



S. HRG. 114-612

# NOMINATION HEARINGS OF THE 114TH CONGRESS

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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FIRST SESSION—MARCH 10 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2015  
SECOND SESSION—FEBRUARY 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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## NOMINATIONS

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2015

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

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Paul A. Folmsbee, of Oklahoma, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic of Mali  
Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic of South Sudan  
Cassandra Q. Butts, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas  
Katherine Simonds Dhanani, of Florida, to be Ambassador of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Somalia

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:16 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeff Flake presiding. Present: Senators Flake and Markey.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF FLAKE, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

Senator FLAKE. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. I would like to welcome all of you here, both the nominees and family members.

We have talked and been able to meet all of you in my office. Thank you for coming by.

As you know, I have long had an interest in Africa, having spent some time there. Last week, Ed and I presided over a hearing, a subcommittee hearing examining the economic policies or the promises that exist on the continent, particularly after the summit we had, the Leader summit last August. That was our first hearing in the Congress, and we will have many more.

But today, we are going to hear from nominees to Mali, South Sudan, and Somalia, and we will look at some of sub-Saharan Africa's most serious challenges. We also have the nominee for the Bahamas as well. I am grateful that she is here.

After seeing positive developments in 2013, Mali's security and governance climate has continued to deteriorate. And despite international pressure and ongoing mediation efforts, the conflict of South Sudan has continued for over a year, costing more than 10,000 lives, displacing more than 2 million people, causing millions more to require humanitarian assistance.

The administration's decision to nominate an Ambassador in Somalia offers at least a glimmer of hope for movement on the security and governance front. I look forward to hearing more about the potential for progress, as well as the hurdles that exist, when we establish a presence in Mogadishu.

We are also considering a nominee, as I mentioned, for the Bahamas. It is an important regional neighbor, and I look forward to thoughts on economic progress and partnership with us here.

Thank you all for your time and for your expertise. I look forward to your testimony.

With that, I recognize Senator Markey.

**STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, so much, and I very much appreciate you holding this very important hearing.

Three of the nominees that we are going to be talking about, and to, today, and hoping to be confirmed as U.S. Ambassadors, are looking at three of the most challenging countries in sub-Saharan Government: Mali, South Sudan, and Somalia. The fourth is seeking confirmation to the Bahamas, a place that most likely conjures up thoughts of vacation, but in truth it is a critical country on the United States third border in the Caribbean.

All four of our nominees have distinguished records of public service that will continue as U.S. Ambassadors when they are confirmed.

And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having this hearing.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Senator Markey. Our first nominee is Paul Folmsbee. Mr. Folmsbee is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service. He currently serves as executive director of the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs. Previously, Mr. Folmsbee served in a number of challenging assignments, including senior civilian representative for the Regional Command East Afghanistan; principal officer at the U.S. consulate in Mumbai, India; the Provincial Reconstruction team leader in Baghdad; and the director of international narcotics in law enforcement affairs at our Embassy in Pakistan.

Mr. Folmsbee has also served in a number of Africa assignments, including Gabon, Tanzania, Kenya. Mr. Folmsbee earned a B.A. in political science from Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas, and an M.A. in social anthropology from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, OK.

Our second nominee is Mary Catherine Phee. Ms. Phee is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, currently serves as chief of staff in the Office of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. From 2011 to 2014, Ms. Phee served as deputy chief of staff in Ethiopia. She was previously director for Iraq at the National Security Council, the regional affairs coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, and counselor for political affairs at the U.S. mission at the U.N. in New York.

Ms. Phee has held multiple positions focusing on Iraq and other countries in the Middle East. And before joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Phee also worked at Development Alternatives, a Bethesda, MD, company, and as deputy press secretary for Senator

Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Ms. Phee earned a B.A. at Indiana University and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Our third nominee is Cassandra Butts. Ms. Butts is currently a senior adviser to the CEO at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Previously, she served at the White House as deputy counsel to the President, general counsel in the Office of the President Elect, and general counsel for the Obama transition project. Prior to these nominations, Ms. Butts was the senior vice president for domestic policy at the Center for American Progress, and counsel and policy director for Representative Richard Gephardt in the United States House of Representatives.

She earned a B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Our fourth nominee is Katherine Simonds Dhanani. Ms. Dhanani is a career Foreign Service officer and currently serves as director of the Office of Regional and Security Affairs in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs. Previously, Ms. Dhanani served as consul general at the U.S. consulate in India. She has held numerous assignments in Africa, including deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe, and at the U.S. Embassy in Gabon. Prior to Gabon, she was political and economic section chief at the U.S. Embassy in Zambia, and economic section chief in the DRC.

Ms. Dhanani earned a B.A. from Kenyon College in Gambier, OH, and an M.A. from MIT.

So thank you all for being here. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and viewpoints. I am sure you will want to introduce family members as well, and we appreciate them for the sacrifice that they make as well as you serve.

We would appreciate it if you could keep your testimony to about 5 minutes, and then we can have time for questions to be asked.

So we will recognize Mr. Folmsbee first, and thank you again for being here.

**STATEMENT OF PAUL A. FOLMSBEE, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF MALI**

Mr. FOLMSBEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to come before you as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Mali. I deeply appreciate the confidence and trust the President and Secretary of State have shown in nominating me for this position.

I am supported here today by my friends and colleagues from the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, as well as my friends from USAID. In fact, my former PRT deputy leader from Baghdad is actually sitting behind me, Jeff Bakken. He is a good man.

My wife, Angie Chin, is also a U.S. diplomat and is probably watching us from Bangkok, Thailand, right about now. Unfortunately, she could not be here today.

My career in the Foreign Service began in 1987 and has led to me to assignments all over the world. The bulk of my assignments have been in developing countries, including Kenya, Haiti, Gabon,

and Tanzania. In Iraq in 2007, I embedded with the 2/82nd Airborne, and ran a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Sadr City and Adhamiyah in downtown Baghdad. In Afghanistan in 2011, I embedded with the 1st Cavalry as a senior civilian rep for Regional Command East, where we worked on expanding governance and economic development programs.

If confirmed, I would draw upon these experiences and many others to deepen U.S.-Mali ties, as we continue to work toward our mutual goals of combating extremism, strengthening democratic governance, and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Mali continues to emerge from the most serious security, political, and development crisis it has faced since independence. It is rebuilding its social, economic, and governance institutions following the March 2012 coup d'état and subsequent takeover of parts of northern Mali by extremists.

Poverty both exacerbates Mali's conflicts and underscores its capacity challenges. Mali is ranked 176th of the 187 nations in the United Nations 2014 Human Development Index. In addition, the recent coup and the events that followed revealed the fragility of Mali's government institutions.

Despite these challenges, Mali peacefully elected a President and National Assembly in 2013. The new government has made national reconciliation a top priority, and donors are now engaging with the country. It is within this context U.S. engagement will be critical as we foster democratic values, promote good governance, and engender peace and security.

U.S. assistance programs will continue to increase access to education and health services, improve nutrition and sanitation, strengthen Malian food security, and facilitate inclusive economic growth. One of the key strategies for deepening economic growth is expanding the resiliency of poor communities so they will not be vulnerable to the shocks of extreme weather and conflict.

Security and stability remain a major challenge. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, which is quite a mouthful, we call it MINUSMA, was established by the Security Council Resolution 2100 in April of 2013 to support the stabilization of the country and to carry out a number of security-related tasks.

Our government continues to fully support that effort by providing training, equipment, and intelligence. The success of this mission is critical to the long-term stability of the country.

Another key objective is to aid in the reformation of the Malian security sector by supporting institutions that can manage internal and external security threats, contribute to national and regional stability while adhering to civilian authority and respect international law and human rights norms.

While there are a number of areas in the security sector that require investment, the near-to-medium-term priority for U.S. assistance are those activities that will refine the national strategy, repair civilian-military relations, improve access to justice in the north, and encourage the legislature and civil society stakeholders to hold security services accountable.



The government has engaged in internationally supported efforts to advance peace talks with the northern armed groups. These talks are ongoing, and their positive outcome is far from ensured.

The U.S. Government will continue to participate in these negotiations as an observer and will also continue to look for opportunities to support a balanced and peaceful way forward.

The outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa, and the threat it represented to Mali, punctuated the need for urgent cooperation on health matters. Early containment of the outbreak was a major priority for the Government of Mali, international partners, and the United States. Fortunately, the threat was successfully contained, aided in part by direct U.S. assistance from the State Department, the National Institutes of Health, CDC, and USAID.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, if confirmed, I will look to you for counsel and support to ensure that our bilateral relationship remains firmly rooted in our shared vision of a democratic and prosperous Mali.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Folmsbee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL A. FOLMSBEE

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to come before you as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Mali. I deeply appreciate the confidence and trust the President and Secretary of State have shown in nominating me for this position.

I am supported here today by my friends and colleagues from the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs and USAID. My wife Angelika Chin is also a U.S. diplomat and is serving at our Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. Unfortunately she could not be here today.

My career in the Foreign Service began in 1987 and has led me to assignments all over the world. The bulk of my assignments have been to developing countries including Kenya, Haiti, Gabon, and Tanzania. In Iraq, in 2007, I embedded with the 2/82 Airborne and ran a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Sadr City and Adhamiya in downtown Baghdad. In Afghanistan in 2011, I embedded with the 1st Cavalry as the Senior Civilian Representative for Regional Command East and worked on expanding governance and economic development programs. If confirmed, I would draw upon these experiences and many others to deepen U.S.-Mali ties as we continue to work toward our mutual goals of combating extremism, strengthening democratic governance and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Mali continues to emerge from the most serious security, political, and development crises it has faced since independence. It is rebuilding its social, economic, and governance institutions following a rebellion in the north, the March 2012 coup d'etat, and the subsequent takeover of parts of northern Mali by extremists. Poverty both exacerbates Mali's conflicts and underscores its capacity challenges. Mali is ranked 176th of the 187 nations in the United Nation's 2014 Human Development Index. In addition, conflict with northern groups, the recent coup and the events that followed revealed the fragility of Mali's government institutions. Despite those challenges, Mali peacefully elected a President and National Assembly in 2013. The new government has made national reconciliation a top priority and donors are engaging with the country. It is within this context that U.S. engagement will be critical as we foster democratic values, promote good governance and engender peace and security. U.S. assistance programs will continue to increase access to education and health services, improve nutrition and sanitation, strengthen Malians' food security, and facilitate inclusive economic growth. One of the key strategies for deepening economic growth is expanding the resiliency of poor communities so that they will not be vulnerable to the shocks of extreme weather and conflict.

Security and stability remain a major challenge. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by Security Council Resolution 2100 in April of 2013 to support the stabilization of the country and to carry out a number of security-related tasks. Our government con-

tinues to fully support that effort by providing training, equipment and intelligence. The success of this mission is critical to the long-term stability of the country.

Another key objective is to aid in the reformation of the Malian security sector by supporting institutions that can manage internal and external security threats, contribute to national and regional stability while adhering to civilian authority, and respect international law and human rights norms. While there are a number of areas in the security sector that require investment, the near- to medium-term priority for U.S. assistance are those activities that will refine the national security strategy, repair civilian-military relations, improve access to justice in the north, and encourage the legislature and civil society stakeholders to hold security services accountable.

The government has engaged in internationally supported efforts to advance peace talks with the northern armed groups. These talks are ongoing and their positive outcome is far from assured. The U.S. Government will continue to participate in these negotiations as an observer and will also continue to look for opportunities to support a balanced and peaceful way forward.

The outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa and the threat it represented to Mali punctuated the need for urgent cooperation on health matters. Early containment of the outbreak was a major priority for both the Government of Mali, international partners, and the United States. Fortunately, the threat was successfully contained, aided in part by direct U.S. assistance from the State Department, the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, if confirmed, I will look to you for counsel and support to ensure that our bilateral relationship remains firmly rooted in our shared vision of a democratic and prosperous Mali. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. Phee.

**STATEMENT OF MARY CATHERINE PHEE, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN**

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan.

I would like to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with this committee.

I would also like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues who have generously shared encouragement, support, and laughter throughout my career. I could not undertake these challenges without them. And I would like to draw special attention to my sister, Amy, who is here today.

I am deeply proud of the opportunity to serve our Nation and to apply my experience in tough situations to advance American interests and values.

Mr. Chairman, I know you and the members of the committee share in the profound disappointment many of us experienced in December 2013 when the political process in South Sudan broke down, and the country's leaders resorted to violence to resolve their disputes. And as you noted, this has resulted in a significant loss of life and nearly 2 million people have been displaced inside and outside of South Sudan. More than 4 million people now need emergency humanitarian assistance, and the country's fledgling economy is at a standstill.

Our disappointment is rooted in the special relationship that we in the United States, including Congress, successive administra-

tions, and the American people, forged with the people of South Sudan during their long civil wars and struggle for self-determination. We had high hopes that the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which led to independence in 2011, offered a permanent end to war. But we were not blind to the challenges of overcoming decades of inadequate government, security, and development, and, with our international partners, sought to avert a breakdown of the fragile political order.

Then and now, our core interests remain strengthening this young democratic state and promoting internal stability and regional peace.

In collaboration with our Troika partners, which are the United Kingdom and Norway, we are backing negotiations to convince President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar to commit to a durable cease-fire and to agree to a transitional government of national unity. The negotiating effort has been led by the group of countries neighboring South Sudan known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or, more easily, IGAD. To the frustration of all, to date, the parties have resisted compromise.

The current IGAD chairman, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, announced March 6 that he would reform the peace process to formally include the African Union, the Troika, the United Nations, the EU, and China. We support this approach.

To be sustainable, we believe the final peace agreement must respect the desire of the people of South Sudan for justice and accountability, as well as reconciliation and healing.

We have called for the prompt release of the official report from the African Union's Commission of Inquiry, which was charged with investigating human rights violations and other abuses during the armed conflict. To advance the peace process, the U.N. Security Council on March 3 unanimously adopted a resolution we introduced that established a targeted sanctions regime and proposed an arms embargo that could be imposed should the South Sudanese leaders fail to respond to the mediation.

To address the humanitarian impact, we have provided more than \$994 million in emergency humanitarian assistance, including help for internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring countries. This assistance has helped stave off famine and provided lifesaving services such as water, sanitation, and health care.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work with the leaders and the people of South Sudan to help end the conflict and begin the rebuilding. I will provide vigorous support to the ongoing effort to improve the humanitarian situation.

