

**NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH
CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—
FEBRUARY 7 THROUGH NOVEMBER 28, 2012
—

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
112TH CONGRESS—SECOND SESSION

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**NOMINATIONS OF MICHELE SISON, BRETT
McGURK, AND SUSAN ELLIOTT**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2012

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

Hon. Michele Jeanne Sison, of Maryland, to be Ambassador to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and to serve concurrently as Ambassador to the Republic of Maldives
Brett H. McGurk, of Connecticut, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq
Susan Marsh Elliott, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr., presiding.

Present: Senators Casey, Udall, Lugar, and Risch.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.,
U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Senator CASEY. Good morning. Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets to consider the President's nominees to serve as Ambassador to the following countries: Iraq, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Tajikistan. I want to thank all of the witnesses and others who are here with us today for appearing to discuss challenges in these countries and obviously to discuss each nominee's work, as well as their work upon confirmation, and of course, U.S. policy in each of the countries.

Let me just go through a little bit about each place first and then we will get to our witnesses, our nominees.

In Iraq, the picture, of course, is mixed nearly 6 months after the redeployment of United States troops from the country. We know that political and ethnic divisions remain sharp as Iraq recovers from years and years of war. The current government took months to establish in 2010 and a high degree of mistrust still exists among key political factions. Iraqis and Americans have sacrificed mightily to support the democratic process in Iraq. At this critical time, we should continue to support the political reconciliation among key players in the country as they work to further deepen the democratic process.

This unsettled political environment exists within a very precarious security situation where extremist groups are still capable of and have launched significant attacks in the country. Just last week, six bomb blasts across Baghdad killed at least 17 people mostly in Shia neighborhoods. On Monday, a suicide bomber killed at least 26 people in Baghdad and wounded more than 190 in an attack on the government-run body that manages Shiite religious and cultural sites. While security is certainly a significant challenge in Iraq and all loss of life is a tragedy, violence has, in fact, decreased substantially since the height of the conflict.

With the end of the U.S. military presence in the country at the end of 2011, Iraq has sought to deepen the roots of its sovereignty and play a leadership role in the region. Iraq recently hosted a meeting of the Arab League in Baghdad, a symbol that it is once again a key player in the region after years of isolation under Saddam Hussein. With this enhanced standing in the region, there are serious questions about Iraq's position on, for example, Syria. While I understand Iraq's concerns about Syria's stability in a post-Assad era, the violence over the past year perpetrated by Assad's forces is inexcusable. Iraq should join with others in the international community and use its position in the Arab League to bring increased diplomatic pressure to bear on Mr. Assad.

I also continue to have significant concerns about Iran's efforts to exert influence in Iraq. I look forward to hearing the nominee's thoughts on this seminal issue and an assessment of the United States ability to diplomatically mitigate the negative effects of Iranian influence in Iraq.

Despite these continuing challenges, there is positive news in Iraq that we can build upon. This was reflected in a recent public opinion survey fielded by the National Democratic Institute, known as NDI. NDI found that 48 percent of Iraqis believed that Iraq was headed in the right direction. Oil exports have increased by 20 percent this year to nearly 2.5 million barrels a day. American companies have increased their presence in Iraq. And, as mentioned, violence levels have, in fact, decreased. We are seeing signs of progress, but this progress is delicate and fragile.

In October of last year, the State Department became the lead U.S. agency in the country. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is the biggest U.S. presence in the world with approximately 16,000 staff and contractors. Questions remain about the State Department's ability to operate in this still precarious security environment and handle the significant workload associated with the processing of billions of dollars' worth of arms sales to the Iraqi Government. A diplomatic presence of this size requires sustained oversight from Congress. And I look forward to continued engagement with our nominee, upon confirmation, to ensure our footprint in Iraq is the right size and that we have the right amount of resources to pursue our interests.

The President has nominated Brett McGurk to represent our interests amid the myriad significant challenges in Iraq. Mr. McGurk, perhaps due to his great upbringing in Pittsburgh, PA, is eminently capable to assume this position. Of course, there are other reasons for his preparation, but it does not hurt that you have roots in Pittsburgh. He has been engaged in U.S. policy in

Iraq since 2004, advising every U.S. Ambassador at post in Iraq. He has an intimate understanding of the political players and history of Iraq, as well as the role of the United States in the country since 2004. His unique experience across two administrations is very good preparation to establish a leadership vision for the Embassy that reflects U.S. diplomatic, security, and economic interests. Mr. McGurk is the right choice at the right time in United States-Iraq diplomatic relations.

Mr. McGurk, welcome. We will hear from you in a moment.

In Sri Lanka, 3 years after the end of more than a quarter century of devastating civil war, we also see a mixed picture. On the one hand, the end of the conflict has led to strong economic growth, driven by large-scale reconstruction and development projects, increasing commodity exports, and a growing tourist industry. However, the war left Sri Lanka with a legacy of internal displacement, mistrust among ethnic groups, and of course, insufficient protection for human rights that have yet to be adequately addressed. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, nearly 100,000 people remain displaced and even more have been unable to repossess their homes. The military's significant presence in the north and east of the country poses an obstacle to returning internally displaced people, as well as to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Some observers have expressed concern about the ongoing Sinhualization of ethnic Tamil areas.

Perhaps most importantly, the Sri Lankan Government has failed to meet expectations with regard to investigating alleged human rights violations and holding culpable individuals accountable. International experts have found credible allegations of serious human rights violations committed by both sides in the last stages of the war, but the perpetrators have not been called to account yet for their crimes. The recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, the so-called LLRC, released more than 6 months ago have yet to be implemented.

I and others remain very concerned about the lack of accountability for actions taken during the final days of the war, as well as about reports of ongoing human rights violations in the country. In March 2011, I led a resolution in the Senate calling for greater accountability in Sri Lanka, and in November of that year, I wrote a letter to Secretary Clinton, along with Senators Leahy and Cardin, calling for an independent international investigation into the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. Recent reports by the Department of State, the U.N., and international human rights groups cite forced disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture, and repression of media and political opposition all as ongoing problems. The United States should continue to work with the international community to push for greater accountability and protection for human rights in Sri Lanka.

The Maldives is certainly an important ally of the United States and we enjoy a productive relationship. In 2008, the Maldives experienced historic elections which heralded a new democratic beginning for this small island, and we know that this year's political unrest has unfortunately threatened to derail the progress that has been made. The United States should continue to press for elec-

tions as soon as possible to ensure that the seeds of the democratic process, planted in 2008, are able to flourish.

I welcome Ambassador Sison, and I met the Ambassador during my visit to the Middle East in 2010 where she was in charge of our Embassy in Lebanon. I was impressed with her ability to navigate a complicated and at times, indeed, treacherous political environment in Beirut. She has also served as Ambassador in the United Arab Emirates and in a variety of diplomatic positions in Iraq, Pakistan, India, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, and Haiti. She will be well prepared for what I know will be a very challenging assignment in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Ambassador, I know that your two daughters, Alexandra and Jessica, are in Arizona today. But as they have accompanied you to seven overseas posts over the years, they deserve special recognition for their unwavering support for you and for the country. And we want to recognize that today.

And finally, Tajikistan. Tajikistan's strategic location and internal instability pose important challenges for United States policymakers. While the United States operations in Afghanistan continue, we must rely upon close cooperation with Tajikistan in order to manage the flow of goods and people into and out of Afghanistan. This includes bringing materials and equipment into Afghanistan that are critical to progress there, disrupting the dangerous flow of narcotics across the border, and preventing militants from seeking safe haven and causing instability in Tajikistan.

However, we must balance these strategic priorities with the need to address serious human rights concerns in the country. The U.N. Human Rights Council in March 2012 reported on Tajikistan and revealed worrying trends in human rights, including reports of repression of media freedom and political opposition and the use of torture by law enforcement officials. I am particularly concerned about the reported restrictions on the rights of women and ethnic and religious minorities, and I appreciate the work that our dedicated Foreign Service and USAID personnel are doing in Tajikistan and look forward to hearing more about how we will advance this work going forward.

The President has nominated Susan Marsh Elliott to be the new U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan. Susan, I note that you were born in Doylestown, PA. I cannot say that that will guarantee your confirmation, but it will not hurt. [Laughter.]

It certainly will not hurt.

She is currently the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. She has served in Russia, Northern Ireland, Greece, Peru, and Honduras. She also has the distinction of having been born in Pennsylvania, but I do not want to put too much weight on that.

I would also like to welcome her son who has joined her today, Kurt Mitman, for being with her today, and I would also like to acknowledge Deputy Assistant Secretary Elliot's husband, Matthias Mitman, who could not be with us today because he is currently serving as the deputy chief of mission in our Embassy in Honduras. And please wish him well for us.

Again, I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here. Madam Ambassador, we will start with you and maybe go from my

right to the left. If you could try to keep your opening remarks to 5 minutes. If you have a longer statement, that will certainly be made part of the record, and then we will get to questions.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHELE JEANNE SISON, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AS AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Ambassador SISON. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Senator, it is an honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka and U.S. Ambassador to Maldives. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for their confidence in my abilities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the committee and interested Members of Congress to represent the American people and to advance U.S. goals in Sri Lanka and Maldives.

In my 30 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, I have been posted as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and as U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, as you noted, Mr. Chairman. I also have considerable experience in South Asia, having served in India and Pakistan and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the South Asia region.

The United States has important interests in both Sri Lanka and Maldives. Sri Lanka is located along the busiest shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, a region emerging as a strategic arena in which America's enduring interests are increasingly at play. Sri Lanka has also been a contributor to U.N. peacekeeping operations. The United States thus recognizes the importance of maintaining a broad range of partnerships with Sri Lanka as we encourage a lasting democratic peace in the country after nearly 3 decades of devastating conflict.

The United States and other international partners have encouraged the Government of Sri Lanka to pursue the steps needed to foster genuine reconciliation and accountability. Although the Government of Sri Lanka defeated the terrorist organization, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, serious allegations of violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by both sides at the end of the war remain to be investigated and have slowed reconciliation.

In March, the U.N. Human Rights Council adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution calling on the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations of Sri Lanka's own government-appointed Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. In April, the State Department issued its third report to Congress on accountability in Sri Lanka since the end of Sri Lanka's conflict in 2009. Achieving genuine reconciliation will require Sri Lanka to take credible steps to ensure equality and justice for all Sri Lankans, particularly for those living in the former conflict areas. Such steps include demilitarization of the former conflict zones, establishment of a mechanism to address cases of the missing and detained, and setting a date for provincial elections in the north. Also critical will be the achievement of an agreement between the Sri Lankan Government and the elected representatives of the Tamil community on devolution of power to provincial institutions.

During a May 18 meeting with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Secretary Clinton underscored that an enduring peace is unsustainable without adequate measures to address reconciliation and accountability. She encouraged a transparent and public process with regard to reconciliation and accountability to strengthen confidence inside and outside of Sri Lanka and to speed the healing of the country. If confirmed, I stand ready to lead our efforts to support Sri Lanka as it moves forward and to use U.S. assistance strategically to promote reconciliation, strengthen democratic institutions and practices, and foster economic growth particularly in the north and east, the former conflict zones.

The U.S. Ambassador in Colombo is also accredited to the Republic of Maldives. In February, following a series of controversial events and protests, the former Vice President took office after the resignation of the President. The United States continues to encourage Maldives to work within existing democratic institutions to resolve political challenges peacefully and transparently. The U.S. Government now has a window of opportunity to step up its engagement in Maldives, and USAID recently committed funding to assist Maldives in ensuring that the next round of Presidential elections is free and fair.

The United States also recognizes the importance of promoting security in the Indian Ocean. To that end, the U.S. Coast Guard has provided training to the Maldivian Coast Guard to improve its ability to respond to threats of piracy, as well as to combat transshipment of illicit commodities. U.S. assistance to the Maldives also promotes the development of a robust "climate resilient islands" model.

If confirmed, I plan to consult with Sri Lankans and Maldivians from all walks of life on how the United States can best support local initiatives to promote civil society, protect freedom of expression, and encourage youth exchanges. It would also be my goal, if confirmed, to engage in vigorous commercial advocacy in Sri Lanka and Maldives on behalf of U.S. companies, in support of President Obama's National Export Initiative.

