over 60,000 political prisoners. Last May, more than 50 human rights organizations released a joint statement noting that Soltan is at serious risk of death due to deteriorating health conditions.

In recent weeks, Egypt has started to correct course with the release of two high profile detainees. I urge President Sisi to extend his presidential pardon to Soltan, so that he may leave Egypt and be reunited with his family.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the complete text of the letter written by Salah el Deen Soltan to his grandchildren be printed in full at this point in the Congressional Record.

[attachment follows]

My dearest beloved grandson, Salah Binyameen,

Ever since I learned of your birth and that you will bear my name, I have been praying for you and constantly thinking about you. I fervently pray to God Almighty that you become a positive force in our community and the world at large. It is no secret that you were born during one of the most challenging periods of my imprisonment, yet news of your birth brought me immense solace and joy. Your coming is a reminder of the time that has passed, my fifth grandson, the fourth of whom I have not met or spent time with because of my decade-long wrongful imprisonment in solitary confinement. The passing years have been arduous, and I feel as though time slips away from me without anyone to share my happiness or alleviate my solitude.

Dearest grandson, Salah, enduring a decade of imprisonment and torture, I found solace only in God. The darkness of my solitude has revealed many certainties and has granted me clarity about my past with all of its good and bad, particularly as I witness death so frequently around me. I feel as if I stared death in the eyes while lying on the ground, paralyzed and denied help and medicine for days. During those helpless moments, all I could do was ponder: Will I ever have the opportunity to see you? What will you come to know of me? If you never meet me, who will be your source of information about me? So, I've decided to write you a series of letters, this being the first, so that you may come to know me as I am. I want you to understand who I am, what my values are, and what I stand for.

My dearest Salah, I have always believed, and will continue to believe, that justice is the bedrock of faith. Freedom and justice are the imperatives of our religious beliefs. I have always prayed for divine guidance towards truth, and for inspiration to stand up for the distressed and most marginalized. In the depths of my suffering, I question whether I have consistently lived up to those ideals. I am grateful to God for the guidance on the things I got right and for forgiveness on those that I got wrong. Allah Himself swore by the sanctity of the questioning soul: "And I swear by the reproaching soul" (Quran 75:2). None of us is immune, not even from the gravest of errors, and repentance is a virtue of a sound heart.

The first of these revisions occurred in the immediate aftermath of the 2013 coup and the gruesome Rabaa Massacre. I penned an Op-Ed to the Egyptian people apologizing for the Islamist Political movements' political mistakes. My decade in solitude that followed compelled me to delve further inwards, to think and rethink. When your father and I shared a prison cell, I engaged in deep contemplations and introspections. Those were both bitter and sweet days, I miss him so much. We engaged in endless debates as I contemplated the meaning of justice, injustice, and advocating for the most disenfranchised. I pondered anger, violence, righteousness, the common good, and reform. I held myself accountable, questioning whether I adhered to my intellectual commitments for the benefit of all or only for certain groups. I reflected on my intellectual journey from Egypt to the United States, Bahrain, and beyond. I have learned and grown and want to acknowledge my regrets and mistakes, as acknowledging what is right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom.

The Palestinian cause shaped my generation's worldview and awakened my political consciousness and activism. It laid the foundations for my understanding of justice, starting from my elementary school days until I obtained my Ph.D. in Islamic jurisprudence. For many years, I allowed my anger to inform my reactions to the senseless bloodshed, and the desecration of sacred sites and to drive my approach to the Palestinian issue privately and publicly. I focused on the losses and struggles of the Palestinian people and their powerlessness and while then as now, many more Palestinians have been injured and killed. My impassioned defense of the oppressed in the Muslim world in those days relied on the common rhetoric that was fueled by anger which turned to hate. As the death toll mounted, my statements sometimes veered toward antisemitism. In doing so, I displayed a blind rage that contradicted the fundamental principles of our beautiful religion. We are a religion of tolerance and compassion toward all religions and such rhetoric has no place in our community or our pursuit of justice. I deeply regret times when I engaged in that kind of rhetoric that I shudder to recall and condemn all rhetoric that is discriminatory, hateful and violent. The ends can never justify the means and noble objectives can only be attained through noble methods. Let me be clear, my commitment to justice for the Palestinian people remains steadfast, as is my belief that the many paths towards justice and peace do not require demonization of the other. Salah, justice and solidarity must extend to those with whom we disagree. In fact, our true commitment to these ideals is measured by how we apply them to those who differ from us.

Look at me now, Salah; I find myself in a country with a Muslim ruler, where the judge, warden, officer, and guards who wrongfully imprison, torture and deny me basic medical needs are all Muslim. While those who stand up for me (and others) are individuals who share little in common with me, except for our shared belief in justice and freedom. I recall how Eric Lewis, a Jewish lawyer and now a dear friend of the family, was the sole international lawyer permitted to visit a political prisoner in Egyptian prisons. I remember how Andrea Prasow, a Jewish human rights lawyer, assumed your father's position as the Executive Director of a rights organization advocating on behalf of Arab political prisoners. Senators Patrick Leahy (liberal Christian), and the late John McCain (Conservative Christian) also come to mind. These individuals, spanning the political spectrum, have dedicated their professional careers to advocating for the oppressed despite their respective political and ideological differences. All of these contradictions and ironies have compelled me to see the error in some of my previous beliefs, statements and positions.

My previous statements and stances are wrong and the best of us are those who reflect, hold oneself accountable and repent. Here I am, reflecting and seeking forgiveness from God for the harm that may have been inflicted upon anyone. I apologize to everyone harmed by what I said and called for. I leave behind these prison walls all forms of anger, hate and coarseness. I bear the burden of upholding the sanctity of human life, speaking truth and defending it wherever it may be.

I had only intended to stand up for justice, but what I did resulted in the exact opposite of the intent, and became a reason for further oppression, suffering and marginalization of the

innocent. In fact, my oppressors used my decade-old stances to justify and fend off pressure from concerned western parties about my release.

Lastly, my dearest grandson, I am writing to you in pursuit of a world that leads with love and eschews hatred. Life is far too short and precious to allow it to be dominated by anger. I urge you to set your moral compass towards justice and truth. Defend those with every peaceful means at your disposal. I hope you grow up to build a world where tolerance, peace and coexistence despite differences is the norm. My beloved, I pray that you grow up knowing and being proud of your grandfather and everything he stood for. I love you, and I long for the opportunity to meet you, whether it is in this life or in the corridors of Paradise in the one after. Oh God, please make me better than they think, and forgive me for what they do not know.

Your loving grandfather,

Salah el Deen Soltan
16/6/2023
27/11/1444