Through our partnership, we can help South Sudan begin to recover from this devastating setback, and regain the opportunities present at independence.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I assure you that, if confirmed, I will be proud to carry on the diplomatic tradition of ensuring the safety and security of American citizens abroad while focusing on the welfare of the American and South Sudanese staff of Embassy Juba.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, I thank you for the honor to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Phee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARY CATHERINE PHEE

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan. I would like to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with this committee. I would also like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues who have generously shared encouragement, support, and laughter throughout my career. I could not undertake these challenges without them. I am deeply proud of the opportunity to serve our Nation and to apply my experience in tough situations to advance American interests.

Mr. Chairman, I know you and the members of the committee share in the profound disappointment many of us experienced in December 2013 when the political process in South Sudan broke down and the country's leaders resorted to violence to resolve their disputes. This breakdown has generated a senseless conflict. There has been a significant loss of life and nearly 2 million people have been displaced inside and outside of South Sudan. More than 4 million people now need emergency humanitarian assistance and the country's fledgling economy is at a standstill.

Our disappointment is rooted in the special relationship that we in the United States—including Congress, successive administrations, and the American people—forged with the people of South Sudan during their long civil wars and struggle for self-determination. We had high hopes that the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which led to independence in 2011, offered a permanent end to war in South Sudan. But we were not blind to the challenges of overcoming decades of inadequate governance, development, and security, and, with our international partners, sought to avert a breakdown of the fragile political order. Then and now, our core interests remain strengthening this young democratic state and promoting internal stability and regional peace.

In collaboration with our Troika partners, which are the United Kingdom and Norway, we are backing negotiations to convince President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar to commit to a durable cease-fire and to agree to a transitional government of national unity. The negotiating effort has been led by the group of countries neighboring South Sudan known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or IGAD. To the frustration of all, to date the parties have resisted compromise. The current IGAD Chairman, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, announced March 6 that he would reform the peace process to include the African Union, the Troika, the U.N., the EU, and China. We support this approach.

To be sustainable, we believe the final peace agreement must respect the desire of the people of South Sudan for justice and accountability, as well as reconciliation and healing. We have called for the prompt release of the official report from the African Union's Commission of Inquiry, which was charged with investigating human rights violations and other abuses during the armed conflict.

To advance the peace process, the U.N. Security Council on March 3 unanimously adopted a resolution we introduced that established a targeted sanctions regime and proposed an arms embargo that could be imposed should the South Sudanese leaders fail to respond to the mediation. The resolution demonstrates that the international community condemns this conflict and seeks a prompt, negotiated end to the crisis.

To address the humanitarian impact on the people of South Sudan, we have provided more than \$994 million in emergency humanitarian assistance since the conflict began, including help for internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring countries. This assistance has helped stave off famine and provided lifesaving services, such as water, sanitation, and health care.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work with the leaders and the people of South Sudan to help end the conflict and begin the rebuilding. I will provide vigorous support to the ongoing effort to improve the humanitarian situation. Through our partnership we can help South Sudan begin to recover from this devastating setback and regain the opportunities present at independence.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I assure you that, if confirmed, I will be proud to carry on the diplomatic tradition of ensuring the safety and security of American citizens abroad, while focusing on the welfare of the American and South Sudanese staff members of Embassy Juba.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Markey, I thank you for the honor to appear before you today and I welcome your questions.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.  
Ms. Butts.

**STATEMENT OF CASSANDRA Q. BUTTS, NOMINATED TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

Ms. BUTTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be our next Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

I am profoundly grateful for the honor the President has bestowed upon me, and for the confidence shown in me by Secretary Kerry, as I look to assume this new assignment, if confirmed.

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce my sister, Deidra Abbott, who is here today, representing my family. My family has been a wellspring of support for me, and I would not be here today but for their support, their love, and their belief in me.

I believe my experience as a lawyer and a policy adviser, and my service to my country in the executive and legislative branches, have well-prepared me for the duties of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Having worked on some of the major legal policy issues of our time, including my most recent experience in international development at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, I have always sought solutions consistent with the values of our great Nation. I understand that leading with our values is a basis for finding lasting policy solutions and building strong partnerships at home and abroad.

If the Senate confirms me, I would bring those experiences grounded in my strong belief in equality, justice, and compassion to the post of the Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Through close political and economic and cultural ties, the United States and the Bahamas have forged a strong bilateral relationship that has served both countries quite well. Bahamians regularly travel to the United States to visit friends and family and to conduct business, and approximately 6 million U.S. citizens travel to the Bahamas annually.

The proximity of the Bahamas to the United States inextricably links our country's national security. Together, we are confronting shared challenges, such as illicit trafficking, including narcotics, arms, and people, as well as bolstering the rule of law.

If confirmed, my first and foremost priority will be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens living in or visiting the Bahamas, as well as the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are included among Embassy Nassau's consular oversight.

I will work closely with the Bahamian authorities, community groups, and the entire U.S. mission, including the U.S. law enforcement officials, under Chief of Mission Authority, to promote innovative, effective, and whole-of-government-based efforts to reduce crime rates and other illegal activities. I will also continue to promote greater economic ties and growth, including exploring ways to make the Bahamas a more attractive place in which to invest and do business through the development and enforcement of stable and transparent regulations, as well as procurement and investment procedures.

If confirmed, I will work to assist the Bahamas in protecting and preserving for future generations the incredible natural beauty that makes it the vacation destination of choice for so many people, including by expanding marine protected areas. As part of the same effort, I will encourage the Bahamas to adopt cleaner technologies and build strong and resilient energy markets, which will not only provide a more secure and sustainable clean energy future in economic growth, but also limit the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

I also will make working with our Bahamian partners on human rights issues a priority by seeking to further gender equality; to expand opportunities for disenfranchised youth; and to encourage Bahamian officials to adopt fair, humane, and transparent practices related to irregular migrants, including improved access to refugee status determinations.

Expanding educational exchanges is one of the best ways to deepen the already existing cultural and historic ties between the United States and the Bahamas. At present, approximately 1,700 students from the Bahamas study in the United States, and more than 750 students from the United States study in the Bahamas. If confirmed, I will seek to increase levels of educational exchange between our two countries, including through enhancing existing partnerships and building new ones.

While geography and history have forged strong bonds between our countries, the Bahamas also maintains close economic ties with many other nations. As the world economy continues to rebound, the Bahamas key tourism and hospitality sectors have seen increases in Asian investment. We do not see foreign economic and commercial links to the Bahamas as a threat to U.S. interests. We strongly believe that the American companies can successfully compete with anybody in the world when transparent regulations and practices with steadfast respect for the rule of law prevail.

The United States has not had an ambassador in Nassau for over 4 years, but we have strong leadership and staff at U.S. Embassy the Bahamas continuing the important work of the mission. Still, the value of having a confirmed U.S. Ambassador to advance U.S. interests cannot be overstated.

If confirmed, I will strive to further the good work of our Nassau mission and strengthen the close and productive bilateral relationship.

In closing, I am confident that I have the experience and imagination and the energy to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. I thank you, again, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Ranking Member Markey, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Butts follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CASSANDRA Q. BUTTS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. I am profoundly grateful for the honor the President has bestowed upon me and for the confidence shown in me by Secretary Kerry as I look to take up this assignment, if confirmed.

Please allow me to introduce the members of my family who are here today. My family has been a wellspring of support. I am here today because of their love and support and because of their dedication and belief in me.

I believe my experience as a lawyer and policy advisor and my service to my country in the executive and legislative branches have well prepared me for the duties of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Having worked on some of the major legal and policy issues of our time, including my most recent experience in international development at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, I have always sought solutions consistent with the values of our great Nation. I understand that leading with our values is the basis for finding lasting policy solutions and building strong partnerships at home and abroad. If the Senate confirms me, I would bring those experiences, grounded in my strong belief in equality, justice, and compassion, to the post of Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Through close political, economic, and cultural ties, the United States and the Bahamas have forged a strong bilateral relationship that has served both countries well. Bahamians regularly travel to the United States to visit friends and family and to conduct business. And approximately 6 million U.S. citizens travel to the Bahamas annually. The proximity of the Bahamas to the United States inextricably links our countries' national security. Together we are confronting shared challenges such as illicit trafficking, including in narcotics, arms, and people, as well as bolstering the rule of law.

If confirmed, my first and foremost priority will be to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens living in or visiting the Bahamas, as well as the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are included under Embassy Nassau's consular oversight. I will work closely with Bahamian authorities, community groups, and the entire U.S. mission, including U.S. law enforcement officials under Chief of Mission authority, to promote innovative, effective, and whole-of-government based efforts to reduce crime rates and other illegal activities. I also will continue to promote greater economic ties and growth, including exploring ways to make the Bahamas a more attractive place in which to invest and do business through the development and enforcement of stable and transparent regulations as well as procurement and investment procedures.

If confirmed, I will work to assist the Bahamas in protecting and preserving for future generations the incredible natural beauty that makes it the vacation destination of choice for so many people, including by expanding marine protected areas. As part of this same effort, I will encourage the Bahamas to adopt cleaner technologies and build strong and resilient energy markets, which will not only provide a more secure and sustainable clean energy future and economic growth, but also limit the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

I also will make working with our Bahamian partners on human rights issues a priority by seeking to further gender equality; to expand opportunities for disenfranchised youth; and to encourage Bahamian officials to adopt fair, humane, and transparent practices related to irregular migrants, including improved access to refugee status determinations.

Expanding educational exchanges is one of the best ways to deepen the already existing cultural and historical ties between the United States and the Bahamas. At present, approximately 1,700 students from the Bahamas study in the United States, and more than 750 students from the United States study in the Bahamas. If confirmed, I will seek to increase levels of educational exchange between our two countries, including through enhancing existing partnerships and the building of new ones.

While geography and history have forged strong bonds between our countries, the Bahamas also maintains close economic ties with many other nations. As the world economy continues to rebound, the Bahamas' key tourism and hospitality sectors have seen increases in Asian investment. We do not see foreign economic and commercial links to the Bahamas as a threat to U.S. interests. We strongly believe that American companies can successfully compete with anybody in the world when transparent regulations and practices and steadfast respect for the rule of law prevail.

The United States has not had an ambassador in Nassau for over 4 years, but we have had strong leadership and staff at the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas continuing the important work of the mission. Still, the value of having a confirmed U.S. ambassador to advance U.S. interests cannot be overstated. If confirmed, I will strive to further the good work of our Nassau mission and strengthen a close and productive bilateral relationship.

In closing, I am confident that I have the experience, imagination, and energy to lead our bilateral relationship with the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. While at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, I have seen firsthand the important work carried out by our ambassadors and their teams as they engage and advocate for U.S. policy goals and objectives. If confirmed, I

pledge to uphold the tradition and high standards of public service expected of a U.S. ambassador. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve my country.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. Dhanani.

**STATEMENT OF KATHERINE SIMONDS DHANANI, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA**

Ms. DHANANI. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, I am honored to appear before you today to be considered for the position of United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia.

I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence in me they have shown with this nomination.

If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our interests by promoting a unified and peaceful Somalia with a stable and representative government that can defend its territory, foster economic development, and defend human rights.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce my husband, Azim Dhanani. His support has meant everything to me as he accompanied me to assignments around the globe. And if confirmed, I will continue to rely on him as I take up my new responsibilities.

This is a critical time in our engagement with Somalia. Decades of conflict, famine, and oppression led many to label Somalia a failed state. Today, Somalis are proving those pessimists wrong. There is progress in Somalia, measured, but real progress on security, on economic development, and on the establishment of representative government.

Just over 2 years ago, the United States officially recognized the Federal Government of Somalia. Since that time, we have been working closely with the Somalis as they rebuild their state and lay a foundation for the future.

The decision to nominate the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia in over 2 decades was taken in recognition of our deepening relationship and our conviction that Somalia is on a path that will bring better times. Establishment of a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu will represent the culmination of this recognition process, but there is no fixed timeline for achieving this objective.

If confirmed, I will carefully monitor the security environment in Somalia, as I seek to advance our diplomatic objectives with no higher priority than my responsibility for the security of personnel under my charge. U.S. interests in Somalia are clear, just as the collapse of Somalia was a strain on the region, stability, prosperity, and peace in Somalia will bolster positive trends in economic and democratic development in Africa.

Violent extremists exploited the past failure of governance in Somalia to our and Somali's detriment.

We have a strong humanitarian interest in easing the suffering of 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons, in reducing the food insecurity that leaves Somalia vulnerable to famine, and



in addressing the failures that place Somalia at the bottom of the list on so many human development indicators.

If confirmed, I will keep these U.S. interests firmly in mind as I lead U.S. engagement with the Somali Government, the Somali people, and the international partners who share our commitment to seeing Somalia succeed.

Mr. Chairman, in my written statement, I outlined the U.S. strategy on Somalia, which was submitted to Congress last summer. In the interests of time, I will not repeat that, but in sum, U.S. policy revolves around three elements: security, the political process, and development. Gains in each reinforce and must keep pace with the others.

Mr. Chairman, Somalia is moving in the right direction but more progress is needed. Somali leaders must pull together to build their institutions, protect their citizens, and unite their country. Somalia's neighbors and friends must assist in that effort.

I can assure you today that, if confirmed, it will be my honor to restore U.S. Mission Somalia, advance U.S. interests, and strengthen our relationship with Somalia. And I look forward to the opportunity to work with the committee to achieve those goals.

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

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dhanani follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATHERINE S. DHANANI

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Markey, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today to be considered for the position of United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence in me they have shown through this nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our interests by promoting a unified and peaceful Somalia, with a stable and representative government, that can defend its territory, foster economic development, and defend human rights.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me at this time to introduce my husband, Azim Dhanani. His support has meant everything to me as he accompanied me to assignments around the globe, and, if confirmed, I will continue to rely on him as I take up my new responsibilities.