I would welcome your insights and views, as well as any questions you might have for me today. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Sison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MICHELE JEANNE SISON

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Sri Lanka and United States Ambassador to Maldives. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for their confidence in my abilities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and interested Members of Congress to represent the American people and to advance U.S. goals in Sri Lanka and Maldives.

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I would welcome your insights and views, as well as any questions you might have for me today. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Madam Ambassador.
Mr. McGurk.

**STATEMENT OF BRETT H. MCGURK, OF CONNECTICUT,
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, Senator Lugar. It is a tremendous honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to become U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for the confidence they have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to advance America's many important and vital interests in Iraq.

I have had the distinct privilege of serving alongside each of the last five U.S. Ambassadors to Iraq. I was with Ambassador John

Negroponte in July 2004 when he raised the American flag to open a U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for the first time since 1991. Nearly 8 years later, I was with Ambassador Jim Jeffrey as he led the challenging transition from military to civilian lead for the first time since the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

I have also served alongside our heroic military commanders, including Generals Petraeus, Odierno, and Austin. The opportunities that are now before us in Iraq exist only because of the leadership of these individuals and the more than 1 million Americans who have served there, including the nearly 4,500 who have paid the ultimate price.

Like too many Americans, I have lost friends in Iraq. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power, drawing on all the tools of our foreign policy, to build a lasting partnership with Iraq that is worthy of their memory and sacrifice.

I believe such a partnership is possible. I also believe, however, that we are not there yet. There is so much the United States must do to mitigate risks of backsliding and increase prospects for consolidating the many gains that we have seen since the worst periods of the war.

Iraq today is slowing emerging from decades of war, isolation, and dictatorship. More recently, it faced down, with American help, a sectarian war that left tens of thousands of Iraqis dead and millions displaced. The violence threatened to collapse the Iraqi state and reduced many citizens to their most basic ethnic and sectarian identities.

This legacy is felt most acutely in the political process. For the first time in Iraq's modern history, politics is now the primary arena for engagement among all of Iraq's many different sects and ethnicities. That is the good news. The bad news is that their vast differences still threaten to overwhelm the nascent institutional framework that was established under the Iraqi Constitution. I am deeply concerned about this situation.

Iraq's Constitution envisions a united, federal, democratic, and pluralistic state in which all citizens enjoy fair representation in local and national institutions. This vision, however, remains an aspiration. Fear, mistrust, and score-settling still dominate political discourse. As a result, Iraqis have sought to supplement the constitutional design with additional political agreements and accommodations.

I have often been one of the few Americans in the room when such agreements were being developed. If confirmed, I pledge my utmost efforts to work with leaders from all political blocs, to encourage respect for prior agreements, durable compromise, and constitutional arrangements that help guarantee meaningful power-sharing and partnership.

These efforts would be guided by the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement, which is now the cornerstone of U.S. policy in Iraq. The SFA is unique in that it structures a long-term partnership across the fields of defense, energy, economics, diplomacy, education, and justice. With respect to the political process, it calls on the United States to help strengthen Iraq's democracy and its democratic institutions as established in the Iraqi Constitution.

If confirmed, my mission is clear: to establish an enduring partnership with a united, federal, and democratic Iraq under the SFA. As one of the lead negotiators of the SFA, I would be honored to carry out that charge, together with Iraqi leaders and close colleagues from across the U.S. Government, many of whom I have worked with over a number of years.

Going forward, if confirmed, I will seek to organize the mission around four mutually reinforcing lines of operation: defense and security, political and diplomatic, energy and economics, rule of law and human rights.

In the defense and security area, if confirmed, I look forward to working with our Office of Security Cooperation and CENTCOM to ensure that we are doing everything possible to deepen our military defense partnership in Iraq.

In the diplomatic area, if confirmed, I look forward to working with our Ambassadors in regional capitals, most of whom I have worked with and admired for many years, to ensure close coordination of U.S. policies in Iraq and throughout the region.

In the political area, Iraq is scheduled to hold elections: provincial elections in 2013 and national elections in 2014. If confirmed, it will be a central focus of our mission to work in coordination with the U.N. to ensure that these elections are held freely, fairly, and on time.

Energy and economics are now foremost priorities. If confirmed, it will be among my highest priorities to connect U.S. businesses with emerging opportunities in Iraq and to refocus Iraqi leaders on the urgent necessity of diversifying their economy and grappling with national hydrocarbons legislation.

As the United States pursues its interests in Iraq, we must never lose sight of our values, including promotion of human rights, women, and protection of vulnerable minorities.

This is an ambitious agenda, but it should not require an unsustainable resource base. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Congress to establish a diplomatic presence in Iraq that is secure, strategic, effective, and sustainable. A focused U.S. mission with prioritized lines of operation organized around the SFA can enhance our influence and ensure the agility we will need to advance U.S. interests in a constantly changing and dynamic environment.

I will also ensure, if confirmed, that precious taxpayer resources are applied effectively, transparently, and with an eye toward long-term sustainability.

I have tried to touch upon a number of the issues that I will soon confront, if confirmed, as the next U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. For me, there is no more important mission in the world. I have served across two administrations over 8 years developing U.S. policy in Washington or executing U.S. policy in Iraq.

I was with President Bush when we planned a surge of 30,000 U.S. troops under a new strategy to turn around a losing war. I was with General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker when we worked to implement that strategy against tremendous odds. I later helped manage the transition of our Iraq policy to the Obama administration under two binding international agreements. Over

the past 2 years, I have answered repeated calls to return to Iraq and public service at times of crisis.

My eyes are wide open to the risks and challenges ahead. But I close from where I started. For every challenge, there is also opportunity and obligation: to honor those lost in this war or forever changed by it, we must do everything in our power to build a partnership with Iraq and its people that can endure and advance United States interests in this most vital region. If confirmed, that is what I will seek to do.

Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGurk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRETT H. MCGURK

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, it is a tremendous honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to become United States Ambassador to Iraq. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for the confidence that they have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and your colleagues in Congress to advance America's many important and vital interests in Iraq.

I have had the distinct privilege of serving alongside each of the last five U.S. Ambassadors to Iraq. I was with Ambassador John Negroponte in July 2004 when he raised the American flag to open a U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for the first time since 1991. Nearly 8 years later I was with Ambassador Jim Jeffrey as he led the challenging transition from military to civilian lead for the first time since the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

I have also served alongside our heroic military commanders including Generals Petraeus, Odierno, and Austin. The opportunities that are now before us in Iraq exist only because of the leadership of these individuals, and the more than 1 million Americans who have served there—including nearly 4,500 who have paid the ultimate price.

Like too many Americans, I have lost friends in Iraq. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power—drawing on all the tools of our foreign policy—to build a lasting partnership with Iraq that is worthy of their memory and sacrifice.

I believe such a partnership is possible. I also believe, however, that we are not there yet. There is still much the United States must do to mitigate risks of backsliding and increase prospects for consolidating the many gains that we have seen since the worst periods of the war.

The situation in Iraq today is much different from what I encountered after first landing in Baghdad in January 2004. Back then, the road from the airport was known as the highway of death. American troops offered the only visible security presence. Sovereign authority was vested in an American administrator. Iraqi ministries were looted and abandoned shells.

Today, Iraqis are securing their own country. Sovereign authority is vested in an elected Iraqi Government that serves under a popularly ratified constitution. And many key indicators are positive: Iraq's GDP is forecast to increase by double digits over each of the next 3 years. Its oil production recently surpassed levels not seen in three decades. Its Parliament recently passed a \$100 billion budget, which was praised by the IMF for its fiscal prudence. The security situation has remained generally stable.

Such indicators might point the way to a globally integrated Iraq that is more secure and prosperous than at any time in its history. This future is now possible, but not inevitable.

The positive indicators I just cited should not obscure the sobering situation that now confronts Iraq. The country is slowly emerging from decades of war, isolation, sanctions, and dictatorship. More recently, it faced down—with American help—a sectarian war that left tens of thousands of Iraqis dead and millions displaced. The violence threatened to collapse the Iraqi state and reduced many citizens to their most basic ethnic and sectarian identities.

This legacy is felt most acutely in the political process. For the first time in Iraq's modern history, politics is now the primary arena for engagement among all of Iraq's many different sects and ethnicities. That is the good news. The bad news is that their vast differences still threaten to overwhelm the nascent institutional

framework that was established under the Iraqi Constitution. I am deeply concerned about this situation.

Iraq's Constitution envisions a united, federal, democratic, and pluralistic state, in which all citizens enjoy fair representation in local and national institutions. This vision, however, remains an aspiration. Fear, mistrust, and score-settling still dominate political discourse. As a result, Iraqis have sought to supplement the constitutional design with additional political accommodations. An example of these included the Erbil agreements, which were negotiated over the course of 5 months in 2010 to serve as a roadmap for a new government.

I have often been one of the few Americans in the room when such agreements were being developed. If confirmed, I pledge my utmost efforts to work with leaders from all political blocs to encourage respect for prior agreements, durable compromise, and arrangements that help guarantee meaningful power-sharing and partnership under the Iraqi Constitution.

This is not simply a policy desire of the United States. It is a central commitment under the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), which President Obama has established as the cornerstone of U.S. policy toward Iraq. The SFA is unique in that it structures a long-term partnership across the fields of defense, energy, economics, diplomacy, education, and justice. With respect to the political process, it calls on the United States to help "strengthen [Iraq's] democracy and its democratic institutions as defined and established in the Iraqi Constitution."

For Iraqis concerned that the United States might lose interest in supporting the political process, they need only look to the SFA and our commitment to its execution. As Secretary Clinton has said, "The SFA commits our countries to work together on a range of issues, from governance and rule of law, to economics, education, energy, and the environment. And we're committed to following through." Such follow-through will require active and sustained U.S. diplomacy.

If confirmed, my mission is clear: to establish an enduring partnership with a united, federal, and democratic Iraq—under the SFA. As one of the lead negotiators of the SFA, I will be honored, if confirmed, to carry out that charge together with Iraqi leaders and close colleagues from across the U.S. Government, many of whom I have worked with over a number of years.

Going forward, we should have no illusions. Building an enduring partnership with a country that since 1958 defined itself in hostility to the West will be exceedingly hard. But it is no harder than what we have done before—and we now have a roadmap.

The SFA provides a common point of reference with the Iraqis and lends coherence to the U.S. mission in two important ways. First, it prioritizes U.S. objectives and thus helps ensure that taxpayer resources are targeted to advance U.S. interests. Second, it institutionalizes state-to-state relations and thus forces long-term thinking across U.S. and Iraqi administrations.

I would like to discuss each of these points in turn, as they will frame my tenure as Ambassador, if confirmed.

PRIORITIZING LINES OF OPERATION

In her introduction to the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, Secretary Clinton stated: "We will eliminate overlap, set priorities, and fund only the work that supports those priorities." In Iraq, that means immediately directing our precious resources—including time and personnel—toward four priority lines of operation.

1. Defense and Security Cooperation

The first line of operation is defense and security cooperation. It would be a mistake to view the withdrawal of U.S. military forces as foreclosing a military partnership with Iraq. The SFA—which is a permanent agreement—provides the foundation for enduring defense ties.

Iraq already has the fourth-largest Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program in the region and ninth-largest in the world. Through FMS, the Iraqi Government has chosen U.S. suppliers to build the backbone of its security forces—supporting tens of thousands of American jobs. The program is now valued above \$10 billion and includes over 400 separate cases that are designed to help build Iraqi self-defense capabilities through ground power (tanks and radars), air power (pilot training, helicopters, F-16s, and air defense), and sea power (patrol boats, support vessels, and threat detection). Importantly, Iraq is now funding its defense and security needs. Its most recent budget included \$15 billion in defense and security spending—twice the amount Iraq spent 5 years ago. It is in our mutual interest to ensure that these funds are spent wherever possible on U.S. manufactured equipment through our FMS program.