This is a critical time in our engagement with Somalia. Decades of conflict, famine, and oppression led many to label Somalia a "failed state." Today, Somalis are proving those pessimists wrong. There is progress in Somalia—measured but real progress—on security, on economic development, and on the establishment of representative government. Just over 2 years ago, the United States officially recognized the Federal Government of Somalia. Since that time, we have been working closely with the Somalis as they rebuild their state and lay a foundation for the future. The decision to nominate the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia in over two decades was taken in recognition of our deepening relationship and our conviction that Somalia is on a path that will bring better times. Establishment of a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu will represent the culmination of this recognition process, but there is no fixed timeline for achieving this objective. If confirmed, I will carefully monitor the security environment in Somalia as I seek to advance our diplomatic objectives, with no higher priority than my responsibility for the security of personnel under my charge.

U.S. interests in Somalia are clear. Just as the collapse of Somalia was a strain on the region, stability, prosperity, and peace in Somalia will bolster positive trends in economic and democratic development in Africa. Violent extremists exploited the past failure of governance in Somalia, to our and Somalis' detriment. We have a strong humanitarian interest in easing the suffering of 2 million refugees and internally displaced Somalis, in reducing the food insecurity that leaves Somalia vulnerable to famine, and in addressing the failures that place Somalia at the bottom of the list on so many human development indicators. If confirmed, I will keep these U.S. interests firmly in mind as I lead U.S. engagement with the Somali Government, the Somali people, and the international partners who share our commitment to seeing Somalia succeed.

Mr. Chairman, as referenced in the U.S. Strategy on Somalia that the State Department submitted to Congress last summer, and the subsequent January update, U.S. policy revolves around three elements: security, the political process, and development. On the security front, our top priority is degrading al-Shabaab, which has links to al-Qaeda. Driving al-Shabaab from its remaining strongholds and neutralizing it as a destabilizing force are critical to open up space for legitimate governance and development opportunities. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, it will be my priority to continue our efforts to help our African partners to degrade al-Shabaab. I will continue to support the African Union Mission in Somalia—or AMISOM as it is most commonly known—until Somalis are ready and able to assume full responsibility for their own security. To that end, building the capacity of the Somali National Security Forces will be a top priority.

In Somalia, political and security gains must reinforce and keep pace with one another. The Federal Government has made progress establishing government institutions, negotiating relationships with regional authorities, and supporting community stabilization. However, the Somali Government's institutional capacity and reach remain extremely limited. If confirmed, I will ensure that the United States, in very close coordination with our international partners, continues to support the Somali Government as it implements "Vision 2016"—the Somali-led state-building agenda for completing a federal state-formation process, holding a constitutional referendum, and preparing for democratic elections.

As we focus on the long-term goals of establishing a sustainable federal system of governance, we must keep in focus the immediate needs of the Somali people. Tragically, Somalis continue to face a multitude of natural and man-made threats to their livelihoods and their lives. Those imperiled by al-Shabaab risk losing their land, their livestock, and their lives; those freed from al-Shabaab may still be in danger from an overall lack of security, including gender-based violence and interclan rivalry. Last year alone, conflict forced more than 80,000 Somalis from their homes. The food security situation continues to teeter on the brink of crisis with a million or more Somalis at risk. If I am confirmed, U.S. efforts to help address these urgent needs will remain at the forefront of our engagement.

Mr. Chairman, Somalia is moving in the right direction, but more progress is needed. Somali leaders must pull together to build their institutions, protect their citizens, and unite their country. Somalia's neighbors and friends must assist in that effort. I can assure you today that, if confirmed, it will be my honor to restore U.S. Mission Somalia, advance U.S. interests, and strengthen our relationship with Somalia, and I look forward to the opportunity to work with the committee to achieve those goals.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Ms. Dhanani. I want to apologize. I put an "L" in your name at the beginning.

Well, thank you for your testimony, all of you, and thank you again to the family members who are here and watching from afar, as well.

Mr. Folmsbee, with regard to Mali, what is the biggest U.S. commercial interest that we have there?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. You know, Senator, to be honest with you, Mali is fighting for last place in a human index factor put out by the United Nations. Its economy is at a low point after the 2012 coup, and so it is very modest.

Any kind of economic development issue, I am sure we could dig up some U.S. sales and that sort of thing, but it is going to be very limited. In reality, it is going to be development assistance at this point.

Senator FLAKE. So commercial development not for a while, mostly development?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. If we can hook some U.S. companies out there, I promise you I will personally get on it and help get them out there.

Senator FLAKE. It is a good place to start, in that regard.

Mr. FOLMSBEE. Absolutely.

Senator FLAKE. Well, great.

Ms. Phee, just yesterday it was reported that the legislature or the lawmakers in South Sudan voted to extend the President's term for another 3 years. I guess they are trying to confer legitimacy where they can. What role is President Kiir playing at present, in your view? What can he do to help the situation at this point?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Senator. We believe the best approach remains a peace agreement, a peace agreement that would end the conflict and establish a transitional government of national unity. And one of the key tasks of that transitional government would be to hold elections, permanent elections. That would be the best way to renew legitimacy.

The President's Special Envoy, Ambassador Donald Booth, was in Juba yesterday meeting with President Kiir to continue to push him to make the compromises necessary to reach that peace agreement.

Senator FLAKE. We have a long way to go, though, it is safe to assume.

Ms. PHEE. It is a challenging task ahead of all of us. One good sign is the fact that so many are unified in wanting to see an end to this conflict. The neighbors, the African Union, the United Nations, China is supporting us in this effort. So, hopefully, if we continue to speak with a collective voice, we will be able to make an impact.

And in that regard, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Congress for its efforts. Its statements, its meetings, its calls, have helped reinforce that message to the South Sudanese leaders that it is time to make compromise.

Senator FLAKE. The countries in the region are playing a role through the regional organization, but Uganda has kind of played an outsized role there. Has that been negative or positive or both? I know there have been some issues with some of the troops.

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. IGAD has had a tough time, but I think it is important to recognize that any peace agreement that is reached will need the support of its neighbors to be fully effective. So we continue to engage with them to work closely with them to try and help them reach the shared goal that we all have of seeing an end to the conflict.

Senator FLAKE. You mentioned one of your roles, as it is for every Ambassador, to protect U.S. citizens who happen to be traveling there. To what extent do we have U.S. citizens—I am assuming it is mostly those in the Sudanese diaspora. What kind of visits are they on right now? I mean, are there other many visits going on?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for raising that point. The State Department last issued a travel warning for South Sudan advising American citizens not to travel there because of the current conflict. We did that in January of this year. So you are absolutely correct. The primary set of visitors from the United States are members of the diaspora, who, like us, care very deeply about this situation and are trying to support a positive resolution.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. Butts, when we spoke in my office, you were talking about the pretty robust presence that we have there given our interest

in all the travel, 6,000 visits a year. Can you describe how many State Department employees, roughly, and how many folks from Customs and other agencies of government there are there?

Ms. BUTTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Nassau is distinct as a post in that there are actually fewer State Department employees in Nassau than there are Homeland Security employees. Actually, there is more of a Homeland Security presence there from Customs and Border Protection, and a lot of the work that we do around immigration and trying to deter irregular migration. There is a significant Coast Guard presence in Nassau. So in total, we have a little over 200 staff with about 20-plus on the State Department side, and about 70 for Homeland Security, and then other agencies are also included. We have a few from DOJ. We have, of course, have a military attaché at post.

And as you appreciate, it is an archipelago, so there are a number of islands. So in Freeport, for example, there is a significant Customs and Border Protection presence, because of preclearance for flights that go between the United States and between the Bahamas.

So it is a distinct post in both the size and the composition of the staff at post.

Senator FLAKE. A lot of your function will be coordinating then, I assume?

Ms. BUTTS. It will, and that is actually one of the challenges of the post. Things have been working very well. The Chargé there, Lisa Johnson, is actually with us today and has done a great job waiting for an ambassador.

But the coordination is a significant part. Fortunately, the agencies work very well together, and we have a very, very robust coordinated effort in dealing with illicit trafficking and dealing with irregular migration.

Senator FLAKE. Well, thank you.

Ms. Dhanani, can you describe the security situation currently in-country? My understanding is that you will not be stationed in the country, initially. You will operate from Nairobi. We have a secured facility at the airport, I guess.

Can you kind of describe the challenges that we have there, and what the timetable might be for you to actually be in-country for more than a few days at a time, I should say?

Ms. DHANANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and you have identified one of the major issues that will be preoccupying me.

I go to Nairobi with a mission of reestablishing a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu, but that will depend on improvements in the security circumstances on the ground. We have adopted a policy that involves continual monitoring of the security environment and phased reengagement. The phase that we currently stand at allows us to have members of the U.S. Government team enter Mogadishu for periods of up to 2 weeks, to stay for periods as long as 2 weeks. But we can only have a limited presence in Mogadishu at any given time.

And at the moment, our assessment of the security situation does not permit us to move beyond the airport. Clearly, we need to see improvement in the security situation what will allow us to have greater access to all of Mogadishu, as well as have greater numbers

of people on the ground at the airport. So there are limitations today, but it is an enormously improved situation to what it was as little as 2 years ago.

During the last year, the team in the Somalia unit and the U.S. Government employees made 161 trips into Somalia. They visited Mogadishu. They visited many of the regional capitals. They have really had an opportunity to substantially expand their engagement.

As I am there, I will be engaged in constant risk monitoring, risk mitigation, and risk management as we seek to take advantage of improved security to move further and engage further in the pursuit of the objectives that we have in Somalia.

Senator FLAKE. A little more complicated than finding a real estate agent and looking for a residence then, I assume. Well, thank you.

Mr. Markey.

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

Ms. Phee, could you talk about a year later after the United States announced sanctions against South Sudan, in terms of the cooperation we are getting from the EU in ensuring the effectiveness of our policy?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you very much for that question.

The resolution that was adopted earlier this month in the Security Council was a unanimous resolution that established a framework to impose international targeted sanctions. That unanimous resolution follows individual steps by the United States, where the President has used his Executive authority, as well as action by the EU to impose EU's targeted sanctions. So we are now ready to use the forum in the Security Council as a tool to support the peace negotiations.

I think, in sum, I would characterize the EU posture as complementary to our own and adding to the collective pressure to reach an end to the conflict.

Senator MARKEY. Ms. Dhanani, how would you characterize al-Shabaab's relationship with al-Qaeda in all of its manifestations? And how would you describe al-Shabaab's ability to recruit outside of its region, to further destabilize the area?

Ms. DHANANI. Senator Markey, al-Shabaab has formally affiliated with al-Qaeda, so when we engage or consider engagement regarding al-Shabaab, we treat al-Shabaab as we would al-Qaeda.

A very worrying aspect of the crisis in Somalia in recent years has been the effect that it has had on Somalia's neighbors. Certainly, in Kenya, in the Westgate mall attack last year, but also throughout the region in Uganda, Djibouti, and elsewhere, there have been incidents. There have been attacks—some successful, some unsuccessful—that have their roots in al-Shabaab.

And it is for that reason that Somalia's neighbors have formed the bulk of the force that we are supporting as they seek to reverse the gains of al-Shabaab.

Senator MARKEY. What is al-Shabaab's largest source of revenue today?

Ms. DHANANI. My understanding, sir, Ranking Member Markey, is that al-Shabaab continues to rely on charcoal trade, taxes that

they achieve through the charcoal trade, and also through extortion.

They no longer control cities. They no longer control large areas. But they are present in various places in the country. Their resources are much more limited than they were when they controlled a large part of the country, but they still have access in a number of places.

Senator MARKEY. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Folmsbee, can you talk a little bit about the French presence in Mali, its military there, what role it is playing, what success it is enjoying or not enjoying? Just give us a little bit of an overview of the French role right now in that country.

Mr. FOLMSBEE. Well, thank you for that question, Senator.

The French role has been critical. The French went into Mali in 2013 and drove al-Qaeda out of the Northern areas. We have heavily supported that activity, mostly in logistics, but the French have done a lot of good work there. Also with training and setting up MINUSMA, they have also played a key role, although they are also assisting directly with the Malian Army as well, where there have been some difficulties. So they played a very key role.

Senator MARKEY. What is it going to take for the rebels to agree to a peace deal, in your opinion?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. Well, that is a good question. You know, I think the fundamental issue is going to come down to the government and the northern groups, led in part by MNLA, to agree to some terminologies relating to the devolution of authority and power.

I do not know if I see the end of that just yet, but I am hopeful that we will get there. So I think we can hope that will come.

Senator MARKEY. Okay, great, thank you.

Ms. Butts, who I have known for 20 years, can you talk a little bit about the immigration policy in the Bahamas and the questions that are being raised about the barriers that are being erected to being able to gain citizenship and not living in a stateless status? Could you give your overview of what that situation looks like today?

Ms. BUTTS. Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Ranking Member Markey.

We work in a coordinated effort with the Bahamians to patrol both sea and surface patrols to deter irregular migration in the region, but also to interdict irregular migration when we have the opportunity to do so. It is my understanding that migrants coming through the area are principally Haitian and Cuban migrants who stop off in the Bahamas, and ultimately want to make their way to the United States.

If I am confirmed, one of the things that I will urge the Bahamian Government is to ensure that they are following international standards in how they are managing irregular migration with the support of the United States as we have supported them in the past.

There are significant pockets of migrants in the Bahamas. There is a large Bahamian-Haitian community in the Bahamas. As you are probably aware, Senator Markey, there has been a change in the policy of the Bahamian Government. It actually went into effect in November 2014. It now requires that migrants who are in the

country actually have passports of their countries of nationality, and they also have documentation that they can legally be in the Bahamas.

There have been concerns that have been raised by the Bahamian-Haitian community and by human rights advocates that the implementation of the policy has unfairly targeted Haitian communities, and that the Haitians or that the detainees who are being detained as a result of the policy in the detention facility are not being treated to international standards.

I will, certainly, urge while I am there, if I am confirmed, that the Bahamians follow international standards in how they are implementing their immigrant policy and also how they are maintaining the detention facilities.

As you are aware, Senator Markey, I have worked for a number of years on issues related to migration. These are things that I care about, I understand, and I look forward to having the opportunity, if confirmed, to engage on the issue.

I am very confident, though, that the Bahamians have robust democratic institutions, and they will be able to address these concerns with the help of the U.S. Government and also the international community, and I look forward to engaging.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

We will do one more round, if that is all right.

Mr. Folmsbee, do we know who is responsible for the latest attacks on the MINUSMA forces?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. In the north, yes, I believe there is very good intel on that. This is an open session, and I do not know if it is out in the public yet. But there is good intel on that.