Indeed, FMS sales have been the bedrock for U.S. strategic partnerships in the region and they can do the same for Iraq. As a staff report from this committee noted: "The sale of military equipment gives us an edge in diplomacy, builds relationships, and fosters interoperability. But perhaps most importantly, it fills a void that other countries, including Iran, are more than willing to step into if left empty." FMS cases also ensure appropriate congressional scrutiny and end-use monitoring to deter and prevent misuse. Of course, this committee will be called upon to provide critical oversight of foreign military sales to Iraq. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to protect and advance U.S. interests through our FMS program.

The Office of Security Cooperation (OSC-I) is the primary implementer of U.S. security assistance in Iraq. I have worked closely with the leadership of OSC-I, Lieutenant General Bob Caslen and Rear Admiral Ed Winters. If confirmed, I look forward to working with them to build a streamlined and innovative OSC-I to advance our defense partnership with Iraq.

This partnership will go beyond arms sales. It might also include joint exercises, strategic training and doctrinal development, support for critical infrastructure protection, NATO exchanges, professional military education, and other programs consistent with an enduring defense relationship. Iraq's regional integration through military-to-military partnerships is also an important priority for CENTCOM. This will remain a challenge, particularly with some GCC states, but as Iraq's military grows and matures, technical mil-to-mil relationships may precede—and help set conditions for—diplomatic progress between Baghdad and GCC capitals.

Additionally, the United States must work with the Iraqi Government to ensure that al-Qaeda never again secures a foothold in Iraq. While Iraq's Special Forces are among the most capable in the region, their effectiveness can be enhanced through cooperation with U.S. technical experts and advisors. If confirmed, I will work closely with Iraqi leaders to ensure that we are doing all we can to help Iraqi forces eliminate al-Qaeda's leadership and uproot its networks from Iraqi soil.

2. Diplomatic and Political Cooperation

The second line of operation is diplomatic and political cooperation. Iraq has made diplomatic strides in recent months. It began to settle a series of long-outstanding disputes with Kuwait arising from the 1990 invasion. Saudi Arabia named its first ambassador to Iraq since 1990. Jordan has begun discussions to enhance energy and economic ties. The Arab League summit in Baghdad signaled Iraq's gradual reemergence on the regional stage.

But the challenges are immense and growing due to the crisis in Syria. Syria was one of the main topics of conversation during my recent assignments in Baghdad. Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders know that U.S. policy is firm: Bashar al-Assad must go. The longer he remains, the greater the danger to the Syrian people, to the region, and to Iraq. We have sought to encourage Iraq to support the Arab League consensus on Syria and demanded full adherence to relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions. In recent months, the record on these points has improved; but this matter will require constant vigilance and resolve.

Iran has tremendous influence in Iraq, sharing a 3,000-kilometer border, as well as interwoven religious, cultural, and economic ties. But Iraqis have also resisted Iranian designs. Millions of Iraqis still bear deep scars—visible and invisible—from a bitter war with its eastern neighbor. Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Marjayiya in Najaf profess a vision of Shia Islam that undercuts the very legitimacy of the Iranian regime. Iraqis complain about a flood of shoddy Iranian goods flooding their markets. The vast majority of Iraqis seek to live in a globally integrated nation, whereas Iran seeks to further isolate Iraq from the world.

It is between these competing visions—an Iraq that is globally connected versus an Iraq that is isolated and dependent on Iran—that the United States retains substantial advantage and influence. Indeed, our vision for Iraq is one most Iraqis share, and it is codified throughout the SFA. To be sure, Iraqi leaders now in power have relationships with the Iranian regime. But they also have relationships with us. If confirmed, I will seek to enhance a broad range of relationships across government and civil society that can help Iraqis resist undue Iranian influence, increase U.S. influence, and advance our own mutual interests as defined in the SFA.

The relationship with Turkey is increasingly complex. Turkey and Iraq enjoy booming economic ties and cooperate on counterterror policies. But recent months have seen rising tension between Ankara and Baghdad in line with rising tensions in the region. Ankara has also established unprecedented relations with Iraq's Kurdish leadership in Erbil, further raising the ire and suspicions of some in Baghdad. In 2007, I was involved in developing a policy to initiate Ankara-Erbil ties after a series of devastating PKK attacks on Turkish territory. At the time, these ties

were dormant; progress since then shows how rapidly dynamics can change. Going forward, the United States must continue to play a mediating role between Ankara, Baghdad, and Erbil.

The greatest threat to Iraq's regional position comes from within. The divisions among Iraq's political blocs—and increasingly within the blocs themselves—have led to a perpetual state of political crisis. Some of this is inevitable. The governing coalition that formed in 2010 includes 98 percent of the elected Parliament—nearly the entirety of Iraq's political spectrum—and naturally gives rise to rivalry, inefficiency, and intrigue. But escalating accusations in recent months present a heightened image of internal discord and open the door to meddling by outside actors. The withdrawal of U.S. forces—while increasing Iraq's sense of sovereignty and ownership over its internal affairs—may have also increased short-term risks of miscalculation and raised the stakes of lingering power-struggles.

An underlying problem is that Iraq still suffers from a political system driven as much by individual personalities as institutions. Our aim, therefore, is to support and strengthen Iraq's democratic institutions wherever possible. There are some encouraging signs. The Parliament has at times asserted its independence and reined in the authority of the Prime Minister, most recently by removing from the budget a \$15 billion investment fund that some believed left too much discretion to the Executive. Current debates in Parliament include deliberations over laws to devolve powers to provincial capitals, impose term limits on the Speaker and Prime Minister posts, and stand up a new Supreme Court. These are the types of quiet but important "issues-based" debates that focus needed attention on what remains an unfinished constitutional design.

It will also be essential over the next 24 months to help ensure that Iraq holds scheduled elections—provincial elections in 2013 and national elections in 2014. Elections may require new laws to allocate seats in provincial councils and Parliament as well as a new mandate and membership for Iraq's electoral commission. These matters will be politically charged and we must do everything possible—working in close coordination with the United Nations—to help Iraqis prepare for elections that are free, fair, internationally monitored, and on time.

In the meantime, we must encourage Iraqi leaders to forge solutions consistent with the Iraqi Constitution. This includes achievement of a durable solution to Iraq's disputed internal boundaries in accordance with article 140 of the constitution, and a legal framework for the development, management, and distribution of Iraq's hydrocarbon resources.

The United States cannot dictate outcomes. But we can nurture processes that open channels of dialogue and narrow areas of disagreement. If confirmed, I will engage national, provincial, and regional leaders every day—including regular visits to the Kurdistan region—to do just that.

3. Energy and Economic Cooperation

The third line of operation is economics and energy cooperation. Secretary Clinton has placed "economic statecraft" at the heart of our foreign policy with an emphasis on harnessing economic forces to increase our influence abroad and strengthen our economy at home. I believe Iraq can be a centerpiece of this agenda. As a staff report from this committee found: "Given that Iraq's fate will be decided in large part by the economic growth trajectory it realizes, the top priority for the U.S. Embassy should be helping American companies do business in Iraq."

Some U.S. companies are doing well in Iraq—including Boeing, Ford, General Motors, and General Electric. U.S. exports to Iraq rose 48 percent in 2011 (to nearly \$2.5 billion) and Iraqi consumers have demonstrated a preference for American goods, including American cars, which now account for nearly one-third of all vehicles sold in Iraq. But U.S. exports lag behind China (\$4 billion) and the European Union (\$5 billion). Given all that we have invested, we must do all we can to connect Iraq's fast-growing market with U.S. businesses. The Commerce Department now offers Gold Key services for business-to-business matchmaking. State and Treasury offer advice and workshops for U.S. companies. The U.S. Business Council in Iraq seeks to promote private sector investment. If confirmed, I will endeavor to make such programs central to the Embassy agenda with a focus on driving investment into Iraq and supporting American jobs.

The Iraqis must do their part. Iraq's macroeconomic picture is sound with low inflation and sustainable growth projected over the next 3–5 years. But the country faces dire economic challenges—including overdependence on oil, weak financial institutions, corruption, and a dated regulatory structure. Its cumbersome legal environment, excessive subsidies, and barriers to entry further discourage growth and foreign investment. By helping the Iraqis address these challenges, the United States can gain leverage and influence while pursuing mutual goals.

For example, the SFA envisions joint cooperation to help integrate Iraq into the global economy, including through accession to the World Trade Organization. WTO accession is a long-term process but it can help standardize import and export requirements, protect investors, and signal to the world that Iraq is ready to play by international rules. Iraq is also a candidate country for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which applies international standards of accounting and independent audits to deter corruption and boost confidence in a country's economic standing. Iraq would be the sole Middle Eastern member of the EITI and it has asked for U.S. assistance to meet its requirements.

Iraq must also diversify its economy. While there is growth potential in nonhydrocarbon sectors—including agriculture, housing, fisheries, tourism, and telecommunications—Iraq is one of the most oil-dependent economies in the world. Sixty percent of its GDP and ninety percent of government revenues depend on the oil industry. Absent diversification, Iraq risks onset of the oil curse with a bloated state crowding out private investment and ingenuity. On the positive side, Iraq recently enacted a 5-year \$186 billion development plan with projects for roads, hospitals, housing, sewage, and electricity plants. USAID and Commerce are working with Iraqi ministries to reform Saddam-era legal codes. But serious reform will require a sustained focus by Iraqi leaders with assistance from the United States, World Bank, UNDP, and the IMF.

The oil sector is booming. Iraq today is one of the few potential swing producers in the world and has helped stabilize global markets. In 2011, Iraq produced an average of 2.7 million barrels per day—a 30-year high—and this year production has increased by another 300,000 barrels per day thanks to improvements in offshore infrastructure. Under contracts with international oil companies, including Occidental and Exxon-Mobil, Iraq has set a production target of 10 million barrels per day by 2020. Key obstacles, however—poor infrastructure, bottlenecks, bureaucracy, political infighting, and legal uncertainty—may limit production to half that amount. It is in our mutual interest to help Iraq overcome these obstacles, and we have begun to do so by linking U.S. and Iraqi expertise to systematically analyze immediate problems and think jointly about long-term solutions. If confirmed, this will be a core Embassy focus.

4. Rule of Law and Human Rights

The fourth line of operation is rule of law and human rights. I have seen Iraqi judges welcome U.S. assistance as they seek to build an independent judiciary free from political interference. This is extremely hard to do, as it was in the early years of our own constitutional experiment. But it is also important, and, as pressure on the Iraqi judiciary grows, we must work to deepen and enhance these relationships. Standing up a new Supreme Court—a requirement of the constitution that has never been acted upon—can also help further define legal boundaries that are intended to check and balance power horizontally (between branches of the federal government) and vertically (between the federal government, provinces, and regions).

As the United States pursues its interests in Iraq, we must never lose sight of our values, including the promotion of human rights, women, and protection of vulnerable minorities. Iraq recently stood up an independent Human Rights Commission with authority to receive and investigate complaints from any Iraqi citizen. The U.S. Embassy is now working with the United Nations and interested Iraqi leaders to help ensure this commission lives up to its potential.

The protection of vulnerable minorities also requires urgent attention. We must continue to work with the Iraqi Government and international partners to maintain a dialogue with these groups and address their concerns. In particular, the Embassy maintains an open dialogue with Iraqi officials and Christian leaders to discuss protection for Christian facilities. This dialogue should continue in earnest and become institutionalized over the coming months and years.

Programs that promote women in Iraq—including assistance through Iraqi ministries to widows and training for emerging women leaders—are low cost and high impact. Secretary Clinton has placed these programs at the top of our human rights agenda in Iraq.

Refugee assistance rounds out that agenda. This includes the nearly 1.3 million internally displaced (IDPs) since 2006. Iraq has boosted resources to IDPs, including a fivefold increase in direct grants. U.S. support includes humanitarian assistance and processing refugees who wish to enter the United States. Recent changes in the intake criteria should ease processing of these cases—including through the Special Immigration Visa program. Iraqis who risked their lives to work with us should feel welcomed, even as we uphold essential security checks.

INSTITUTIONALIZING RELATIONS

In Iraq today we confront a newly sovereign and assertive nation. The SFA is designed to account for this inevitability by establishing an organized partnership centered on high-level Joint Coordinating Committees (JCCs). Standing up these committees can establish regular patterns of engagement to widen avenues of cooperation and narrow areas of disagreement.