There were also attacks in Bamako, and al-Mourabitoun actually has claimed responsibility for those attacks.

Senator Flake. Do we know what is leading to this increase in attacks?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. Well, it is very clear that some of the Tuareg extremists groups are looking to put pressure on the government as it relates to the peace talks. I think there is little doubt about that.

But I also think that they will be thwarted. I think there is a lot of pressure back against them.

Senator FLAKE. As far as the U.S. Government is concerned, do we have the right mix in civilian and military tools for you in the country?

Mr. FOLMSBEE. I think we do, but I will also say, if confirmed, I am, certainly, going to be looking at that, because that is a fair question. The key issue is going to ultimately be what is the north—the opportunity for the government is really to make inroads to the north. There have to be paved roads up there. There have to be jobs up there. There have to be hospitals up there.

So if the government does not swing around with that, our actions will not matter that much. So we have to make sure that the government takes that on.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. Phee, you mentioned in your testimony, the U.N. Security Council on March 3 resolution established a targeted sanctions re-

gime, even proposed an arms embargo that could be imposed, should these South Sudanese officials not respond to mediation. What effect do you believe that would have, particularly the arms embargo that is talked about?

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The objective of the resolution was to send sort of an unequivocal signal to the parties that they were at a crossroads, that it is really time. This conflict has gone on too long. The humanitarian consequences are devastating. And it is time to reach an end and find a way forward.

So it was an effort to provide the negotiators with a tool to convince both sides that there is no self-interest in sustaining the conflict. That is the objective of the resolution. It is tied very closely to the progress of the negotiations, particularly, as I mentioned, this new effort by IGAD to reformulate the negotiating process, and, frankly, to provide a more direct role for outsiders such as ourselves to be engaged and hopefully bring this over the finish line.

Senator FLAKE. All right, well, thank you.

Ms. Butts, we have cooperation with the government with regard to drug interdiction, with the Bahamian Government. Can that be improved, or is that considered good? How would you characterize it?

Ms. BUTTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have made tremendous progress in that area. As you are aware, during the 1980s there was very robust trafficking, a lane through the Bahamas. And at that point in the 1980s, about 80 percent of the cocaine that came to the United States actually came through the Bahamas.

Since then, we have actually established a very robust partnership that is focused on our OPBAT task force. As recently as 2011, actually 10 percent of the cocaine coming to the United States actually came through the Bahamas, and so we have had tremendous success in that regard.

Unfortunately, over the past couple of years, Mr. Chairman, we have seen a bit of an uptick in what was 10 percent in 2011, has now become about 14 percent. So we are doing well. We can, certainly, do better. We could, certainly, use additional resources to fight illicit narcotics coming through. But we have a very strong partnership with the Bahamians on that area.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Ms. Dhanani, what do you think the prospects are for elections that are scheduled to be held next year? And given a very complicated arrangement with the government appointed, as opposed to elected, how credible will that be seen around the country, if these elections are actually held?

Ms. DHANANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I think you have touched on an extremely important factor. We need a Government of Somalia that is a representative government, that the people feel is answerable to them, and that is representative to all the regions of the country in order to have stability going forward.

The existing Federal Government of Somalia was selected. Elders selected the Parliament, and the Parliament nominated the President, and there is a degree of representivity, but not to the extent that we require.



That government, however, has defined and outlined a detailed roadmap toward representative government. "Vision 2016" is the name of this roadmap. It is a roadmap that we and the rest of the international community are supporting.

It includes a number of steps on which the deadlines have already been missed, quite frankly. We are currently focused on urging the Somalis to make progress toward restoring that schedule, making progress toward establishing a constitution.

Creating a federal system is a very complicated task. When we think of what our Founding Fathers achieved and the stability of the United States, it is quite remarkable. This is the challenge that faces Somalis today. And we are supporting the vision that they have outlined, and we are urging, along with our friends and throughout the international community, that they stick to this plan that they have defined for themselves.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Each of you is extremely well-qualified. Life's work has prepared you for the jobs which you are being nominated to take on for our country. What I would like you to, perhaps, give us is, in each one of your own words, your hopes for what you will be remembered for in your ambassadorship, what achievement you want to have left behind when your service has been completed. I am going to ask each one of you to give me a sense of what it is that you would like to have left as your legacy.

We will begin with you, Mr. Folmsbee.

Mr. FOLMSBEE. This is really a great opportunity to talk about that, so thank you for that question.

I think the key element and concern I have for Mali is the divide where the Niger River runs across the country. Everybody to the north has never really been connected to everyone to the south. So you have this cycle of conflict that has been going on for 50 years and probably much longer, actually.

I think the opportunity for all of us in the diplomatic community and the government is to help connect that. That is going to be through education and other areas, as well as in security.

So I hope that is the legacy that someone like myself and our whole team can leave behind, making that connection. That is going to make a big difference that will help stabilize that country.

That is what I am going to do, if confirmed.

Senator Markey. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Phee.

Ms. PHEE. Thank you, Ranking Member Markey, for your support. If I were to be confirmed, I would be the second U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan, so that raises a question: Who wants to be second, right? Generally speaking, second is not a positive space.

But in this instance, I think second is very important and very special, because I would symbolize United States commitment to the people of South Sudan. We are there in the tough times, as well as the more fun times, as was experienced in 2011 when the new state was established.

So, moreover, I would also follow, I think, in the footsteps of so many Americans, students, church groups, activists, Members of Congress, members of so many administrations who have cared for so long for the people of South Sudan and all the suffering they have experienced.

So I would be proud to stand second behind all those folks, and represent U.S. commitment to helping get this right.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Ms. Butts.

Ms. BUTTS. Thank you, Ranking Member Markey.

There is so much that I want to do. If I had to boil it down, I would say, just overall strengthening the bilateral relationship, furthering social and economic justice in the country. Certainly, building on and enforcing and supporting human rights for all the people of the Bahamas, and just more within the mission, within post, strengthening management, improving morale, showing that the people who work at post are valued and all of their efforts are appreciated.

So I hope that my legacy is both inside appreciating the people who work at post, and outside reflecting the best of U.S. values and the best that we have to offer in America.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Ms. Dhanani.

Ms. DHANANI. Thank you, Senator Markey.

I think I have a small advantage here. Unlike my colleague nominated for South Sudan, I will be the first in sometime, and therefore, I have that advantage in a sense.

You know, the step of deciding to nominate someone to serve as Ambassador to Somalia represented the progress that was the result of a lot of hard work that many people, including many of my colleagues in the U.S. Government, put in over the last few years. So in a sense, my nomination is a tribute to the efforts that they made.

Similarly, I would hope the efforts that I and my team make will take us to that next step, the step of establishing a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu. I think that step will be important in itself, but it will be even more important because it will be a sign that so many things have continued to move in a favorable direction, and that Somalia is getting closer and closer to being the kind of peaceful, secure, unified, stable place that we would all like to see it become.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

Well, you are an extraordinary group, and we thank you for your willingness to serve our country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

I want to note the presence of the Deputy Chief of Mission, Chet Neymour, from the Bahamas here.

I want to thank all of you for your testimony and for being here. Thank you for your service. And hearing your remarks and looking at your resumes, it is apparent that you have all been at this awhile. And I know that sometimes our diplomatic efforts are overlooked by the general populace. You are not given the opportunity to board an airplane first or things like that sometimes that an-

other branch of our government seems to get noticed for. But I want you to know that we here appreciate what you do, and we are grateful for your sacrifice and for the sacrifice of your families. The risks, we know that the risks out there that you expose yourselves to as well, and they are not insignificant, particularly with many of these assignments.

So thank you for what you do. Thank you for being here.

For the information of members, the record will remain open until the close of business on Friday, March 27. This will include time for members to submit questions for the record. We would ask you to respond to these questions quickly. Your responses will be made part of the record as well.

Senator FLAKE. With the thanks to the committee, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:12 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF PAUL A. FOLMSBEE, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE  
REPUBLIC OF MALI, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE FOLMSBEE'S REPOSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

*Question.* What further influence will the United States utilize through your offices or other means to compel greater compromise and collaboration in seeking sustainable peace, especially by the long-standing intransigent government and officials in the southern portion of the country? How will you work with the Government of Mali in addressing marginalization in the north?

*Answer.* The United States is engaged in robust diplomatic outreach to urge all parties in Mali to commit immediately to the March 1, 2015, peace agreement. We are working closely with the Government of Mali to support improved service delivery to northern Mali and are considering ways we could support a final peace agreement.

Right now, the United States is supporting a variety of efforts designed to promote peace and reconciliation in northern Mali, including translating, printing, and disseminating 30,000 copies of the peace agreement in local languages; empowering grassroots civil society peace campaigns through hundreds of local forums and discussions; promulgating radio and television programming and targeted SMS text messages reaching millions of Malians; and strengthening national-level institutions charged with resolving the crisis, such as through creating a communications cell in the Ministry of National Reconciliation and improving the capability of justice and civilian security institutions to provide vital services in the north.

*Question.* What are the positions of the United States, France, and neighboring states on the prospect of federalism or autonomy for northern Mali? How such reorganization affect U.S. policy in Mali?

*Answer.* The United States, together with France and other key international partners, strongly supports the June 2013 Ouagadougou Accord. This framework agreement, signed by both the Government of Mali and the northern armed groups, reinforces the international community's commitment to the territorial integrity of the Malian state.

*Question.* MINUSMA signals a shift in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations in which peacekeepers are combating an extremist presence. Does the United States support U.N. peacekeeping as peace enforcement?

*Answer.* Today, two-thirds of U.N. peacekeepers are operating in active conflict areas, many with a chapter VII mandate of peace enforcement. The United States has supported that mandate for these missions. Some of these chapter VII mandated missions involve peace enforcement in situations involving extremists. MINUSMA does not necessarily represent a shift in the chapter VII operating environment.

MINUSMA's mandate, under chapter VII authority, to protect civilians and support the Malian authorities in stabilization efforts and to take steps to deter threats and prevent the return of armed elements, is one part of a broader strategy, including political engagement, to bring stability to northern Mali.

*Question.* How does the lack of an AFRICOM jurisdictional boundary in the Sahel region benefit U.S. Government efforts in dealing with the instability in Mali? What benefits would State Department realize if there was a unified region under one Regional Bureau? How does State Department work through the range of regional and bilateral programming applied to counter terrorism, transborder criminal trafficking and activity, build governance and economic capacity, train, equip, advise and assist security forces, and respond to humanitarian and human rights crises?

*Answer.* Through the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Program (TSCTP), the United States is working to address transborder issues in Mali and the Sahel. TSCTP supports programs that strengthen the Government of Mali's operational and tactical abilities to combat terrorism and programs designed to ensure that Malians remain unreceptive to extremist messages.

Programs designed to strengthen Mali's counterterrorism capabilities include:

- ◆ Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) training for law enforcement. This program provides police with training needed to protect facilities, individuals, and infrastructure from terrorist attacks and respond to major crises such as hostage takings.
- ◆ Establishment of a Legal Advisor from Department of Justice beginning in calendar year 2014.

Programs designed to counter violent extremism include:

- ◆ Installation of community radio stations in the most remote regions of northern Mali and support for radio programming;
- ◆ Support for small scale-community infrastructure such as school rehabilitation and well projects;
- ◆ Engagement with "medersas," which in Mali are Islamic versions of parochial schools that teach secular subjects and are very different from "madrassas" or Koranic schools;
- ◆ Publishing and distribution of 56,600 Arabic-language civics textbooks to medersas for the 2011–2012 school year;
- ◆ Cultural and educational exchange programs and the preservation of ancient Islamic manuscripts;
- ◆ Capacity-building for local government officials and institutions to support decentralization and democratic governance; and
- ◆ Skills training for youth, including a just launched USAID/Mali Out-of-School Youth Project (Projet d'Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs) that provides out-of-school youth, ages 14–25, with low literacy skills nonformal basic education instruction, technical and work readiness training, as well as training in entrepreneurship and leadership.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE FOLMSBEE'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MENENDEZ

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

*Answer.* As the Senior Civilian Representative embedded with Regional Command East in Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012 and as Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader embedded with the 2/82 Airborne in Sadr City and Adhamiya, Baghdad, Iraq from 2007 to 2008, I am proud of the work I did to promote stability, strengthen democracy and protect human rights in two dangerous but vitally important places. If confirmed, I will draw on my experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, among others, to emphasize the importance of protecting human rights and promoting justice as we work to support the national reconciliation process in Mali.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Mali? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Mali? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The 2013 inauguration of President Keita and the establishment of a new National Assembly through free and fair elections ended a 16-month transitional period following the 2012 military coup, armed rebellion, and terrorist occupation of the north. The restoration of a democratic government and the arrest of coup

leader Amadou Sanogo restored some civilian control over the military. The 2013 international military intervention helped to eradicate terrorists and the resumption of peace talks with armed groups has decreased armed conflict.

However, problems exist in some areas. These include ineffective civilian control over security forces and impunity toward the military; acts of sexual violence, summary execution, torture, and use of child soldiers by armed groups; killing of civilians and military forces including peacekeepers by violent extremists; trafficking in persons and exploitative labor, including child labor; and judicial inefficiency, poor prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, lengthy pretrial detention prolonged trial delays, and lack of access to justice in the North.

If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Bamako's extensive diplomatic outreach and programming in support of the peace process and a national reconciliation process that will provide justice and accountability.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Mali in advancing human rights and democracy in general?

*Answer.* The Government of Mali took strong initial steps to advance justice and fight impunity from prosecution, most notably with the imprisonment and ongoing investigation against coup leader Amadou Sanogo and 28 other individuals implicated in extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances committed in the aftermath of the coup d'etat. Judge Yaya Karambe helped drive this fight against impunity as he worked under constant threat from Sanogo's supporters to gather evidence and arrest suspects, culminating in his uncovering a mass-grave with 21 missing Red Beret soldiers in December 2013.

These efforts are laudable, but I am concerned about the lack of progress in pursuing justice for victims of terrorism or human rights abuses that occurred during the occupation of northern Mali. Human rights abuses committed in northern Mali on all sides of the conflict have not been addressed and remain a sticking point in the reconciliation process. The capacity of the justice sector is significantly limited in the north, as judicial officials have been slow to return over continued fears of insecurity. Human rights organizations documented various abuses committed during and after the conflict, including northern armed groups which killed, raped, and abused soldiers and civilians during the 2012 invasion, and Malian Armed Forces which committed summary executions, torture, and forced disappearances upon retaking territory in early 2013.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in Mali?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with nongovernmental organizations in both the United States and Mali to solidify Mali's democratic transition and promote human rights.

*Question.* If confirmed, please describe steps that you will take to enhance effective implementation of Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, commonly known as the Leahy amendment, within the Embassy in Mali as well as steps you would take to accomplish the goal of the law, namely, helping the Government of Mali end impunity for human rights violations by security forces.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to strengthen security sector institutions in Mali by promoting accountability and civilian control. Careful attention to the Leahy vetting process is critical in assuring that this assistance reaches only those individuals within Mali's security forces who are not implicated in abuses of human rights and can be credible advocates for reform and professionalization through participation in a meaningful national reconciliation process that emphasizes respect for human rights of all Malians.

*Question.* After days of protests in the north and a rejection of the recent peace proposal by Tuareg rebels, the Malian Government announced that it would no longer negotiate on the future of the north.

◆ What are the implications of the recent stalemate over a peace deal?

*Answer.* Failure of the parties to reach an agreement risks further violence and increased alienation by the northern populations. However, the agreement would be only a first step toward peace, security, and development in the polarized communities in the north. Without a peace agreement and follow-on action to resolve longstanding issues that divide Bamako and the north, violent extremists will continue to make northern Mali insecure. This insecurity has increased, with more frequent attacks against civilians, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the French forces of Operation Barkhane.

Upon signing a peace agreement, the opportunity for the Government of Mali is to noticeably establish a real presence in the north with hospitals, paved roads, schools, and expanding economic development. The United States will do all it can to assist the government in that initiative.

*Question.* In your written testimony, you referenced the need to reform the Malian security sector. Mali is one of six partner countries for the administration's new Security Governance Initiative (SGI).

- ◆ What is the status of the development of SGI programming in Mali?
- ◆ What has been achieved through existing security sector assistance programs such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)?
- ◆ What lessons can be drawn from TSCTP to inform efforts under SGI?

*Answer.* An interagency Security Governance Initiative (SGI) team visited Mali in February to consult with Malian partners on potential areas for SGI engagement. Expert teams will reengage with Malian counterparts to develop joint country action plans and programs.

Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Program (TSCTP) activities in Mali remain very targeted to specific sectors and activities. We have small programs focused on law enforcement, justice sector, and corrections reform and Antiterrorism Assistance programming on crisis response and terrorist interdiction. In part this is due to the significant European Union program underway there that permits us to be more selective in our engagement. This year TSCTP supported the deployment of Law Enforcement and Resident Legal Advisors to assist in civilian security and justice sector reform. In addition, TSCTP supports several countering violent extremism (CVE) programs promoting peace building, reconciliation, and tolerance. Overall, the United States is focusing on broader security sector reform and political reconciliation before committing to the same kind of tactical training and equipping of counterterrorism units.

TSCTP's experience in Mali and elsewhere in the Sahel and Maghreb provides several important lessons which may benefit SGI efforts. Our experience in Mali highlighted the importance of addressing state weakness and focusing on institutional resilience as key parts of our overall engagement strategy. Before the fall of the Toure Government, TSCTP focused on tactical-level training for various Malian units and the underlying state weaknesses were not sufficiently addressed. Consequently, when the units were deployed without adequate leadership or logistical support, they quickly collapsed. By contrast, TSCTP has intensified its focus on building more sustainable capabilities in Chad, Mauritania, and Niger and invested in defense and civilian security institutions. Capacities in those countries remain nascent in many sectors, but we have seen benefits to the approach as they have responded to threats along multiple borders from Mali, Nigeria, and Libya.

*Question.* Mr. Folmsbee, you alluded to the north-south divide in Mali that has contributed to cycles of conflict. The integration of Tuareg citizens into the broader society has been an ongoing challenge, not only in Mali, but elsewhere in the Sahel.

- ◆ If confirmed as Ambassador, how do you plan to work with the Malian Government, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to work toward this goal?

*Answer.* National reconciliation is a top U.S. policy priority in Mali. If confirmed, I plan to continue working to promote national reconciliation through partnerships with civil society and the Malian Government and by participating in the peace talks as needed. Additionally, with USAID programming, we will promote economic growth and the health sector to help tie the north to the rest of the country.

In direct support of the peace talks, our efforts will include translating, printing, and disseminating 30,000 peace process documents in local languages; empowering grassroots civil society peace campaigns through hundreds of local forums and discussions; promulgating radio and television programming and targeted SMS text messages reaching millions of Malians; and strengthening national-level institutions charged with resolving the crisis, such as through creating a communications cell in the Ministry of National Reconciliation.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE FOLMSBEE'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR FLAKE

*Question.* What more, if anything, can be done to stimulate economic growth and alleviate poverty in Mali? What are the most significant U.S. commercial interests in Mali? What is the environment for U.S. businesses and investors, and how might it be improved?

Answer. Mali faces formidable challenges to economic development. Its economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, which makes up 45 percent of GDP and provides income for 75 percent of the country's population.

In order to promote long-lasting food security, the United States invests in the sustainable development of agriculture through the Feed the Future (FTF) initiative. Agriculture is a driver of economic growth, employment, better health, and nutrition, and remains a sector where Mali has an underexploited comparative advantage.

With an FY 2014 budget of \$18 million, FTF works to develop and reinforce the private sector by targeting opportunities in the production, processing, and trade of selected commodities in key geographic areas. USAID/Mali also recently signed a nearly \$14 million dollar Development Credit Authority (DCA) microcredit facility to support small and medium-size agricultural enterprises as well as female entrepreneurs.

*Question.* Would you advise an expansion of U.S. security assistance? Please describe how the Security Governance Initiative will be implemented in Mali.

Answer. Rebuilding Mali's security institutions in the wake of the 2012 coup is critical to Mali's capacity to control its porous borders and vast territory, counter terrorist influences and deny Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) the ability to use northern Mali as a safe haven. In our meetings with civil society, it is clear that better security service delivery and access to justice will be a critical component to any effort to bring stability to the country. Through the Security Governance Initiative and other complementary programs, we will support the development of these critical security institutions, systems and processes to increase accountability and improve security and justice through transparent and responsive governance.

*Question.* What is your assessment of security trends in the Sahel? How might U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Mali and the wider Sahel best be evaluated and prioritized?

Answer. The continued presence and activities of al-Qaeda affiliates, including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), other armed extremists and transnational criminal groups in northern Mali, threatens both Mali and the broader Sahel region. Ensuring that Malians continue to reject extremist messages is a key focus of U.S. counterterrorism programming in Mali. Our ability to counter extremist influences depends on a skillful balance of programs designed to consolidate Malian democracy, support economic growth, deepen mutual understanding, promote moderate messages, and assist the Malian Government and local leaders to deliver basic services and counter the root causes of extremism.

*Question.* Who is responsible for recent attacks against MINUSMA forces, and what factors are contributing to their increase? How might U.S. interagency coordination related to regional counterterrorism be improved?

Answer. Al-Morabitun and the Movement for the Oneness and Unity of the Jihad (MUJAO), both groups with ties to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), have claimed responsibility for attacks against U.N. peacekeepers in Mali. Other armed extremists and transnational criminal groups, coupled with slow progress on national reconciliation between the Government of Mali and northern groups, have produced an increasingly insecure environment for the U.N. mission.

We are working closely with the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the GOM, troop and police contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) and other international partners to support the mission to better operate in this insecure environment and implement its robust mandate.

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) recently sponsored an asymmetric threat assessment team that traveled throughout the MINUSMA area of operations and is providing recommendations that may reduce peacekeeper vulnerability and contribute to IED threat mitigation. We are providing mine-protected combat vehicles for MINUSMA contingents and training peacekeepers how to use them, and exploring ways to support more C-IED training for troop contributing countries (TCCs).

In close partnership with MINUSMA's U.N. Police (UNPOL) and the EU Police capacity-building mission (EUCAP), we have also conducted IED awareness seminars for the Malian National Police who work in northern Mali. Additionally, the ACOTA Program has provided Counter-IED training to TCCs trained and deploying to MINUSMA (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, and Togo). During the 7-10 week battalion training, Counter-IED tasks relevant to an infantry battalion are integrated into command and staff, soldiers' skills and collective unit training.

*Question.* Mali's current peace process has gotten bogged down. What more can the United States do to encourage a peaceful political resolution? If another deal is

struck, what will you do differently than your predecessors to ensure that this next one, unlike the previous four peace deals, will stick?

*Answer.* We are working, with our international partners, to encourage all parties to sign the Algiers agreement as soon as possible. We are also considering how the United States could most effectively support the implementation of this agreement by leveraging our diplomatic and development assistance resources.

*Question.* Do we have the mix of civilian and military tools right in Mali? How will you, as chief of mission, ensure that U.S. civilian capabilities are not overshadowed by our military?

*Answer.* We continue to emphasize that the only way to create a lasting peace in Mali is through a durable political agreement between the Government of Mali and the northern armed groups. Embassy Bamako's diplomatic outreach in support of the peace process is a whole-of-government effort that emphasizes the importance of solidifying Mali's democratic transition and strengthening security sector institutions. We are beginning to implement robust civilian security engagement with the police and justice sector to improve these critical elements of a stable democracy.

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RESPONSES OF MARY CATHERINE PHEE, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE PHEE'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

*Question.* Does the United States agree with the 2014 African Union report that neither antagonist Riek Machar or Salva Kiir should serve in South Sudan's transitional government?

*Answer.* The report referred to is a leaked document which the African Union disavowed in an official statement on March 16. Our view is that the two leaders need to make compromises to reach a peace agreement and form a transitional government that can accomplish essential transitional tasks such as holding elections for a permanent government and establishing a hybrid judicial body to promote accountability and justice.

*Question.* How will U.S. influence on South Sudan's warring parties be affected by the expansion of the IGAD peace talks beyond IGAD member states?

*Answer.* "IGAD Plus," as proposed by IGAD Chairman, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalgn, envisions additional leverage on the warring parties through enhanced international participation and cooperation, bolstering the negotiation efforts of the current IGAD leadership. This includes participation by the African Union, which has selected five African heads of state for this purpose, the Troika (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway), the U.N., the EU, and China.

A reformed and reinvigorated "IGAD Plus" process would unite a number of stakeholders and members of the international community behind a common peace plan and gives international partners, including the United States, a larger role in shaping process and substance. The United States will continue to look for further opportunities to enhance the IGAD mediation process and will lead international efforts to bring additional pressure upon the parties to shift their concern toward the people of South Sudan, instead of their narrow political interests.

*Question.* How do you assess the relationship between UNMISS peacekeepers and humanitarian organizations in fulfilling the protection of civilians mandate?

*Answer.* UNMISS is mandated to protect civilians with support from its 11, 669-person strong military force. This U.N. mission has four priorities: protection of civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights, creating the conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and supporting the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement.

UNMISS has established seven protection of civilian sites for internally displaced persons and is protecting nearly 113,000 IDPs in these sites. In tandem with humanitarian organizations, UNMISS is providing assistance to civilians at these sites as well as to those displaced elsewhere in the country. The partnership between UNMISS and the humanitarian organizations is vital and robust and we continue to encourage both sides to cooperate with these efforts.

Recent troop deployments from Kenya, China, and Ghana will enable UNMISS to conduct its protection tasks more effectively, including patrols and proactive community engagement. Inadequate infrastructure, difficult weather conditions, and access



challenges posed by the parties in conflict hinder UNMISS' ability to fully execute its mandate.

*Question.* How will you ensure the United States does not enter into an agreement that perpetuates the failures of the 2005 CPA that left unresolved significant interethnic rivalries and challenges?

*Answer.* Recalling the scale and devastation of the Sudanese civil wars, which exacted tremendous human cost over two decades, the CPA was a critically important accomplishment that ended the fighting. Unfortunately, the parties to the CPA did not implement many of the important provisions designed to build institutions that would facilitate development and good governance throughout Sudan and what is now South Sudan. If confirmed, I will work to encourage both parties to end the current conflict in South Sudan and establish a transitional government that begins to address these longstanding challenges. The primary criticism of the CPA is that the official parties lacked diversity and inclusivity. I will seek to engage all stakeholders and encourage their participation in developing broad-based institutions and sustainable development.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE PHEE'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MENENDEZ

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

*Answer.* I have had the opportunity to directly advance human rights and democracy in nearly every assignment in my career and expect deep engagement in such efforts in South Sudan, if confirmed.

As a political reporting officer in Cairo, Egypt, from 1997–2000, I undertook path-breaking reporting on the government's treatment of the Coptic Christian community and relations between Copts and Muslims. I convinced USAID to transfer democracy and governance funds to the State Department and with those funds administered a small grants program that provided assistance to human rights advocates; significantly, these grants were not subject to prior approval from the Government of Egypt.

Examples of the program's beneficiaries include activists working to combat female genital mutilation and those providing legal assistance to Egyptians who had been tortured. We also used these funds to support the travel of Egyptian activists to the United States to learn about American civil society and judicial processes. Several of the program's beneficiaries were active in the 2011 Arab Spring.

While administering an occupied province of southern Iraq in 2003–2004, I arranged for the establishment of a provincial council and municipal councils with reserved seats for women and religious minorities who were elected in caucuses from their communities. In explaining the purpose of reserved seats and the function of caucuses, I was able to educate local leaders who had no prior experience with inclusive participatory governance systems and to mobilize previously oppressed communities.

Most recently, as deputy chief of mission in Addis Ababa from 2011–2014, I arranged U.S. Government financial support for journalists fleeing the country who feared persecution, as well as for victims of Wikileaks. I chaired the mission's inter-agency working group on democracy and governance, and pioneered an innovative effort to create a dialogue between prominent American academics and senior Ethiopian party leaders about one party states in agrarian-based economies in East Asia (countries whose economic transformation Ethiopia seeks to emulate) which had chosen to liberalize politically in order to illustrate that democratization can bring stability and economic progress.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in South Sudan? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in South Sudan? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The most pressing human rights issues are ending the war, promoting accountability and addressing the needs of those displaced by the conflict. If confirmed I intend to support efforts to hold accountable those who have committed human rights violations, abuses, and other atrocities in this conflict. We have pledged to work with the South Sudanese, the AU, regional partners, and the U.N. to promote accountability for abuses committed in this conflict.