Much of this is now underway. In April, the Energy JCC held its inaugural meeting to discuss how best to increase Iraq's supply of oil to global markets as well as its emerging electricity and natural gas sectors. Two weeks ago, the Defense and Security JCC began a structured dialogue over the contours of a long-term defense partnership. The Education and Culture JCC now oversees the largest Fulbright program in the Middle East and the largest International Visitors Leadership Program in the world.

These JCCs help interconnect our governments, militaries, economies, cultures, and educational institutions. They are the institutional foundation for a long-term partnership.

The SFA does not foreclose additional linkages between the United States and Iraq. For instance, given the increasingly important role of Parliament as an independent institution, it would be beneficial to develop linkages between the U.S. Congress and Iraqi parliamentarians.

Additionally, America's close and historic relationship with Kurdistan and the Kurdish people must be sustained and enhanced. The U.S. consulate in Erbil is building deep and long-term relationships with Kurdish officials and civil society leaders. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing a dialogue with Kurdish officials on issues of mutual interest, including easing visa processing for travel to the United States, strengthening economic and educational connections, and supporting the region's emerging role as a gateway to the broader Iraqi marketplace.

INSTITUTIONALIZING OUR PRESENCE

If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Congress to establish a diplomatic presence in Iraq that is secure, strategic, effective, and sustainable. I will welcome your guidance and continue a discussion with the Congress on the most appropriate U.S. footprint in light of U.S. priorities and conditions on the ground. I will also ensure that the use of precious U.S. taxpayer resources is transparent, effective, and targeted to advance U.S. interests.

In Iraq today, our size often bears little proportion to our influence. In my experience, the opposite can be true. Our large size and contract tail can lead to friction with the Iraqi Government and misunderstanding among the Iraqi people, thereby depleting diplomatic leverage and capital. A focused U.S. mission with prioritized lines of operation—organized around the SFA—can help enhance our influence over the long term and ensure the agility we will need to advance U.S. interests in a dynamic and constantly changing environment.

I have tried to touch upon a number of the issues that I would soon confront if confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. For me, there is no more important mission in the world. I have served across two administrations over 8 years developing and implementing U.S. policy in Iraq.

I was with President Bush when we planned a surge of 30,000 U.S. troops under a new strategy to turn around a losing war. I was with General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker when we worked to implement that strategy against tremendous odds. I later helped manage the transition of Iraq policy to the Obama administration under two binding international agreements with the Iraqi Government. Over the past 2 years I have answered calls to return to Iraq and public service at times of crisis.

I have always sought to take an empirical and pragmatic approach to the many complexities we confront in Iraq; and I have based my assessments on measurable risks to U.S. interests. If confirmed, I pledge to do the same with you.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my eyes are wide open to the risks and challenges ahead in Iraq. But I close from where I started. For every challenge, there is also opportunity and obligation: to honor those lost in this war, or forever changed by it, we must do everything in our power to build a partnership with Iraq and its people that can endure and advance U.S. interests in this most vital region.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Mr. McGurk.
Ms. Elliott.

**STATEMENT OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT, OF FLORIDA, TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN**

Ms. ELLIOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, and Senator Lugar. As the chairman pointed out, I do have strong ties to the State of Pennsylvania, having been born there, and my son is a student at the University of Pennsylvania. But I also have strong ties to Indiana, having been a graduate of Indiana University and lived in Muncie, IN. So it is an honor for me to be here in front of you today.

Senator RISCH. How about Idaho? [Laughter.]

Ms. ELLIOTT. I do not have any to Idaho.

Senator RISCH. But you do eat the potatoes. [Laughter.]

Ms. ELLIOTT. Yes, I do and I love them.

I am very honored to be President Obama's nominee to become the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan. I am grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will work closely with you, the committee, and the entire Congress to advance America's goals and interests in Tajikistan.

I would also like to thank my wonderful colleagues, friends, and family who have supported me over my 22-year career at the State Department.

Since recognizing Tajikistan's independence and establishing diplomatic relations 20 years ago, the United States has supported Tajikistan's sovereignty and encouraged its development as a more prosperous, tolerant, and democratic society. Shortly after its independence, when I first began working on Central Asia policy, Tajikistan was in the midst of a civil war. Today, the people of Tajikistan enjoy peace and stability. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia over the last 2 years, I often traveled to Tajikistan and developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for the importance of Tajikistan to U.S. foreign policy interests.

Tajikistan shares a long border with Afghanistan. Although the terrain is mountainous and the infrastructure is not well developed, Tajikistan plays an important role in the Northern Distribution Network that brings vital supplies to U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Tajikistan also provides vital air transit routes for U.S. and coalition cargo and military personnel.

The Government of Tajikistan recently cohosted with the Government of Afghanistan a successful regional economic cooperation conference on Afghanistan. The conference achieved consensus on a concrete set of achievable projects and reform initiatives that can advance regional integration and provide new opportunities for private investment in the region. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to maintain and expand where possible this important support.

Narcotics trafficking and terrorism plague Tajikistan's neighborhood. Over the years, U.S. cooperation with Tajikistan has grown in addressing this and other transnational challenges through engagement, assistance, and training. Currently we are working with the Government of Tajikistan to develop expanded counternarcotics cooperation with the goal of targeting organized traffickers, bringing them to justice, and reducing the flow of narcotics through Tajikistan. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen our part-

nership with Tajikistan to combat the flow of narcotics and other illicit goods.

Tajikistan is also the poorest country in Central Asia. The people and the government, though, are working to improve their economy and aspire to become members of the World Trade Organization. If confirmed, I will work with Tajikistan to develop its agricultural sector and to improve the regulatory environment for foreign investment and trade. If confirmed, I will also continue encouraging Tajikistan to take steps necessary to attract U.S. companies to help develop and diversify its economy with American goods, expertise, and services.

Secretary Clinton visited Tajikistan in October 2011. During her visit, she met with the citizens of Tajikistan from all spectrums of society, from human rights activists to religious leaders to members of the media. The Secretary stressed the importance for governments and leaders to provide space necessary for citizens to have a voice in their governments, to pursue their aspirations, and promote their ideas. She also emphasized the belief that an open, democratic, tolerant society provides a firm foundation for a stable, secure, and prosperous nation. If confirmed, I will work with the Tajik Government to take concrete steps toward continuing the development of this kind of society.

If confirmed, I will also engage the government and people of Tajikistan to increase not only our bilateral security and economic engagement, but also continue our dialogue on human rights, civil society issues, such as allowing freedom of the press and freedom of religion or belief.

I know that success in all aspects of our engagement depends on my taking a leadership role in encouraging and supporting a strong, dedicated Embassy staff that coordinates closely with the administration, Members of Congress, and if confirmed, I look forward to continuing this active dialogue with you as we seek to advance America's interests with the government and people of Tajikistan.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Elliott follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan. I am grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I will work closely with you, the committee, and the entire U.S. Congress to advance America's goals and interests in Tajikistan.

I would like to thank all of my wonderful colleagues, friends, and family who have supported me over my 22-year career at the State Department. My son, Kurt Mitman, is here today. My husband, Matthias Mitman, is unable to be here because he is a career Foreign Service officer serving as the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. He encouraged me to join the Foreign Service and has been my strongest advocate. I would not be here today without his love and support.

Since recognizing Tajikistan's independence and establishing diplomatic relations 20 years ago, the United States has supported Tajikistan's sovereignty and encouraged its development as a more prosperous, tolerant, and democratic society. Shortly after its independence, when I first began working on Central Asia policy, Tajikistan was in the midst of a civil war. Today, the people of Tajikistan enjoy peace and stability. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia for the last 2 years,

I often traveled to Tajikistan and developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for the importance of Tajikistan to U.S. foreign policy interests.

Tajikistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and has provided assistance to its neighbor to the south and to U.S. and coalition efforts to stabilize the security situation there. Although the terrain is mountainous and the infrastructure is not well developed, Tajikistan plays an important role in the Northern Distribution Network that brings supplies to U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. It also provides vital air transit routes for U.S. and coalition cargo and military personnel. A stable future for Afghanistan depends on continued progress to develop the road, rail, and energy linkages with its Central Asian and other neighbors. Tajikistan cohosted, with the Government of Afghanistan in late March, the fifth and most substantive and successful Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan to date. The conference achieved consensus on a concrete set of achievable projects and reform initiatives that can advance regional integration and provide new opportunities for private investment in this region. Likewise, greater peace, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan will contribute to stability and prosperity in Tajikistan and the other countries of Central Asia. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to maintain and expand, where possible, this important support.

Narcotics trafficking and terrorism plague Tajikistan's neighborhood. Over the years, U.S. cooperation with Tajikistan has grown in addressing these and other transnational challenges through engagement, assistance, and training. Currently we are working with the Government of Tajikistan to develop expanded counter-narcotics cooperation with the goal of targeting organized traffickers, bringing them to justice and reducing the flow of narcotics through Tajikistan. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen our partnership with Tajikistan to combat this flow of narcotics, and other illicit goods.

Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia. The people and the government are working to improve their economy and aspire to be members of the World Trade Organization. If confirmed, I will encourage Tajikistan to develop its agriculture sector and improve the regulatory environment for foreign investment and trade. If confirmed, I will also continue encouraging Tajikistan to take the necessary steps to attract U.S. companies to help develop and diversify its economy with American expertise, goods, and services.

My experience in the Foreign Service has taught me that long-term peace and stability are only possible when accompanied by respect for human rights, the rule of law, the fostering of transparent and democratic governmental and civic institutions, and an open and free media environment. If confirmed, I will engage the government and people of Tajikistan to increase not only our bilateral security and economic engagement, but also continue our dialogue on human rights and civil society issues such as allowing freedom of the press and freedom of religion or belief.

The Obama administration has established conditions for constructive dialogue and trust with the government and people of Tajikistan. Secretary Clinton visited Tajikistan in October 2011. During her visit, she met with citizens of Tajikistan from all spectrums of society—from human rights activists to religious leaders to members of the media, women leaders, students, and educators. While there, the Secretary noted that Tajikistan is home to courageous, dedicated, and talented people who want to help improve the prospects for Tajikistan's future. The Secretary stressed the importance for governments and leaders to provide the space necessary for citizens to have a voice in their governments, to pursue their aspirations, and promote their ideas. It is also important to ensure fundamental freedoms, including religious and media freedoms for all people—men, women, young, and old. We believe that an open, democratic, tolerant society provides a firm foundation for a secure, stable, and prosperous nation. If confirmed, I will encourage the Tajik Government to take concrete steps toward continuing the development of that kind of society.

I recently participated in the third Annual Bilateral Consultations with Tajikistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, hosted in Washington, DC, by the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Assistant Secretary, Robert Blake. In these consultations we discussed openly and comprehensively a wide range of bilateral and multilateral interests, including counternarcotics cooperation, regional security, development assistance, economic development cooperation and human rights. If confirmed, I will continue working with the Government of Tajikistan to achieve positive results on these issues and others.

Finally, I know success in all aspects of our engagement depends on my taking a leadership role in encouraging and supporting a strong, dedicated embassy staff that coordinates closely with the administration and Members of Congress. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing an active dialogue with you as we seek to advance America's interests with the government and people of Tajikistan.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Ms. Elliott.

Before I get to my questions, we are joined by two ranking members: the ranking member of our Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Lugar; and the ranking member of our subcommittee, Senator Risch. And I think Senator Risch has a statement.

Senator RISCH. Why do you not go ahead on the questions? I will do it later.

Senator CASEY. OK. Thanks very much.

Let me start with Iraq, Mr. McGurk. I just have a couple of questions on this first round. And we will do as many 5-minute rounds as we can.

I wanted to ask you about leadership, which is a central concern in any confirmation process, but maybe especially so for the position that you have been nominated for. There will be those who say—and I want to have you respond to this—that you have, based upon your record, broad experience in Iraq, several time periods within which you have served and you have been called back for service, as I indicated, under two administrations. But they will also say that you have not had the leadership position that would lend itself to the kind of experience that would prepare you for such a substantial assignment. And I want you to answer that question because I think it is an important one in terms of demonstrating your ability to lead not just an embassy but an embassy and a mission of this size and consequence.

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. Thank you for allowing me to address that, and I would like to do it in really three ways.

First, leadership of the embassy starts at home at the embassy. As you noted in your opening statement, I have served with all five of our prior Ambassadors to Iraq and I have seen every permutation of the Embassy from the very beginning to where it is today.

Throughout that process, I have learned and seen and been involved in what it takes to lead in Iraq, and to lead in Iraq, you need a really fingertip understanding of the operational tempo in Iraq, of what it is like day to day, of knowing when something is a crisis and when it is not, managing morale and keeping people focused on the goals.

It also takes a team, and if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I would be inheriting a team of extraordinary talent and depth at the embassy. I have been fortunate to have worked with every member of the country team in Iraq, one of whom happens to be sitting to my left, Ambassador Sison. That team incorporates individuals from across the U.S. Government, just a whole-of-government approach from Commerce to Transportation to Treasury to State to the defense community to the intelligence community. I have been fortunate and also gratified to learn that key members of that team have volunteered to stay on for another year and, if I am confirmed, would serve with me.

As Ambassador, the buck would stop with me. And as I think I said in the opening statement, I have a very clear vision, in coordination with the President and the Secretary, of where we need to take this mission. But I would be working with a very strong team. Ambassador Steve Becroft, the DCM—I have worked with him for a number of years. I think we would make a very unique leadership team in the front office. The Regional Security Officer, Mark

Hunter, has done an extraordinary job under difficult circumstances. He would be staying on. I have worked with him for a number of years. It would be my honor to lead them.

Leadership also in this context—you have to look at interagency experience because you are leading a whole-of-government approach. As the senior director for President Bush in the NSC, particularly at one of the most intense periods of the war, from the time of planning and implementing the surge and through the end of his administration, I was at point for organizing a whole-of-government effort to implement the surge. Throughout that process, I developed extremely strong relationships across the entire U.S. Government. I was involved in setting goals such as negotiating the Strategic Framework Agreement—that started in March 2007—organizing the U.S. Government, getting the right team in place, getting the right people in place, the right inputs in place, and then having an operational plan leading it through to fruition. That is just one of many examples of my interagency experience.

And finally, I think one of the most important criterion for the Ambassador is the relationship with the Iraqis. And one of the reasons I have been called back into public service to come back to Iraq a number of times over the last 2 years I think is due to my unique relationships with the Iraqis. I have worked with these individuals since I first got to Iraq in January 2004. I was involved in those early days in the negotiation of Iraq's interim constitution called the Transitional Administrative Law, and I dealt with a lot of the same issues we are dealing with now and a lot of the same individuals we are dealing with now. I have deep and strong relationships across the board in the Iraqi Government.

And I was just talking to Ambassador Jim Jeffrey, who just returned from Iraq, and we were talking about the leadership question. He said, you know, a lot of it is politics and personal, and one of the key jobs for the Ambassador is making sure that the Iraqis—we are working in a seamless way with the Iraqis so that we can run an effective mission, and that requires daily interaction and contact at the highest levels of the Iraqi Government. And that is something that I have done in Iraq for a number of years.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much. I am almost out of time in this round, but Madam Ambassador, I will come back to you in a couple of minutes to ask especially about what I would assert is a lack of progress in Sri Lanka after the LLRC work that was done. I will pick up with that.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, let me say that, Mr. McGurk, I do not think anyone can question your knowledge and understanding of what has happened in Iraq. You have had an incredible amount of experience there. In fact, I would be hard-pressed, I would think, to find someone who would have a resume like you would as far as dealing with that is concerned.

Having said that, Iraq of course is in a volatile, post-conflict situation, and it is in, probably arguably, the most unstable region in the world. It is the largest Embassy that we have anywhere in the world. Last year, the United States spent about \$6.5 billion there and this year it will be about \$4 billion there, very substantial

amounts, more than my State had when I was Governor as an entire annual budget.

Also, given the lack of representation that we do not have today in both Tehran and Damascus, the Ambassador in Baghdad is going to be responsible for, and have the responsibility for, the much larger regional context. And the ability to navigate all of these issues with the right balance and the right leadership and the right management will certainly be critical to the success of our Ambassador there. And again, recognizing the experience that you have had in Iraq, I appreciate that. I will have to say you are going to be challenged, I think, inasmuch as the size and the complexity of this operation confronts you, never having been an Ambassador before. And I wish you well in that. Certainly the administration recognized your understanding and abilities to pick you for the Ambassador there, but as Ambassador, obviously, your responsibilities will be substantially larger and much broader than what you have done there before. So I wish you well.

Ms. Elliott, I want to talk briefly about Tajikistan. And one of the things you did not mention is the relationship Tajikistan has with Iran, and I think that is a concern to all of us, particularly when it comes to the purchase of crude oil from Iran. What are your thoughts in that regard?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Thank you, Mr. Senator. That is actually a very important question.

The people of Tajikistan have close cultural ties with the people of Iran, and of course, they are in the same neighborhood.

I will say, in terms of sanctions, that we have been working very closely with the Government of Tajikistan on the recent Iran Sanctions Act. We have discussed with them at high levels and we have had an interagency approach. Not only the State Department but the Treasury Department has visited Dushanbe to talk with the Government of Tajikistan about this. We feel that from our discussions that they are very supportive and will be in compliance with the sanctions, and we look forward to continuing that discussion with them.

Senator RISCH. They are not in compliance with the sanctions now. Did they give you any timeframe as to when they would comply with the sanctions?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Well, we have been talking with them and they are, especially through their banking structure, working on improving those. And that will be a priority of mine to work with them to make sure that they do stay and become in compliance with them.

Senator RISCH. Have they given you a timetable?

Ms. ELLIOTT. I have not received a timetable.

Senator RISCH. Have you requested a timetable of that?

Ms. ELLIOTT. I believe that we have, but I can get back to you on that on the specifics of the timetable.

Senator RISCH. I will take that for the record.

[The written reply for the record follows:]

Despite misleading reports by Iran-based media, we can confirm that Tajikistan does not import crude oil from Iran. Relevant Ministries confirmed to our Embassy that Tajikistan is not purchasing, and has no plans to purchase, crude oil from Iran and that media reporting was incorrect. I would also note that, contrary to the Iran-based media report, there is no rail link to Afghanistan to transport the oil to Tajikistan nor does Tajikistan have sufficient capacity to refine significant volumes

of crude oil in Tajikistan. Tajikistan also does not have any pipelines connecting it with Iran.

Though we can confirm that Tajikistan is in compliance with Iran Sanctions with respect to crude oil, we continue to monitor and engage with the Government of Tajikistan on other potentially sanctionable activity. The Government of Tajikistan has responded swiftly when we have raised activities of concern, including in the financial sector, and has taken immediate steps to preclude any re-occurrence.

Senator RISCH. I am going to yield to Senator Lugar at this time.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McGURK, there was considerable discussion in this committee, as well as in our Government as a whole, about the size and the scope of our Embassy in Baghdad after the nature of our post-withdrawal presence there was made clear. Iraq was very insecure, and we apparently had ambitions that the Embassy might be a fulcrum for activities throughout the area, almost a headquarters for the United States ambitions for democracy and human rights and so forth throughout the Middle East. However, we still have that Embassy. It is still huge and it has been suggested, in addition to the diplomatic employees of the United States, maybe as many as 16,000 people are affiliated with it, in a situation where our troops are no longer providing security on the ground there in the numbers they were.

I am just simply wondering about your reflections, having served in all of these capacities through five Ambassadors, just physically how do you plan to administer this building, quite apart from the people? I appreciate that this is a several-chapter answer. But in light of the security predicaments and increased hostility on the part of the Iraqis regarding our participation, how do you plan to manage this?

Mr. MCGURK. Senator, thank you very much. I have given a great deal of thought to this. On my last assignments in Iraq, I participated in almost every internal conversation, both inter-agency and in Baghdad, about how not only to plan the transition after our troops were withdrawing but also how to get the size down. Quite frankly, our presence in Iraq right now is too large. There is no proportionality also between our size and our influence. In fact, we spend a lot of diplomatic capital simply to sustain our presence. So there is a process underway now, as you may know, to cut our presence by about 25 percent by next fall. I fully agree with that approach, and I think we can do more.

It is important to keep in mind the reason we are so big now is that the transition was planned—it was all contingency planning. The Department was not quite sure what we would face in the early months of this year. And so we planned for every possible contingency. But where we are now I think we need to really focus, and that is why I had this four-part test. It will be a test for every program in Iraq. Are we secure? Are our people safe? Is it strategic? And that means is it a core priority to advance our national interests. We need to ask that very directly because we are institutionalizing our long-term presence now. Is it effective? Are our programs getting results? That means do they have adequate buy-in from the Iraqis? And is it sustainable, something we can do for the

long term? If I am confirmed as the next Ambassador, I will put everything to that test.

In terms of managing the day-to-day operations of the Embassy, I have also been involved in this because what often happens is it is not just the internal management. We need to go discuss something with the Iraqi National Security Advisor, with the Prime Minister, and I am often doing that shuttling.

As I mentioned in my earlier answer to Senator Casey, I have a very strong team in Iraq. Steve Becroft, who would be the DCM and the COO of the shop, I have worked with for a number of years. We would sit right next to each other. Offices would be right next to each other. The buck would stop with me for every single decision, but Steve is a terrific day-to-day manager of the operation, and I think we would make a very strong team. But I cannot discount the challenges ahead.

Senator LUGAR. Well, I appreciate that answer very much and the very specific though that you will examine each and every program, that we probably are overrepresented, and that the expense of this is enormous. This impact our whole State Department budget, as you know. So I appreciate that managerial idea.

Let me ask how you are going to advise Prime Minister Maliki under the current circumstances in which he is not getting along well with the opposition, to say the least, and the Kurds are drifting off by themselves. What are the challenges for our diplomacy here?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. It is a really critically, critically important point.

I have worked with Prime Minister Maliki for a number of years and all the Iraqi leaders. And I have worked with him in his capacity as the Prime Minister. I said in my written statement I would try to focus now on dealing with the Iraqis in an institutional way, so dealing with Maliki as a Prime Minister now. If there was a new Prime Minister tomorrow, I would have the same, I hope, close working relationship with him. I have worked with four speakers of Parliament, for example, to focus on the institutions.

When you are in Iraq and dealing with all sides, there are different narratives to the political process. The government, though, was put in place in 2010, as you know. It took 8 months to put in place. When it finally came together, it represents—98 percent of the Council of Representatives are represented in the cabinet. That naturally leads to a lot of inefficiency, a lot of rivalries, a lot of intrigue, and that is certainly going on now. Maliki will say that his opposition figures who are in his Cabinet will not share responsibility for governing. The opposition figures say Maliki is consolidating power. They are all right. And we need to work with all of them to live up to their prior agreements and to work within the constitutional system to change the process.

You mentioned the Kurds, and this is critically important. I would plan to visit the Kurdistan region as much as possible. I would like to be up there, if I am confirmed, at least once a week because it is the personal interaction between the Iraqi leaders and the U.S. Ambassador that is so important for keeping everything stable and for bridging areas of disagreements. The Kurds are having some difficulties with the Baghdad Government right now.

The Baghdad Government is having difficulties with the Kurds. The real rivalry is Massoud Barzani and Prime Minister Maliki. We have to play an important role in mediating that effort.

I would just leave it at there is a constitutional system in place now. This is the third Iraqi Government. This is the second Parliament. The Iraqis are going to fight through their politics under the constitutional rules that they themselves have devised. We cannot direct outcomes through that process. When you try to do that, the unintended consequences are quite enormous. But we can help bridge differences. We can mediate back and forth and be constantly actively engaged. And that is what I would intend to do if I am confirmed.

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you for very comprehensive and thoughtful answers. I appreciate it.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Chairman Casey and ranking members that are here. Good to see you.

And thank you for the panel being here. I very much appreciate all of your service to our country.

In April 2012, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction found in his report that there was a record low amount of casualties for the month of March and a drop in violence overall in the last few months and specifically reported that 112 Iraqis died as a result of violent attacks in the month of March, the lowest toll since the United States invaded in 2003.

Based on such improvements, do you think that the Iraqi Government is on the right track to secure its government, and how has the fact that Iraq is accountable for its own security changed the security calculus in the country and the U.S. relationship with Iraq?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator.