I will also support efforts to combat gender-based violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. I will promote the expansion of civic space for alternative voices and the role of a free press. I will reach out to local government officials, professional associations, civil society organizations, youth, women, and traditional leaders to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in South Sudan in advancing human rights and democracy in general?

*Answer.* In South Sudan there is a history of impunity for human rights abuses and violations. South Sudan also lacks strong institutions capable of enforcing the rule of law. Building local capacity and facilitating reconciliation among the people of South Sudan is a long-term challenge and will require the consistent support of the friends of the South Sudanese.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in South Sudan?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations, both local and international. I will reinforce current U.S. engagement with civil society and other South Sudanese and international partners to promote human rights.

*Question.* If confirmed, please describe steps that you will take to enhance effective implementation of Section 620 M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, commonly known as the Leahy amendment, within the Embassy in South Sudan as well as steps you would take to accomplish the goal of the law, namely, helping the Government of South Sudan end impunity for human rights violations by security forces.

*Answer.* All U.S. Government assistance to the defense sector was suspended shortly after the outbreak of the current conflict. We remain concerned about the conduct of both the Government of South Sudan and opposition forces.

The United States has urged the African Union Peace and Security Council to immediately release the report of the African Union's Commission of Inquiry, which was charged with developing findings regarding violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the armed conflict, and formulating recommendations on the best ways and means to ensure accountability, reconciliation, and healing. We are prepared to support mechanisms that advance these goals. When the parties achieve a lasting peace and we review the possibility of providing assistance for security sector reform, I will work to ensure that all relevant U.S. Government agencies and offices are working together and actively sharing information to ensure the Leahy law is being fully implemented.

*Question.* The Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan has the lead role in directly engaging with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and parties to the conflict in South Sudan as part of ongoing peace negotiations.

- ◆ a. What is your role if any, in the peace process? In what ways will you work to bring an end to the civil war?
- ◆ b. In the event that the latest round of talks—reported to be scheduled for some time in April—do not result in an agreement, what next steps will the United States take to bring about an end to the conflict?
- ◆ c. How much information do ordinary citizens have about the peace process, and how are their interests being represented in negotiations?

*Answer.* a. If confirmed, I, in coordination with the President's Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Ambassador Donald Booth, will steadfastly engage both parties on the need to make compromises and to come to a political agreement. I will also directly engage the people of South Sudan to promote peace and provide humanitarian assistance without regard to ethnic or political affiliation.

b. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is now moving ahead to prepare for a peace summit in the coming weeks, and has the critical task of engaging stakeholders and members of the international community to get behind a common peace plan. Ultimately, however, the decision to end this needless conflict lies with the warring parties. The United States will continue to look for further opportunities to enhance the mediation process and will lead international efforts to bring additional pressure upon the parties. We are in discussions with our partners in the region and the international community on how best to support upcoming talks, to increase pressure on the parties, and to widen international consensus to support the peace process if these talks fail.

c. Given the high rate of illiteracy, and minimal internet penetration and newspaper circulation in South Sudan, radio broadcast is the most effective means to disseminate information. And more of this is needed. We are working with implementing partners to expand accurate live broadcast radio coverage of the mediation and to distribute peace messaging through local partners. We have pressed IGAD to include a broad range of opposition political parties, civil society, religious leaders, women, and youth and have provided direct support to civil society participants in the process so they can advocate for the South Sudanese people.

*Question.* On March 24, Parliament voted to extend by 3 years President Kiir's term in office. Originally set to end on July 9, 2015, his mandate now expires in 2018.

- ◆ What was the reasoning behind the extension of President Salva Kiir's mandate, and what are the repercussions on the peace process?
- ◆ Could it affect former Vice President Riek Machar's willingness to negotiate? How transparent was the process through which the vote was debated and taken? What effects might the extension of President Kiir's mandate have on the development of democracy in South Sudan?

*Answer.* The Government of the Republic of South Sudan has justified the extension of its tenure to 2018 to allow more time to achieve a peaceful settlement. However, this step by the legislature sends a negative signal about the government's commitment to a transitional government and for the development of democracy in South Sudan. This action has created another political grievance for the opposition. We have been clear that the way to extend legitimacy without elections is through a negotiated peace agreement in South Sudan and the establishment of a transitional government.

*Question.* Administration officials, including Ambassador Booth in his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on February 26, 2014, have stated that things must not "return to business as usual" which seemed to imply that a political solution among elites at the expense of justice and accountability for crimes committed is unacceptable.

- ◆ Are there currently discussions in South Sudan about the need for accountability for violations of human rights committed during the course of the conflict?
- ◆ What grassroots efforts are underway to promote justice, accountability and reconciliation? Is the United States supporting such efforts?

*Answer.* Discussions about the need for accountability have taken place among those in the Government of the Republic of South Sudan, opposition forces, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediators, and civil society groups. The U.S. Government has facilitated these discussions through its support for a multistakeholder peace process. The parties to the conflict have agreed on general provisions for a legal mechanism to prosecute those responsible for gross human rights abuses and violations, as well as a commission for truth, reconciliation, and healing, but no steps have been taken to put these into place absent a peace agreement. Justice and accountability are critical elements of a lasting peace.

The United States is encouraging grassroots efforts by South Sudanese groups and individuals to promote justice, accountability, and reconciliation. For example, the Department of State is in the process of funding an in-country South Sudanese civil society-led project to investigate and document human rights abuses and violations.

*Question.* There are reports that the Government of South Sudan is imposing burdensome bureaucratic obstacles such as arbitrary taxation, expulsion of staff, and a delay in issuing permits, that are making it difficult for nongovernmental organizations to provide humanitarian assistance. The United States has provided nearly a billion dollars in humanitarian assistance this fiscal year, and thus a strong interest in ensuring that the operating environment is conducive to efficient provision of assistance.

- ◆ Are you aware of the reports of bureaucratic obstacles imposed on organizations trying to carry out lifesaving humanitarian operations in South Sudan? What will be your role in helping to ensure they are able to carry out their work without being harassed or otherwise impeded by government?

*Answer.* I am aware of such concerning reports, including threats of expulsion of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), harassment, abduction, detention, and expulsion of NGO workers, delays in visas and work permits, denial of tax exemptions, import delays, and bureaucratic delays in moving cargo by road, river, and air.

If confirmed, I will engage all parties to press for immediate and unconditional access for humanitarian workers so they can deliver humanitarian assistance to all South Sudanese people in need. I will also work with other donor governments and organizations and the U.N. to help minimize the obstructions to humanitarian aid.

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE PHEE'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR FLAKE

*Question.* Does the administration view South Sudan's oil revenues as contributing to the current conflict, and, if so, are sanctions against the oil sector being considered?

*Answer.* We believe that the government revenues are largely being directed to security spending which makes the search for peace all the more urgent. At the same time, several factors have significantly decreased oil revenues for the government, which receives the majority of its income from oil. The conflict has caused a disruption in total oil production, which dropped from 220,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) in November 2013 to 150,000 bbl/d on average in 2014. The drop in the global price of oil has further reduced South Sudan's oil income. Production will only be restored to preconflict levels when the parties cease fighting and provide the security needed for critical repair and maintenance of oil infrastructure in South Sudan. We are not at this time considering sanctions against the oil sector.

*Question.* What is the extent of the Ugandan military deployment in South Sudan? Are Ugandan forces playing an active role in the fighting? How does the Obama administration view Uganda's role in the conflict?

*Answer.* At the request of President Salva Kiir, two brigades of Ugandan troops were deployed in December 2013 during the initial days of the conflict to protect key infrastructure and the city of Juba against opposition forces. Ugandan forces remain in South Sudan at the invitation of the government.

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities that was brokered by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediators in January 2014, and signed by both the Government of South Sudan and the opposition, calls for the withdrawal of foreign forces from South Sudan. The parties have subsequently rededicated themselves to the Agreement and we continue to press for its immediate implementation.

We remain continuously engaged with the Government of Uganda to promote a common strategy for pressing the parties to stop the fighting and find a negotiated rather than a military solution to the conflict.

*Question.* Given the role you will play in the peace process, how do you plan to maintain legitimacy with both sides involved in the conflict?

*Answer.* The United States, in coordination with IGAD and our Troika partners Norway and the United Kingdom, has maintained the firm position that both parties are responsible for this conflict and the failure to reach peace. If confirmed, I, in coordination with the President's Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Ambassador Donald Booth, will steadfastly engage both parties on the need to make compromises and to come to a political agreement. I would also directly engage the people of South Sudan to promote peace and provide humanitarian assistance without regard to ethnic or political affiliation.

*Question.* In your testimony you note that the U.N. Security Council's March 3 resolution "established a targeted sanctions regime and proposed an arms embargo that could be imposed should the South Sudanese leaders fail to respond to the mediation."

- ◆ Do you think the threat of sanctions will be seen as credible by the parties and encourage them to reach a compromise?
- ◆ Are we able to identify significantly influential individuals for sanctions in both camps?
- ◆ What impact do you anticipate the arms embargo would have? How would it the power balance in the conflict?

*Answer.* The March 3rd U.N. Security Council's sanctions resolution allows for the imposition of asset freezes and travel bans on those who hinder the South Sudanese peace process or commit human rights violations. The resolution established a Sanctions Committee—which consists of all members of the Security Council—to review information regarding individuals and entities and designate them for sanctions. A U.N. Panel of Experts will be formed, which will help the committee gather and review information about those who may meet the sanctions designation criteria. Based on the findings of the Panel of Experts and our own findings, we will propose relevant individuals for consideration by the Sanctions Committee.

The resolution's credible threat of sanctions increases pressure on the parties to resolve the outstanding issues and begin a process that establishes the Transitional Government of National Unity. This incremental approach hones the efficacy of measures imposed and ensures continued buy-in and support from IGAD regional leaders.

Under this resolution, the Council has also committed to periodically review the situation in South Sudan and, as deemed necessary, consider additional measures, including an arms embargo. The U.S. Government believes that actions based on this resolution should be calibrated to maximize the Council's leverage to facilitate an end to the horrific violence and promote the beginning of a sustainable settlement. We believe that an arms embargo could pressure both parties to negotiate earnestly.

*Question.* How would you assess the capacity of U.N. peacekeepers in South Sudan to protect civilians? Do UNMISS forces currently have the capacity to go out on patrols and engage armed actors, if civilians are under imminent threat?

*Answer.* UNMISS is mandated to protect civilians with support from its 11,669-person strong military force. This U.N. mission has four priorities: protection of civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights, creating the conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and supporting the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement.

UNMISS has created seven protection of civilian sites for internally displaced persons and is protecting nearly 113,000 IDPs in these sites. The mission works very closely with the humanitarian community that provides assistance to the IDPs in these sites. Recent troop deployments from Kenya, China, and Ghana will enable UNMISS to conduct its protection tasks more effectively, including patrols and proactive community engagement. Inadequate infrastructure, difficult weather conditions, and access challenges posed by the armed conflict hinder UNMISS' ability to fully execute its mandate.

*Question.* What additional leverage would an "IGAD Plus" bring to bear?

*Answer.* "IGAD Plus," as proposed by IGAD Chairman, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalgn, envisions additional leverage on the warring parties through enhanced international participation and cooperation, bolstering the negotiation efforts of the current IGAD leadership. This includes participation by the African Union, which has selected five African heads of state for this purpose, the Troika (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway), the U.N., the EU, and China.

IGAD leadership has worked tirelessly to broker a comprehensive peace agreement. While the two sides have moved closer to a deal in recent months, neither has agreed to peace. A reformed and reinvigorated "IGAD Plus" process would unite a number of stakeholders and members of the international community behind a common peace plan and give international partners a larger role in shaping process and substance. Ultimately, however, the decision to end this needless conflict and to begin the process of reform and rebuilding of South Sudan lies with the warring parties. The United States will continue to look for further opportunities to enhance the mediation process and will lead international efforts to bring additional pressure upon the parties to shift their concern toward the people of South Sudan, instead of their narrow political interests.

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RESPONSES OF CASSANDRA Q. BUTTS, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE BUTT'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MENENDEZ

*Question.* What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

*Answer.* At every stage of my adult life I am proud to have worked to advance the cause of human rights at home and abroad. As a college student, I was one of the organizers of an advocacy campaign to end the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's investments in corporations that did business in apartheid South Africa. Our campaign was successful, and the effort foreshadowed a path to the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa and the direction of my professional life.

My first job following law school was a fellowship with the Georgetown Women's Law and Public Policy Program, where I worked as a lawyer to advance access to quality health care for the poorest communities at the National Health Law Pro-

gram. My focus included addressing the particular challenges facing impoverished women of color, including the incarcerated. Our work advanced efforts to expand treatment for women of color with HIV/AIDS and to eliminate the practice of shackling incarcerated women while giving birth.

As a lawyer on Capitol Hill, I worked on civil rights issues and issues related to migration, asylum, and refugees. In the latter category, I traveled the world to view conditions for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in conflict and post-conflict zones working with the Department of State, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and a range of international NGOs to find durable solutions for some of the most vulnerable populations in the world. Through that work, we were able to provide critical oversight and increase the number of individuals accepted into the U.S. refugee resettlement program.

My work at Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) over the past 4 years has focused on advancing the values of democracy and human rights. As the chairperson of MCC's Investment Management Committee, I have overseen and approved investments of over \$8 billion with partner countries that must prove a measured commitment to policy performance in the area of democratic governance and human rights. In my role, I have traveled to partner countries to the importance of democratic governance and human rights to the work of poverty reduction through economic growth. In addition, my work at MCC has focused on advancing the agency's work on gender equality, ensuring that women and men are equal beneficiaries of our program is an international model for how to best integrate gender equality in development assistance.

Finally, as a lawyer at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Nation's premier civil rights legal advocacy organization, I litigated civil rights cases on issues of voting rights and education. In addition, I advocated on Capitol Hill and within the executive branch for the expansion of a range of basic human rights for women and minority communities.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in the Bahamas? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in the Bahamas? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* The Bahamas has a strong tradition of protecting human rights. Bahamians enjoy freedoms of speech and religion, and Bahamian media is able to present the various sides of issues and frequently takes editorial positions critical of the government.