At the very top of my mind is the safety of all Americans serving in Iraq. I track this extremely closely. Over the course of this year, we have had, on average, zero to three attacks a week on the overall U.S. presence, almost entirely 107 millimeter rockets from the Naqshbandi group which is remnants from the Baathist Party in the north. Fortunately, we have had no casualties from those attacks. Zero to three attacks on our presence compared to about 1,000 a week, which I can remember very well, 5 or 6 years ago. So that is positive. We want to make sure that that trend continues.

The reason for that trend is there are really five militant groups in Iraq right now.

First, there is Al Qaeda in Iraq. Al Qaeda in Iraq remains active. Their operating tempo—they are able to strike every 30 to 40 days. Sometimes those attacks are quite spectacular. Senator Casey mentioned recent attacks just this past week. Al Qaeda in Iraq is now striking at a level that is about the same as it was over the course of last year. The Iraqi Government has not been able to degrade Al Qaeda in Iraq. That is a serious concern and we need to work with them on that.

The second group, as I mentioned, is the Naqshbandi group. They operate in the north around Nineva and Kirkuk, and they primarily only target us.

Then there are three militant Shia groups. There is Asaib al-Haq. There is Kataib Hezbollah and the Promise Day Brigades. The Jaish al-Mahdi, which you might remember, Sadr's army, has pretty much—is now part of the political process.

Those three Shia militant groups since January 1 have really gone to ground. And I was just discussing this with General Mattis, and it is interesting. We are watching it very closely. Our withdrawal seems to have taken them—their ability to recruit and sustain operations has really been depleted. They have almost stopped attacking us.

However, I would not bank on that. I remember very well when the Iraqi Army went into Basra and we took hundreds of rockets on the compound from groups that were lying in wait to strike us. And I watch this very carefully with all of our assets within the U.S. Government.

In terms of internal security and the Iraqis and being able to secure their country, they are not doing a bad job. They secured the capital to host an Arab League summit. They secured the capital to host the P5+1 talks. That would have been unheard of 3 to 5 years ago. So they are doing very good internal security. They remain weak in external security, and that is where the Office of Security Cooperation under the Embassy is working very closely with the Iraqis to try to close some of their capability gaps.

Senator UDALL. Thank you. I have another couple of questions, but I think it will run over if I pursue those right now.

Senator CASEY. Senator, we allow an extra minute.

Senator UDALL. OK, well, that is good.

I am changing direction here a little bit. I want to ask you about the future stability of Iraq and its ability to have a sustainable water supply in the Tigris and Euphrates River Basin. This area is considered one of the birthplaces, as you know, of human agriculture, and their ability to sustain the ecology of the area has been threatened by increased water use upstream. And we are seeing this, I think, in rivers across the region.

How will you work with Iraq's neighbors to develop sustainable use of water, and how can the United States work to leverage its scientific and engineering talents, especially those at the national labs, to find a long-term solution to the problem?

Mr. MCGURK. Senator, it is a really great and overlooked point. The water situation in Iraq and the region is very serious. If you look at Iraq's agriculture, it used to be the bread basket of the world. Today agriculture is approximately, at best, 20 percent of GDP. But agriculture in Iraq uses 90 percent of Iraq's water. That is not sustainable. And it is to the point where if we get their agriculture going again, they are going to have a serious water problem.

Maliki and the Iraqi Government recently hosted a conference to discuss this with some of the regional neighbors in Baghdad, and Maliki said we face a real crisis. So the Iraqis are now seized of it.

We have a common way forward within the Strategic Framework Agreement because it calls on cooperation between the United States and Iraq to address issues like this to call on the expertise—I know there is some of it in New Mexico—from within our country to help the Iraqis think in a systematized way. Do they need dams? Do they need to redirect some water supplies? And to work with Turkey in particular to address this problem over the long term.

All I will say is it has been overlooked. It has been overlooked because Iraq has been involved in a fierce sectarian war. Now that we are coming out of that phase, these very important issues need to rise to the highest priority within our Embassy.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Thank you for your courtesies, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Ambassador Sison, I wanted to ask you about the so-called LLRC in Sri Lanka, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. I have a two-part question. For part one, you heard me assert that I do not think they have made anywhere near substantial progress. How do you assess where Sri Lanka is as it relates to the LLRC, the implementation of the results or maybe more pointedly the imposition of accountability on individuals for their actions especially at the end of the civil war? No. 2, Why have the United States and other countries in the international community not insisted upon an independent investigation, and will they?

Ambassador SISON. Thank you, Senator.

The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission recommendations were, of course, front and center as a topic when the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister met with Secretary Clinton last month here in Washington. We have asked the Government of Sri Lanka to provide regular and public updates on the implementation of what is the government's own commission, particularly with regard to demilitarization of the north, to setting a date for provincial elections in the north, focus on human rights protections, including increased space for civil society to operate, increased focus on media freedom.

I agree we do need to see in more specific terms benchmarks met on the recommendations of the action plan set out by the LLRC.

Senator CASEY. As a result of that meeting, were we enlightened by it or were there any indications that there is progress, momentum, results, deadlines? Because it has been 6 months and the concern here is obvious. It is about human nature when you have that kind of internal conflict and a winner, in this case the Sinhalese side of the debate. They have power and they have set up their commission. The question is, Will they ever be able to implement recommendations, and should we, in fact, have an international independent investigation?

Ambassador SISON. Senator, not just the United States but many international partners, of course, voted in March in Geneva at the Human Rights Council on a U.S.-sponsored resolution on reconciliation and accountability. There has been an international call for progress on both reconciliation and accountability because one cannot have true reconciliation, genuine reconciliation without that accountability. There are credible, serious allegations, I completely agree, of crimes committed by both sides in terms of violations, I

should say, of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

So we do look for near-term progress, benchmarks to be met, particularly on setting a date for the provincial elections in the north, specifically demilitarization in the north. And if confirmed, Senator, I can absolutely commit to you and to your colleagues that human rights issues, protection of the ability of civil society and the media to do their job, will be on the top of my agenda. I do believe that we can have constructive engagement and at the same time principled engagement that keeps human rights protections, rule of law at the forefront.

Senator CASEY. Look, I know this has been a priority, but when people see almost no progress on the implementation of recommendations, this question of an international investigation is going to present itself continually. And I realize it is sensitive. It is a difficult question for the administration.

But I would say two things. No. 1, it is not going to go away until the world sees results. So the question will not go away. And No. 2, I would urge you, upon confirmation, to use every bit of energy and persuasion and cajoling and anything else you can bring to bear on the leadership in Sri Lanka to get results because in the end people are not going to be satisfied until we see those results, meaning progress on the recommendations.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McGurk, you commented about the Kurds, and I am interested in that and I would like to pursue that a little bit further.

It seems to me, as an outsider looking at this, the Kurds seem to be doing very well on their own. The construction that is going on there far outstrips what is being done in Baghdad and other parts of Iraq. They just seem to be progressing.

Having said that, it would seem to me that they are being left alone to a degree because of the—for lack of a better word—chaos down south. What is your view as to what is going to happen as this thing—the rub right now you blamed on personalities I think I picked up from your statement. But I think it is going to go deeper than that. Once Baghdad gets its act together and they see what is happening with the Kurds and the Kurds—as is pointed out, they are moving away and are happy to move away and seem to be doing very well moving away. I do not think that is going to set very well with Baghdad as time moves on. Can I get your thoughts on that?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. And it is far deeper than personalities, so I do not want to leave that impression. These issues are—some of them are centuries in the making and it could take centuries to really resolve for good.

Between the Kurds and the Arabs, there is obviously an issue on what the call the disputed internal boundaries. That still remains unresolved. You have my commitment, if confirmed, to work through the process that is designed through article 140 of the constitution—and the U.N. will play a role in that—to get the sides together to begin discussing in a serious way an equitable resolution to the disputed internal boundaries.

Also, nothing could go further to stem these centrifugal forces that you are discussing than agreement on national hydrocarbons legislation. That is agreement on the management, the distribution of their national patrimony. We have made a go at that over the years, made some progress in 2007, and had a package of laws that were pretty close.

On my last trip in Baghdad, even in the midst of a political crisis, I found a new urgency among some of the key players to return to the table on the issue of national hydrocarbons. If I am confirmed, that will be one of my central priorities to do everything we possibly can. Again, we cannot dictate the outcome but we can do shuttling and figure out where are the areas of agreement that we can build on and where can we narrow areas of disagreement because without consensus on how to manage the national hydrocarbon resources, centrifugal forces can accelerate, and I am deeply concerned about that. And I think focusing on the 140 process and on the hydrocarbons legislation will be very important.

Senator RISCH. Do you think the parties are amenable to that resolution?

Mr. MCGURK. Some of them are and some of the are not. There is a lot of division within the Kurdish region and there is division in Baghdad among all of the many parties. And one of the key things to do is to try to find the leaders who are in a compromising frame of mind to work sometimes behind closed doors to build compromise, and it can be very difficult. I cannot underestimate the challenges of this issue. The Kurds want to develop their resources in their region, and under the constitution, they have a right to. In Baghdad, they want to develop the resources in a national way in which the Baghdad Government has a say, and under the constitution, as they read it, they have a right to. What we need to do is find a compromise within the constitutional framework.

My hope is that as Iraq's oil production is increasing—and it is one of the good news stories in Iraq right now. They are producing around 3 million barrels a day for the first time really in 30 years. Iraq's own estimates—they want to get up to about 10 million barrels a day by 2017. As I said in my written statement, we do not think that they will meet that. Probably it may plateau at about five. But still as these resources are being developed, there is a new sense that something has to be done with a consensus for how these resources are going to be managed and the profits and the revenues shared. It is one of the most central issues on the domestic political agenda.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

You, with Senator Risch, discussed this whole issue of hydrocarbons. It has been reported that Iraq has the goal of doubling its oil output over the next 3 years. And I think in the long term they want to reach a total of 12 million barrels per day, which, as you know, Mr. McGurk, would be pretty incredible in that region. That would put them up there with Saudi Arabia. Do you believe Iraq is on track to achieve this goal, and what has helped Iraq improve its successful increase of petroleum output over the last year?

And in particular, I am interested in while we were there, there were lots of reports that the security was not good enough for oil companies from around the world to move in and do the job and get the oil back online. But apparently now, I mean, they are going up dramatically. I think they are up past what it was from the invasion, and they look like they are very aggressive. I know you are not an oil expert, but I mean, you are over there talking to them and you have been over there a while. Do you have a sense of where they are headed on oil output?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. We addressed this briefly in your office, and I am fortunate for the chance to develop it further here.

There were two key events in 2007 and 2009 that have really led to this major increase in oil. In 2007, during the surge period, we really convinced the Iraqis that they have a single point of failure and a national security problem in how their oil is exported. It is really exported through the Basra oil terminal called the ABOT, and if you go out there, it is kind of like the movie "Water World" or a Mad Max movie. It is very vulnerable and it is old and rusting. And were that terminal to fail, Iraq would not be able to export oil other than through the north in the Ceyhan pipeline, but about 80 percent goes through the south.

So a plan was put in place. And General Petraeus was part of this and Ryan Crocker was part of really urging the Iraqis to do this with the Oil Minister at the time, Sharastani, to develop new offshore infrastructure. And these are called single-point moorings. Foster Wheeler had a big role in the engineering feat in actually pulling this off.

The first single-point mooring started delivering oil in February and it immediately increased Iraq's oil by 200,000 barrels a day. Other single-point moorings in the gulf are scheduled to open over the course of this year. It is a major engineering feat. There will be setbacks, but it could increase Iraq's oil—just those single-point moorings—by 2.5 million barrels a day. It is a tremendous story from 2007 and getting the Iraqis to where they are now.

The second piece were the bidding rounds in 2009 where Iraq, for the first time, invited international companies in to bid for their fields. It was a success. And it was very difficult because I used to hear from Iraqis in 2004, 2005, 2006 and say you really got to get international companies in here. There was this fear of a kind of nationalist backlash if they got companies in to drill and to help the Iraqis produce their oil. But it happened in 2009. They drove a very hard bargain. But because of those contracts, there is now international companies. BP, Exxon Mobil, Occidental, the Chinese Lukoil are drilling and helping the Iraqis develop their resources.

So very briefly, where do we go from here? The Iraqis still are not thinking in terms of a system and how to really get their oil going. Sometimes they do not have the right pumps in place. They do not have the right water pressure to come in and get the oil out of some of their older fields. And we have been working closely with the Iraqis. And Ambassador Jim Jeffrey has really raised this to the top of our embassy priority. He has done an incredible job with it through the Joint Coordinating Committee, the SFA. We now have very deep ties with the Iraqis. They recently had their

inaugural meeting here in Washington with our Department of Energy with Carlos Pasqual at the State Department and showing the Iraqis how to think in terms of a systematized way to develop the oil resources. A number of do-outs came from that meeting, and we are now following up.

But it is an important way how under the SFA we can talk to the Iraqis about high-level strategic issues and how we can cooperate both whole-of-government and within our private industry. And getting our private industry harnessed and into Iraq is going to be really critical. And through the oil sector and through the energy sector, there is a gateway for doing that.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that answer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator LUGAR.

Senator LUGAR. Ms. Elliott, I would like to pursue further just for our own knowledge of what is occurring in Tajikistan presently. How would you describe the relations of that country with Russia, for example, or with China or other countries that may have strategic interests there?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Thank you, Mr. Senator. That is a very good question.

Having been a former country of the Soviet Union and also sharing a border with China, Tajikistan I believe shares very good relationships with those countries, but they also share good relationships with us. As I mentioned in my statement, we have good cooperation with them on the Northern Distribution Network, and they are doing a lot to help their neighbors to the south and also to help in fighting crime and narcotics.

We believe that it is not a zero sum game in Central Asia and that the countries of Central Asia need to keep good relations with their neighbors and with Russia. We have also had good cooperation. I have served in Embassy Moscow, and our Assistant Secretary Blake, as part of our annual bilateral consultations—we have consulted in the region. So I would say that the situation is very good, that Tajikistan shares good relations with its neighbors. And we look forward to continuing those strong relationships, and if confirmed, I will make that a priority.

Senator LUGAR. Well, you have described in your opening statement a civil war that occurred there, the resolution of that, and the beginnings at least of a government that apparently aspired to democratic tendencies. But try to describe the evolution of that government. To what extent is there a sharing of power between the branches? How active is the legislative branch, and how active are persons who are demanding human rights and the recognition of minorities and what have you? What is the lay of the land in terms of political progress there?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Well, that is also a very good question and one that concerns us because I think in the 20 years of its independence, we have not perhaps seen the growth of civil society and the growth of democracy that we would have liked to have seen. This is something that the Obama administration has engaged on. As I mentioned in my statement, Secretary Clinton visited Tajikistan, and part of the reason she visited was to be able to engage with civil

society but also to engage with the government on the need for expanding human rights, expanding freedom of the press, expanding freedom of religion. There is one independent Islamic party that participates in the Parliament in Tajikistan.

However, I would say that we need to do more to open civil society there and to improve the human rights of the people of Tajikistan. And again, if confirmed, this will be one of my top priorities. We do have national security interests there, but our interest in improving the human rights and the rights of the people of Tajikistan are also extremely important.

Senator LUGAR. The reason I asked these questions in that order is that clearly there are influences governmentally from China and from Russia, quite apart from historical problems in Tajikistan. We have, as you have illustrated, our own ideas about what would be ideal for the people of the country and espouse those, and Secretary Clinton's visit is a good, high-profile example. I am just curious in terms of the complexity as we weigh in diplomatically with regard to our thoughts about their governance, while at the same time hoping for support in Afghanistan or elsewhere where they can be helpful. This requires diplomacy with really a high degree of tact, I suspect, and recognition of the cross currents historically as well as presently.

Has there been a trend, would you say, toward the human rights aspect and toward developments that we would find more compatible with our ideas of governance?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Well, as I mentioned, I do not think that the trends have been perhaps as extensive as we would have liked in the 20 years of Tajikistan's independence. I think one thing we have to remember is they do not share the same history of democracy that we do. They are a young country, and I believe that they are working toward improving the human rights situation there. They just recently passed a law that would get rid of the laws that make criminalization of libel which will help journalists there. So we have seen some progress. Some journalists who had been arrested have been released, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

And I would say that Russia does have interests in Tajikistan. They have a military base there. Their concern, I think, is for security and for stemming the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan.

So if confirmed, I think we will continue to work on that and make it a priority and to work not only with Tajikistan but with the neighbors to make sure that we are all moving and helping them to move in the right direction.

Senator LUGAR. Well, I thank you for your answers and likewise for your experience in that area.

Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

I will go another round and others may as well, but I know we are coming to the end of our hearing.

Ms. Elliott, I wanted to ask you about the Northern Distribution Network, and I will hold that in abeyance just for a moment to get to Mr. McGurk on special immigrant visas. If a citizen of Iraq has helped American forces in ways that put him or her at substantial risk, we expedite their visas pursuant to the Special Immigrant Visa program. And as I said, these are individuals that live under

threat today. I know that the process has been expedited and that the United States has admitted as many applicants in fiscal year 2012 as it did in all of 2011. So there is progress. But there is still a backlog.

And the question I have for you—I do not know if you have a number, but if you do not, if you can get it to us. The number of cases of special immigrant visas—how many of those are in the pipeline for the so-called principal applicants? And No. 2, how many cases are pending for applicants through the direct access visa process?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. This issue is very important to me and it is a very personal issue to me. I had the opportunity to discuss it in some depth with Senator Cardin when I visited him in his office.

I have known Iraqis in Iraq who have worked with us and lost their lives. I have known Iraqis who have got into this program and never came out of it or were never able to get a visa. And I have known Iraqis who have resettled in the United States. It is very personal to me.

As you may know, we also have to have security checks to make sure that the American people are protected. That is also first and foremost.

There is a substantial backlog, which as you said in your statement—it is absolutely right. We have now over the first half of this year admitted more SIV cases into the United States than we did all of last year, and I have been told that the numbers for the third quarter look to be substantially higher. I think this year so far the number is about 850.

Senator, I will get you the exact figures on the number of cases that are being processed now and the backlog.

[The written reply for the record follows:]

This issue is very important to me and it's a very personal issue to me. While serving in Iraq I have known Iraqis who have worked with us and lost their lives. I have known Iraqis who have got into this program and never came out of it. They were never able to get a visa and I have known Iraqis who have resettled in the United States.

As you may know, we have security checks to make sure that the American people are protected, that's first and foremost. There was a substantial backlog which, as you've said in your statement, is absolutely right. We have now over the first half of this year admitted more SIV cases into the United States than we did all of last year, and I have been told that the numbers for the third quarter look to be substantially higher. Through the end of March 2012, the Department had already issued 865 SIVs to Iraqis, up from a total of 706 such visas issued to Iraqi citizens in FY 2011. Preliminary counts for April and May of this year show 1,733 additional SIVs have been issued. If confirmed, I pledge to continue working to increase these numbers as much as possible.

Mr. MCGURK. Since I saw Senator Cardin, I visited with Samantha Power at the National Security Council, the national security staff, who has done a terrific job in streamlining the processing of these cases and making sure that we have the personnel and the right resources directed to process them effectively and efficiently. The Embassy plays a key role in that, and we have increased our staff there to make sure that these cases can be processed from the initial point of entry at the Embassy. And if I am confirmed, I pledge to you I will do everything I possibly can to make sure that these cases are processed efficiently, with reason-

able security checks to make sure that the American people are protected, but that Iraqis who have worked with us who wish to come to our country feel welcomed, that they know where they stand in the process, and that they know they are taken care of. I will do everything I possibly can to make this program effective.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Ms. Elliott, I wanted to ask you about the Northern Distribution Network on two levels. No. 1, the importance of it is so apparent as we draw down in Afghanistan and need to get supplies, equipment, and so much else through that network. Can you assess where we are as it relates to the role played by Tajikistan? No. 2, How will you, upon confirmation, prioritize and focus on the importance of Tajikistan's help for us in the Northern Distribution Network?

Ms. ELLIOTT. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Tajikistan has played a very important role in the Northern Distribution Network which, as you rightfully mentioned, has become extremely important in getting vital supplies to our troops in Afghanistan. Likewise, it will play an extremely important role in taking equipment out of Afghanistan as we begin to lessen our military presence there.

I have worked closely with the Government of Tajikistan on these issues. While Tajikistan does not have a developed rail network like some of the other countries in Central Asia, they have been very supportive and played a vital role in the part of the Northern Distribution Network that I would call the KKT route. It is Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The capacity is not great because we have to truck things through the mountains of Tajikistan. However, we have had a very good success rate with very low loss of cargo, no pilferage, and we have gotten a lot of cooperation from the Government of Tajikistan on that. And President Rahmon indicated to Secretary Clinton when she met with him that he wants to continue to support us in that area because, as I think the Government of Tajikistan and the people of Tajikistan realize, in order to have a safe and prosperous Tajikistan, we need to have a safe and stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

My time is up for this round. Senator Udall, Senator Risch, Senator Lugar, anything?

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. I would just ask one final question here.

Since the invasion displaced Saddam Hussein's Sunni governing structure, or whatever you want to call it there, one of the major issues has been this divisive conflict between Sunni and Shia. And we have seen it in terms of talk of a civil war and all the various bombings and suicide bombings that have gone on.

What is your assessment of how the current government is moving to integrate Sunnis into the government at all levels, whether it is high positions in the government or people that held kind of bureaucratic positions and were not necessarily involved in all the atrocities and things? What is your assessment about how they are performing on the integration?

Mr. MCGURK. Thank you, Senator. Senator Casey referenced an NDI poll which shows that there is still this vast gap in perceptions of the government between Shia and Sunnis. Among Sunnis, according to this poll, it has increased in recent months, but it has increased from about 10 percent to only 30 percent of Sunnis would see this government favorably.

The current government has a lot of work to do in this area. We can track it through the percentages of military officers. The last order of battle I saw, Sunni officers were about 13 percent overall. That is below the population figure.

In this current round of political negotiation and debate, it has been very interesting because there has been a real shakeup in different alliances. So Muqtada Sadr, for example, who was seen as the face of the Shia Jaish al-Mahdi group which was involved in a lot of atrocities during the sectarian war, is now aligning with a lot of Sunnis in kind of an Iraqi nationalist view, and that is interesting and something to watch.

The Sons of Iraq is also something we need to watch very closely. So far, about 70,000 have been incorporated into government positions. About 30,000 Sons of Iraq are still manning checkpoints. They are getting paid under the current budget. I have been told under the current budget, they get paid about \$300 a month, which is slightly below the per capita GDP. But that needs to continue because one of the indicators, if you look at academic studies of precursors of renewed or reignited civil war, is militant insurgent groups beginning to coalesce and reform. And I think making sure the Sons of Iraq are continued to be taken care of will be very important. So far the government has kept most of its promises on that, but we need to watch it.

So obviously, Senator, these Sunni-Shia cleavages are extremely deep. There is the overhang now of a very bitter sectarian war which the Iraqis are still overcoming. We need to help them overcome it, and we need to remind the current government every day that they need to do what they can to make Sunnis feel like they are a full part of the process.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Mr. McGurk, Ambassador Sison, Ms. Elliott, we thank you for your testimony, for your prior service, and for your willingness to serve yet again in tough assignments.

And I want to make sure for the record I say this, that we are going to keep the record open—and I know I and others will have more questions—for 48 hours for questions. That is a short window, but I want to make sure that members of the committee knew that.

We are grateful for your presence here and for your testimony. And we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MICHELE JEANNE SISSON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

Question. Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 imposes restrictions on assistance to any unit of a foreign country's security forces for which there is credible evidence that the unit has committed gross violations of human rights. U.S. embassies are heavily involved in ensuring compliance with this requirement.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy effectively implements section 620M? In particular, what actions will you take to ensure, in a case in which there is credible evidence that a gross violation of human rights has been committed, that assistance will not be provided to units that committed the violation? What steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy has a robust capacity to gather and evaluate evidence regarding possible gross violations of human rights by units of security forces?