The most pressing human rights concerns in the Bahamas center around the country's correctional and immigration detention facilities. Both are outdated, overcrowded, and do not meet the growing needs of the country. Local human rights organizations report of migration raids that ignore the rights of those they detain. The United States has provided training and technical assistance over the last 2 years under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), which has improved conditions at the Bahamas Department of Correction's (BDOC) and enhanced BDOC's capacity to operate a sanitary, safe, and secure correctional facility in conformity with international standards.

If confirmed, I will urge the government to take the steps necessary to improve conditions of detention and detention practices, both in terms of addressing immediate problems and in looking more systematically at modernizing and improving conditions over the medium to long term. I will also continue to apply U.S. assistance in these efforts where appropriate with the goal of bringing Bahamian facilities and procedures into full conformity with international human rights standards, practices, and procedures.

Statelessness remains an issue, particularly in the case of second generation Haitian children born in the Bahamas who have access to neither Haitian nor Bahamian citizenship at birth. I commend the Bahamian Government for proposing a constitutional amendment allowing for Bahamian citizen women married to non-Bahamian husbands to pass on their Bahamian nationality to their children. Statelessness is also a concern for migrant children born in the Bahamas who, according to the constitution, have the right to apply for Bahamian citizenship at age 18. The process to acquire citizenship is cumbersome and complex, and if confirmed, I will urge the government to both simplify the process and pass the constitutional amendment on gender equality before the end of 2015.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in the Bahamas in advancing human rights and democracy in general?

Answer. Although considered a “high income” country by the World Bank, the Bahamas faces significant resource constraints which make building new detention centers or expanding existing facilities challenging. In addition to resource problems, the country also faces significant challenges in its judicial system. Despite some recent improvements, criminal cases can be prolonged, and a lengthy appeals process often adds additional time after a trial before a case is finalized.

Societal and structural issues present the largest challenges to advancing human rights and democracy in general. The Bahamian Constitution protects against discrimination due to race, but societal prejudices exist, especially with regard to the Haitian immigrant community. The Bahamian Constitution and law currently do not prohibit discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity, and certain gender inequalities exist with regard to citizenship. The Christie administration has introduced constitutional amendments that would largely correct these deficiencies, but the process has stalled. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for improvements to the justice sector and promote nondiscrimination and nonviolence toward vulnerable groups.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in the Bahamas?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain a regular dialogue on human rights with all stakeholders, including human rights and other NGOs in the United States and local human rights NGOs in the Bahamas. In addition, if confirmed, I will engage in a frank dialogue with Bahamian officials on human rights issues, which will include bringing specific concerns to the attention of the government when it is appropriate to do so.

*Question.* If confirmed, please describe steps that you will take to enhance effective implementation of Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, commonly known as the Leahy amendment, within the Embassy in the Bahamas as well as steps you would take to accomplish the goal of the law, namely, helping the Government of the Bahamas end impunity for human rights violations by security forces.

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Nassau’s current practice of ensuring that all Bahamian candidates for U.S. assistance are fully vetted in conformity with State Department and Defense Department procedures before any assistance is provided. I will ensure that the Embassy is diligent in denying assistance to Bahamian security force units when we have credible information that such units have committed gross violations of human rights. I will also press the Bahamian Government to establish an appropriate and transparent process to investigate allegations that government officials have engaged in human rights violations and to hold accountable those found to have done so.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE BUTTS’S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR FLAKE

*Question.* What do you see as the most significant challenges in relations with the Bahamas? What would be your priorities if confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The United States and the Bahamas enjoy a long-standing cooperative relationship and security partnership. As one of our closest neighbors, our shared interests include improving citizen security and promoting shared prosperity through trade.

If confirmed, I hope to continue working with the government of the Bahamas on efforts to strengthen citizen security, promote social and economic development, including advancing U.S. trade and investment interests, and reduce crime, including illicit trafficking and other transnational crime. If confirmed, I will encourage the Bahamas to take a more systemic approach to address the worsening crime situation. I hope to support efforts by the Bahamas to improve the education system and look at opportunities for workforce development. Other key priorities will be economic development and growth, including the attendant energy and environmental issues. Finally, I will ensure that the entire U.S. mission in the Bahamas—Bahamians and Americans—understands that their contributions are valued and that they are appreciated.

*Question.* The Bahamian economy was hard hit by the global financial crisis and has only registered meager economic growth rates over the past 3 years. What is the outlook for the Bahamian economy over the next few years? Is there any pros-

pect that the Bahamas will diversify its economy beyond tourism and financial services?

**Answer.** The Bahamas economy is projected to see real growth rise steadily to 2.8 percent by 2016 based on IMF forecasts. The government anticipates additional revenue from the new value-added tax that became effective on January 1, 2015, and the licensing and regulation of local gaming operations later in 2015. The Bahamas also expects economic boost from continued economic improvement in the United States, which is the Bahamas' largest trading partner and source of tourism dollars.

The Bahamian Government faces significant challenges in diversifying its economy beyond tourism and financial services in the near future. New investments in the light manufacturing and technology sectors are hindered by high energy prices and limited availability of skilled labor. The government continues to promote investment in nontraditional sectors outside of tourism and financial services, and is also making efforts to promote the agriculture sector in an effort to mitigate the high cost of importing food. The government also has announced plans to offer new products within the financial services sector, such as the development of an international arbitration center and an offshore clearing and settlement center for international currencies, in the hopes of attracting greater trade and investment to the country.

**Question.** U.S.-Bahamian cooperation on drug interdiction has been strong. Are there any further actions that the Bahamian Government can undertake to improve its antidrug efforts?

**Answer.** The United States and the Bahamas enjoy a long-standing history of counternarcotics cooperation, most notably under the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) led Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT). Under OPBAT, DEA Special Agents coordinate, in an integrated manner, with the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) and the Royal Bahamas Defense Force (RBDf) to gather intelligence, conduct investigations, and execute interdictions. OPBAT seizure operations increased substantially between FY 2012 and FY 2014. We believe this is due, in part, to increased U.S. support, cooperation, and equipment.

The Bahamian Government could impose stricter penalties on individuals convicted of serious drug offenses. In addition, the Bahamas continues to be challenged by delays in trials and in responding to U.S. extradition requests. Improved procedures to expedite extraditions would bring drug crime offenders more quickly to trial and serve as a more credible deterrent for traffickers. The Bahamas National Anti-Drug Strategy places significant emphasis on drug abuse, awareness, demand reduction, and treatment policies, but programs in these fields would benefit from additional resources. In addition, health care professionals report that women and residents of the Family Islands (i.e., islands other than New Providence) are under-represented in substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

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RESPONSES OF KATHERINE S. DHANANI, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA, TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE DHANANI'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CORKER

**Question.** What considerations, apart from the holding of elections, were taken into account when recognizing Somalia as a sovereign state in 2012? What additional considerations have been identified as crucial in moving to the nomination of an ambassador?

**Answer.** U.S. recognition of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) on January 17, 2013, was the first step toward normalizing the U.S.-Somalia bilateral relationship. The decision was in large part due to the relatively credible political transition after more than a decade of transitional governments. The provisional constitution and Parliament forged from the 2012 transition were the first steps toward rebuilding a sovereign Somali state. Recognizing the FGS signaled U.S. commitment to sustained diplomatic engagement with Somalia.

The Department's decision to seek a Presidential Appointment of an ambassador was in recognition of the growing interagency engagement toward Somalia. Between FY 2006 and FY 2014, State and USAID provided nearly \$3.1 billion in development, security, education, and humanitarian assistance. The level of U.S. assistance underscored the need to coordinate our Somalia engagement under an ambassador, to ensure that our relationship with the FGS best reflects our broad range of national security and foreign policy interests.



*Question.* What specific parameters, including political reconciliation and security concerns, will be required by the United States to warrant a move of the Office of Somali Affairs/U.S. Embassy for Somalia in Nairobi, from its current location to Somalia? What is the best estimate or U.S. expectation of a move of our mission to Somalia? Would it be to Mogadishu in every instance or is there an intermediate location elsewhere?

*Answer.* The Department of State does not have permanent diplomatic presence in Somalia due to continued instability and the high-threat environment in Mogadishu. After the December 25, 2014, al-Shabaab attack on the Mogadishu International Airport (MIA) compound, the Department is assessing what security upgrades need to be made to bolster MIA perimeter security and the internal compound utilized by U.S. diplomats. As security conditions permit, we look forward to broadening and deepening our engagement, and to reestablishing a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu. As I mentioned in my testimony, there is no fixed timeline for the establishment of a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu, but if confirmed, I will carefully monitor the security environment in Somalia and make the recommendation for a more enduring U.S. presence in Mogadishu, when the environment permits.

*Question.* How do the positions of U.S. Special Representative for Somalia and Ambassador to Somalia differ, if at all? Will the role of a U.S. Special Representative be necessary upon the confirmation of an ambassador, and if so, what role will the SE play?

*Answer.* The U.S. Special Representative for Somalia (SRS) is a secretarial appointee who manages the Department's relationship with the Federal Government of Somalia. The SRS, resident in Nairobi, also engages regional governments on Somalia—Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda—given their national security interests in Somalia as troop contributing countries. The SRS does not have authority to direct and coordinate the actions of U.S. executive branch agencies in Somalia. As chief of mission, unless otherwise directed by the President, the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia will have full responsibility and authority for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. Government executive branch activities, operations, and employees in Somalia. The role of SRS will no longer be needed as the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia will maintain the regional coordination role given the level of international engagement in Somalia.

*Question.* Yemen may prove a cautionary tale. In view of the unsuccessful efforts of significant U.S. military assistance and operational emphasis in Yemen to withstand political and militant unrest and in view of the ensuing instability, how will U.S. policy integration and coherence across USG agencies address current parallel efforts similar to those that existed in Yemen? What specific mechanism exists to harmonize U.S. policy governmentwide in moving Somalia toward sustainable governance and greater stability than it has had in decades? How will the U.S. role in partner efforts to help reestablish a viable government for Somalia change with an ambassador?

*Answer.* U.S. policy in Somalia directly links security sector reform to political progress. Our Somalia strategy, previously shared with Congress, includes ways in which political development and security progress must move in tandem. U.S. policy is harmonized governmentwide through the White House directed interagency policy coordination process, and with our international partners via the New Deal Somali Compact.

The United States and international partners support a regional force, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), that enjoys broad international and regional support. AMISOM is composed of African troop contributors that have a strategic interest in stabilizing Somalia and as a result have initiated a number of military operations designed to pressure and erode al-Shabaab. AMISOM also has provided critical time and political space so the Somali political process can gain strength and the Federal Government of Somalia can begin to build a representative, apolitical, human rights respecting, professionally trained force under civilian oversight.

In Yemen, there was no international or regional force like AMISOM that provided Yemen's leaders the time and space to find a peaceful solution to Yemen's political crisis, while at the same time maintaining security and putting pressure on al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

*Question.* What is the status of Somaliland and Puntland as it relates to U.S. policy? How do you expect the status to change, if at all, in the near to mid-term? What are your priorities for working with Somaliland and how will this translate into engaging Somalia?

**Answer.** The United States recognizes a single Somalia, which includes Somaliland and Puntland. We are encouraged by the progress made in the integration of Puntland into the federal state formation process. While progress has stalled in regards to the formal, Turkey-sponsored talks between Somaliland authorities and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), we continue to encourage dialogue between both parties.

The United States regularly engages with all levels of the Somali Government, including the FGS, the newly established interim regional administrations, and the authorities in Puntland and Somaliland. If confirmed, my priorities at the regional level will be to promote security, good governance, and economic development, as well as to advance the state formation process.

**Question.** The implementation of Vision 2016 is behind schedule. How will you apply pressure on the Somalia Government to complete the plan?

**Answer.** While implementation of Vision 2016 is behind schedule, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has made significant and important progress, especially in regards to advancing the state formation process. That said, time is short and the FGS has itself acknowledged that Vision 2016 is behind schedule.

If confirmed, I will engage extensively with the President, Prime Minister, parliamentarians, and the regional governments, in close collaboration with our international partners, to push for a renewed focus on accelerating implementation of the Vision 2016 reform agenda. It is of paramount importance that the FGS move swiftly this year to lay the foundations for credible, democratic, and inclusive national elections in 2016, as well as for a constitutional referendum as envisioned by Vision 2016. The United States will maintain close engagement with the international community to ensure we have a coordinated approach to support the Somalis as they work towards 2016.

**Question.** How will East Africa region's instability and the drawdown of Embassy personnel in Nairobi, Kenya, affect the movement and accessibility of the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia to travel and conduct business with the Government of Somalia, its citizenry and U.S. programming in Somalia while operating from Nairobi?

**Answer.** The Somalia Unit, comprised of 21 personnel, was deemed to be of such strategic importance it was not reduced in size during the July 2014 drawdown of Embassy personnel in Nairobi, Kenya. The drawdown did not reduce staffing or programming operations of the Somalia Unit. If I am confirmed, the Department will transition the Somalia Unit to U.S. Mission Somalia and is in the process of determining the accompanying staffing footprint. As security conditions permit, U.S. officials will maintain regular travel into Somalia to conduct official business and promote our foreign policy objectives.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE DHANAN'S RESPONSES TO  
QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MENENDEZ

**Question.** What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

**Answer.** Throughout my career, I have advanced U.S. interests in the promotion of human rights. In my current assignment in the Africa Bureau, I lead the office responsible for coordinating the Bureau's efforts to promote human rights throughout the continent. Our activities include, for example, ensuring that recipients of security assistance have clean human rights records; promoting atrocity prevention; promoting fair, credible, and peaceful elections; and defending the human rights of LGBT persons. We coordinate the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Trafficking in Persons Reports, and International Religious Freedom Reports for African countries. As consul general in Hyderabad, India, my team's activities included partnering with the private sector to sponsor training for disabled adults, promoting local nongovernmental organizations' projects to economically empower women in lower income Muslim communities, supporting efforts to combat HIV/AIDS stigma, and persuading local police to rescind an order banning a rainbow film festival. In Gabon our human-rights-related activities included a public program highlighting abuses committed as part of rituals to enhance political success and in Zambia we were particularly active in responding to the humanitarian needs of refugees, including projects aimed at protecting teenage refugee girls from sexual abuse and exploitation.

My actions to promote human rights were particularly important during my service as deputy chief of mission in Zimbabwe. The U.S. Embassy's programs directly assisted thousands of Zimbabweans whose human rights were abused by the regime, and our efforts to expose abuse changed the course of events surrounding the 2008 election. When U.S. Government-supported election monitoring made stealing the election impossible during a first round of voting, the Government of Zimbabwe launched a campaign of violence and intimidation to ensure that the ruling party would prevail during a runoff. The U.S. mission in Zimbabwe already supported a network of partners to provide medical care, psychological counseling, and legal counsel to victims of torture and other human rights abuses. When the scale and severity of abuse expanded dramatically, we led an international effort to protect victims and expose abusers. In addition to supporting shelters and services for internally displaced persons (IDPs), we interviewed scores of individuals who had been beaten and burned out of their homes to identify individuals at risk of further political persecution for targeted support. The Embassy led the diplomatic community in visits to torture camps, defying police roadblocks. On July 3, 2008, hundreds of IDPs who had been forced to leave a shelter arrived at the U.S. Embassy seeking refuge. We scrambled to identify alternative shelters for the women and children, and provided blankets and hot meals for over 150 men that winter night. The USAID Director and I spent July 4 identifying and setting up a shelter on a farm outside the city, where we identified partners able to meet the IDPs' basic needs in the ensuing weeks. Independent media and watchdog groups who enjoyed our support provided us with documentation of the regime's abuses which we shared throughout the region, convincing Zimbabwe's neighbors that this time they could not turn a blind eye to the Mugabe regime's crimes. As a result, the ruling party recognized that it would be unable to steal the runoff, and invited the opposition into a coalition.

I was proud to lead the team at U.S. Embassy Harare who demonstrated the tremendous compassion and empathy of the American people under the most trying circumstances, making a difference in both the lives of individual Zimbabweans and the course of public events.

*Question.* What are the most pressing human rights issues in Somalia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Somalia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

*Answer.* If I am confirmed, working with the African Union, Government of Somalia, and Somali civil society to improve protection of civilians will be central to my engagement. Violence against women and girls, including rape, remains a pervasive problem. I will work with Somali and international counterparts including AMISOM to improve protection efforts, including ensuring that women can access the services they need and perpetrators are held accountable. I am also deeply concerned about the situation of media freedom in Somalia. The country remains one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist. I will regularly discuss protection concerns with Somali journalists themselves, speak out against abuses against journalists, and strongly encourage the Somali Government to fully respect freedom of expression. In addition, I will work with Somalia and the United Nations to further implementation of Somalia's action plan to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers and standardize operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Somalia in advancing human rights and democracy in general?

*Answer.* Key challenges to addressing human rights concerns in the country include continued insecurity in al-Shabaab-controlled portions of the country. This limits not only U.S. Government access to much of the country, but also access by international and local partners who could provide information that is vital to addressing human rights concerns. Human rights organizations have identified the lack of data on the situation in much of the country as problematic.

Improving civilian protection while conflict continues is extremely challenging, but it will be central to my efforts. Attacks, including direct attacks on civilians, continue to result in deaths, injuries, and displacement. Somali women and girls experience systematic marginalization, which makes it difficult to address gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. Women are reluctant to report abuse due to possible reprisals, and police are reluctant to investigate. The Government has arrested alleged rape victims. Authorities rarely used formal procedures to address rape. Improving protection for journalists is challenging in part due to the continued inse-

curity and presence of al-Shabaab. Also challenging is that the Government of Somalia and regional authorities continue to arrest, detain, and prosecute journalists. In regards to child soldiers, the government has taken additional steps to implement its action plan with the U.N., though, overall, implementation of the plan has been limited. More also needs to be done to improve demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts for children separated from armed groups.

*Question.* Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in Somalia?

*Answer.* If confirmed, one of my most important goals as U.S. Ambassador to Somalia will be improving respect for human rights in the country, so that all Somalis have the opportunity to exercise their fundamental freedoms and live their lives without fear. My efforts will include those focused on improving civilian protection, strengthening efforts to address rape, building respect for media freedom, and ensuring that children are not used as soldiers. Human rights and other NGOs are critical to this work and I look forward to meeting with them, if I am confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, please describe steps that you will take to enhance effective implementation of Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, commonly known as the Leahy amendment, within the Embassy as well as steps you would take to accomplish the goal of the law, namely, helping the Government of Somalia end impunity for human rights violations by security forces.

*Answer.* The Leahy laws are based on a basic principle: A government security apparatus' respect for human rights bolsters its legitimacy and trustworthiness in the eyes of the people it is supposed to protect, and enhances its ability to protect. Moreover, holding violators accountable fortifies the rule of law, which will be key in our efforts to improve governance in Somalia. If confirmed, the Embassy staff and I will convey this message in all our interactions with the FGS. In terms of implementation, the Embassy and the Department vet all individuals and units of the security services; if confirmed, I will ensure that our vetting continues to be comprehensive, thorough, and in full compliance with the Leahy laws, and that those who violate human rights are restricted from training. Furthermore, I will strongly urge the FGS to hold all violators accountable for their actions.

*Question.* In your written testimony, you mention the importance of building Somali institutional capacity. The U.S. Government has spent considerable time and resources in training the Somali national army as part of its Somalia strategy. The U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa states that as part of security sector reform, the United States will build security forces that "are subordinate to and operating jointly with their constitutional civil authorities."

- ♦ a. What programs are currently underway to build up the civil authorities in Somalia? What is the status of current efforts to build the capacity of the Somali Ministry of Defense? What plans do we have to build capacity in the judiciary and civilian oversight organizations that can provide oversight of the Somali National Army?

*Answer.* The United States has supported the development of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) by refurbishing the MOD headquarters at Gashandiga in Mogadishu, as well as providing a contract advisor who works with the Defense Minister at the MOD on a daily basis. Other donors are also participating in the effort to build the capacity of the MOD, including the European Union. We intend to expand our support to the MOD in the coming years, to include additional training, advisory support, and material support. Our assistance will reflect the absorptive capacity of the MOD, and complement the efforts of other donors. We are designing this support in coordination with other donors to strengthen civilian oversight of the military so that respect for human rights and inclusivity become well entrenched.

- ♦ b. What tools were used to assess the requirements of the Somali National Army and what is the plan for monitoring and evaluating our current efforts in keeping with the policy guidelines contained in Presidential Policy Directive 23?

*Answer.* Defining the requirements of the Somali National Army (SNA) has been an iterative process involving inputs and analysis from across the U.S. interagency, the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), other donors involved in the effort to develop the SNA, U.S.-funded advisors embedded with the SNA and MOD, and, most importantly, the Somalis themselves. Program monitors in Mogadishu, augmented by U.S.

Government personnel's visits, ensure programming is being provided in line with U.S. Government regulations and objectives.

- ◆ c. How is the United States coordinating with other donors in the security sector?

Answer. U.S. support to the Somali security services is coordinated by regular working group meetings within the framework of the New Deal's Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Group Two (PSG-2). PSG-2 and the subworking groups that fall under it, is the primary vehicle for coordinating international community support directly with the Federal Government of Somalia, the U.N., the AU, and other partners.

- ◆ d. What is the administration doing to build government capacity to administer or provide social services in Mogadishu and areas which have been liberated from al-Shabaab?

Answer. The United States is helping the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) define, coordinate, and manage the frameworks for national programs within the Office of the President, National Security Advisor, and the Ministry of Interior and Federalism. We support the Federal Government of Somalia to increase inclusiveness of political processes and facilitate the delivery of critical services in newly liberated areas, including training national and regional Parliaments to increase their oversight role through the Transition Initiatives for Stabilization from USAID. The United States helped the FGS understand the utility of initiating local-level reconciliation and civic dialogues in areas liberated from al-Shabaab, as a means to prevent new conflicts from erupting in the aftermath of liberation.

In FY 2014, the administration provided more than \$58.3 million in development assistance to Somalia to promote peace and stability, foster good governance, spur economic growth and job creation, improve transparency and accountability, support institutional development, and increase the responsiveness of government institutions at the federal, regional, and local levels. The United States is supporting Somalia's Ministry of Education to help develop an Education Sector Strategic Plan. Development of this national plan will build government capacity to deliver improvements in educational quality and services across the country.

*Question.* Regarding the Somali Federal Government's Vision 2016 agenda, you mentioned that many deadlines have already been missed and that the international community continues to encourage the federal government to adhere to the roadmap.

- ◆ a. What is the status of constitutional development in Somalia?

Answer. The Somali parliamentary constitutional review committee has begun to advise the recently established Independent Constitutional Review Implementation Commission (IRIC), on chapters one and four of the constitution which address the critical issues of the status of Mogadishu in the state formation process and the electoral law. The Speaker of Parliament informed us that he intends to expedite the review process during the next session of Parliament (technically scheduled to open the week of April 20).

- ◆ b. What is the status of discussions about federalism and the integration of semiautonomous regions such as Somaliland?

Answer. The state formation process to build a federal system in Somalia is currently underway. Interim administrations, precursors to formal federal states, are now in place in Jubbaland and the South West region, and a reconciliation process is currently underway in the central regions. The Federal Government of Somalia and Puntland signed an agreement in October 2014 to pave the way for Puntland's recognition as a federal member state. To accelerate the federalism process, Mogadishu and the regional leaders recently created the Somali Leadership Forum to discuss key issues, including regional security force integration, 2016 elections, and the state formation process. Somaliland maintains its unilaterally declared independence from Mogadishu, but has engaged in Turkish-sponsored talks on issues requiring cooperation, such as airspace management.

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AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE DHANANI'S RESPONSES  
TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR FLAKE

*Question.* What are the prospects for Somalia to hold elections as expected in 2016? Given the political infighting and insecurity, will it be possible to hold a nationwide constitutional referendum and elections next year?

**Answer.** The United States continues to support the Federal Government of Somalia's Vision 2016 agenda, which includes holding national elections in 2016. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) itself has acknowledged that Vision 2016 is behind schedule. We consistently urge the FGS to accelerate the pace of reform and to put in place the institutions, laws, and processes necessary to meet its Vision 2016 goals.

**Question.** Given that the current central government was largely appointed and selected to overcome internal rivalries, do you think these elections will be viewed as credible and legitimate in the eyes of the Somali people?

**Answer.** The United States supports Somalia's state formation process, currently underway, which will lay the foundation for a more representative government. We continue to urge the Somali Government to begin the process to review the interim constitution and present a final version for its citizens to approve in a national referendum by early 2016. USAID's democracy and governance program in Somalia strengthens regional and national parliaments to perform oversight and to develop legislation, particularly as regards the legal framework necessary for credible and legitimate referenda and electoral processes. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Government of Somalia urgently to take steps toward inclusive and democratic elections. As Somalia continues to develop inclusive political institutions, its leaders must support the ability of citizens to choose their own government through periodic free and fair elections.

**Question.** How would you characterize al-Shabaab's relationship with al-Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and the Islamic State, respectively?

**Answer.** Al-Shabaab publicly announced its merger with al-Qaeda in a February 2012 statement in which they pledged loyalty to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Shabaab is not related to ISIS, although there have been reports of ethnic Somalis, not affiliated with al-Shabaab, fighting alongside extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, like al-Shabaab, is an al-Qaeda affiliate.

**Question.** What is the anticipated timeline for establishing an embassy in Mogadishu? What are the challenges with the current system, in which U.S. diplomats and USAID personnel travel back and forth from Kenya?

**Answer.** We look forward to broadening and deepening our engagement and to re-establishing a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu. Currently, chief of mission personnel travel to Mogadishu and other locations in Somalia as security conditions permit. Establishment of a permanent diplomatic presence in Mogadishu will represent the culmination of this recognition process, but there is no fixed timeline for achieving this objective.

**Question.** The State Department budget justification includes a request for \$110 million to support African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP). According to the CBJ, the program would "build rapid peacekeeping response capabilities in Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda."

♦ (a). How does this proposal compare to existing training programs, including African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Program?

**Answer.** APRRP assistance will complement but not replace existing peace operations capacity-building programs, such as the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program (which is funded predominantly through GPOI), and the International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support (IPPOS) program. GPOI and IPPOS emphasize broader, global capacity-building efforts focused on addressing a wider range of international peace operations shortfalls and strengthening the effectiveness of U.N. and regional missions. APRRP partners have and may continue to receive training through these other programs as well.

♦ (b). How would you see the program impacting troop contributing countries effectiveness in ongoing operations?

**Answer.** APRRP will focus on developing the capabilities of partner nations to deploy forces rapidly in support of an AU or U.N.-mandated operation. APRRP will inject targeted resources to address specific gaps in peacekeeping rapid response capabilities in the selected partner countries. With this specific goal in mind, APRRP works with a set of proven partners to emphasize training and provision and maintenance of equipment to enable rapid deployment and sustainment. While facilitating rapid deployment is the primary focus of the program, we anticipate that the improved specialty capabilities and institutional capacity provided through APRRP have the potential to benefit ongoing operations as well.

- ◆ (c). As you know, reports implicated Ugandan and Burundian troops participating in AMISOM of raping civilians. Would APPRP include modules aimed at protecting civilians? Would, if not how, do you guard against reputational risk to the U.S. from being associated with their training?

Answer. We are greatly concerned about the reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by AMISOM forces. The United States immediately engaged with the African Union and the Governments of Uganda and Burundi to urge them to undertake a credible and transparent investigation into the alleged incidents immediately. Ugandan and Burundian forces deploying to AMISOM currently receive substantial training related to human rights and protection of civilians through the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program and counterterrorism training funded through section 2282. We are continuously looking at ways to improve this training, including in response to the reports of sexual exploitation and abuse. That training will need to focus not only on increased awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse, but also on improving the capacity of the contingents to investigate allegations and hold perpetrators accountable.

We intend to keep APPRP focused on developing specialized capabilities and enabling units required to facilitate rapid deployment (including logistics, engineering, equipment maintenance, transport, intelligence, and medical capabilities), and, therefore, we do not expect protection of civilians to be a primary focus of the APPRP-funded training events. This is not because protection of civilians is unimportant, but rather because these topics are already being addressed through the existing predeployment training initiatives funded through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (like ACOTA) and section 2282. We intend APPRP to complement, not replace existing training initiatives.

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