Answer. Our current engagement with Sri Lanka takes many forms—economic, humanitarian, cultural, and military—and helps us move forward our agenda of fostering a peaceful and stable Sri Lanka by improving human rights, democratic governance, reconciliation, and accountability. We take very seriously credible allegations of abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law at the end of the conflict, as well as ongoing abuses. If confirmed, I will continue to urge full accountability for individuals on both sides of the conflict alleged to be responsible for those violations and a demilitarization of civilian affairs. Mindful of human rights concerns, the administration is pursuing measured military engagement with the Sri Lankan Government commensurate with our security interests in the region. This engagement includes human rights or humanitarian components and is in accordance with Leahy vetting policy and law. Assistance and engagement is not now, nor will it be, undertaken with units or individuals associated with credible allegations of abuses of international human rights law or violations of international humanitarian law. As always, adequate resources, along with Embassy Colombo and State Department staff, will be assigned to undertake the full Leahy vetting procedures in all applicable cases.

Question. If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report, given the Sri Lankan Government's apparent intransigence in pursuing national reconciliation and reducing human rights violations over the past 3 years? If Sri Lanka continues to ignore international calls to seriously pursue reconciliation and accountability, what steps would you recommend for U.S. policy toward Sri Lanka?

Answer. The United States successfully sponsored a United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution in March 2012 that calls on the Sri Lankan Government to take concrete steps toward reconciliation and to address alleged human rights violations during the final stages of the country's conflict. Secretary Clinton invited Foreign Minister Peiris to Washington May 18 to discuss the way forward on reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka in the post-UNHRC resolution environment. The Secretary stressed the importance of making progress on the recommendations made by Sri Lanka's own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and the importance of providing regular and public updates to all Sri Lankans and to the international community.

We now look to Sri Lanka to take the necessary steps to achieve reconciliation and accountability for the alleged abuses that occurred in the final months of the conflict, while ensuring respect for human rights and institutionalizing democratic governance. If sufficient progress is not made, however, there will be pressure to look at international mechanisms.

An important opportunity to review progress will come this fall, when Sri Lanka is scheduled for its Universal Periodic Review before the U.N. Human Rights Council on the status of human rights in Sri Lanka, then again next March, when the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights will brief the Council on Sri Lanka's progress on reconciliation, accountability for human rights abuses, and implementation of the recommendations from Sri Lanka's LLRC. In the time preceding these two critical review opportunities, we will continue our vigorous engagement with the Government of Sri Lanka, as well as India and other international partners, to foster true democracy, reconciliation, and accountability in Sri Lanka.

Question. How do you assess the state of democracy in Sri Lanka, given increasing threats against journalists and limited press freedoms, limited provincial powers

and no timetable for provincial elections in the north, ongoing disappearances of individuals with impunity, continued military presence in the north, and ongoing human rights concerns and violations? What future actions might the United States take bilaterally and multilaterally to push Colombo on these issues? Are there any economic or trade measures you would favor employing?

Answer. We are deeply concerned by reports of ongoing human rights abuses and an erosion of democratic institutions and practices, and continuing to engage the Government of Sri Lanka on these issues would be one of my highest priorities. There has been progress in some discrete areas, particularly in regards to the return of people displaced by the conflict to their homes, demining of the former conflict regions, building of transport infrastructure, schools and hospitals, and in the reintegration of former combatants.

There are, however, ongoing issues that concern us, such as the shrinking space for civil society, military involvement in civilian affairs and restrictions on freedom of expression and other fundamental rights. There is also much that remains to be done to achieve genuine reconciliation, democratic governance, and accountability. Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review of its human rights situation will occur in November under the auspices of the U.N. Human Rights Council. This should be an excellent opportunity to evaluate Sri Lanka's current human rights record and progress towards achieving reconciliation and accountability.

Solutions that come from the Sri Lankans themselves are most likely to have the greatest impact and also help strengthen Sri Lanka's democratic institutions, including defending space for its long-established civil society. We would, therefore, first like to see the Sri Lankans implement the LLRC's recommendations, and establish an independent mechanism to investigate the credible allegations that the LLRC failed to address, both of which could directly help achieve lasting reconciliation and democratic governance. We are looking to Sri Lanka to take the necessary steps to achieve reconciliation, accountability and respect for human rights and democratic processes, and are not considering economic or trade measures at this time. If sufficient progress is not made, however, there will be pressure to look at international mechanisms.

RESPONSE OF MICHELE JEANNE SISSON TO QUESTION SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. What bilateral measures has the United States taken to highlight its concerns about the human rights situation on Sri Lanka? Given a sense that existing measures have not been effective, what future actions might the United States take bilaterally to push the Colombo to resolve its domestic conflict? Are there any economic or trade measures you would favor employing?

Answer. The United States successfully sponsored a United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution in March 2012 that calls on the Sri Lankan Government to take concrete steps toward reconciliation and investigate alleged human rights violations during the final stages of the country's civil conflict. Secretary Clinton invited Foreign Minister Peiris to Washington on May 18 to discuss the way forward on reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka in the post-UNHRC resolution environment. The Secretary stressed the importance of making progress on the recommendations made by Sri Lanka's own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and the importance of providing regular and public progress updates to all Sri Lankans and to the international community.

We are looking to Sri Lanka to take the necessary steps to achieve reconciliation, accountability and respect for human rights and democratic processes, and are not considering economic or trade measures at this time. If sufficient progress is not made, however, there will be pressure to look at international mechanisms.

An important opportunity to review progress will come this fall, when Sri Lanka is scheduled for its Universal Periodic Review on the status of human rights, then again next March, when the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights will brief the Human Rights Council on Sri Lanka's progress on reconciliation and implementation of the recommendations from the LLRC.

Biographic note: I have been a resident of the State of Maryland since 1962, and I appreciate your interest in this matter.

RESPONSES OF MICHELE JEANNE SISSON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution passed a resolution in March 2012 that calls on the Sri Lankan Government to investigate alleged human rights violations during the final stages of the country's civil war. The United States strongly supported this resolution, which was a positive step toward greater accountability for perpetrators of abuses.

What is the United States strategy for further action on accountability in international bodies, particularly at the Human Rights Council? How is the administration using the resolution to push further action on LLRC recommendations and wider accountability? How are you planning to engage with India to build on its important vote for the resolution?

Answer. Secretary Clinton invited Foreign Minister Peiris to Washington May 18 to discuss the way forward on reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka in the post-UNHRC resolution environment. The Secretary stressed the importance of making progress on the recommendations made by Sri Lanka's own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and the importance of providing regular and public progress updates to all Sri Lankans and to the international community. We are looking to Sri Lanka to take the necessary steps to achieve reconciliation and accountability for past abuses while ensuring democratic governance and respect for human rights now. If sufficient progress is not made, however, there will be pressure to look at international mechanisms.

An important opportunity to review progress will come this fall, when Sri Lanka is scheduled for its Universal Periodic Review on the status of human rights, then again next March, when the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights will brief the Human Rights Council on Sri Lanka's progress on reconciliation and implementation of the recommendations from Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report. In the time preceding these two critical review opportunities, we will continue to coordinate with India and other international partners to encourage, reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka.

Question. The United States and the Maldives enjoy a strong bilateral relationship. However, the small country faces several significant challenges, including serious environmental concerns and recent political unrest that has threatened to upset the country's democratic progress.

What do you consider the most pressing issues facing the Maldives at this time? Apart from participating in global climate change initiatives, what might the United States do to help support Maldivians? Do you view recent regime change in Maldives as having been a coup d'etat, as described by former President Nasheed or as a self-initiated resignation, as claimed by his opponents? How should the United States respond to former President Nasheed's call for more U.S. pressure in support of democratic institutions in Maldives?

Answer. Former President Nasheed resigned from office under murky circumstances. He was succeeded by his own Vice President, Mohamed Waheed. Maldives' Parliament continues to function and a civilian, democratic government continues. Former President Nasheed, current President Waheed and others have agreed to a Commission of National Inquiry to look into the circumstances surrounding the transfer of power. The United States, India, U.N., Commonwealth and others are supportive of Maldives' own efforts to resolve questions about the transfer of power through this mechanism.

Our Embassy in Colombo is engaged with all the parties in Maldives to foster dialogue, respect for democratic procedures and the rule of law. Assistant Secretary Blake, who was formerly Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives, is also personally engaged. In addition, State currently has one person from our Conflict and Stabilization Operations Bureau on the ground in Maldives, working across political divisions. USAID has committed funding to assist Maldives in ensuring that the next round of Presidential elections is free and fair and we are working with Maldives to find additional ways to support its rule of law and justice sector.

RESPONSES OF MICHELE JEANNE SISSON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR

Question. In December 2009, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee released a bipartisan staff report entitled "Sri Lanka: Recharting U.S. Strategy after the War." The report contained eight recommended action points for the Obama administration related to Sri Lanka. What is the status of the administration's response to

each of the points of recommendation? <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CPRT-111SPRT53866/pdf/CPRT-111SPRT53866.pdf>

Answer. The administration's policies toward Sri Lanka seek to balance U.S. interests in reconciliation and accountability with economic, security, and strategic interests. Since the end of the conflict in 2009, we have provided robust demining assistance, worked with the U.N. and other international organizations to support the Sri Lankan Government's resettlement of more than 300,000 displaced persons, designed many USAID-sponsored democracy and governance programs and public diplomacy programs to create and enhance people-to-people links across Sri Lanka, and worked to provide needed training for Sri Lanka's judicial sector. The administration, of course, vigorously enforces existing laws concerning visa applications and loss of citizenship. We are continuing to work with the Peace Corps in the hope that the Peace Corps can return to Sri Lanka in the future and resume its invaluable work.

Question. If confirmed, how will you most effectively deal with Sri Lankan officials representing U.S. geostrategic interests while advocating accountability for the wide range of human rights violations for which the Sri Lankan Government is allegedly responsible?

Answer. Our unwavering support for human rights, democratic governance, reconciliation, and accountability informs our principled engagement with Sri Lanka in all areas. However, we remain cognizant of our security interests, which include the security of the Sea Lines of Communication and counterterrorism, for which Sri Lanka is an important regional partner. If confirmed, I will continue to press Sri Lanka to address issues related to reconciliation and accountability, including those highlighted in the 2009 Senate Foreign Relations Committee bipartisan staff report "Sri Lanka: Recharting U.S. Strategy after the War" while seeking areas of common ground on U.S. geostrategic interest.

Question. Please inform the committee as to the use of the American Center in Sri Lanka. What is the volume of activity during the past year and how does that compare to the preceding 4 years? In addition, what is the range of activities occurring through the Center and what are the priorities of the Center's focus?

Answer. The American Corners in Kandy and the post-conflict area of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, were opened in 2005 and 2011, respectively. The U.S. Embassy in Colombo reports they have both enjoyed a noticeable increase in activities and visitors over the past several years and particularly throughout 2011.

The American Corner in Kandy focuses on programs for youth and education. Over 5,500 people visited the Corner in Kandy this past year, a marked increase from 3,200 visitors in 2010, for student advising, film screenings, book readings, and video conferences with the Embassy featuring monthly public lectures from Colombo. In 2011 the American Corner in Kandy organized an environment program for students in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, social media training for our newly created Youth Forum, HIV/AIDS awareness program in collaboration with educational authorities, and a discussion series on current affairs for teachers. The number of programs increased from 16 in 2010 to 40 in 2011.

The American Corner in Jaffna opened in January 2011 and also focuses thematically on programs that help rebuild communities in the post-conflict environment. Entrepreneurship and education programs are targeted at vulnerable populations, such as war widows and youth whose education has been interrupted by the civil conflict. Over 6,500 people have visited the American Corner in Jaffna. The American Corner hosts school orientation programs, public lectures by visiting Embassy staff and U.S. citizens, and a summer camp program for children of orphanages. The American Corner organized an outreach program with "Shadows of Change" visual theater for over 3,000 students from nine Jaffna schools. The program included a workshop for students that led to the formation of the Jaffna Youth Forum, which now meets at the Corner every month to discuss community issues. Future programming includes English teaching, entrepreneurship workshops for rural young women seeking self-employment, and psychosocial training for youth.

The American Center at the U.S. Embassy in Colombo aims to educate Sri Lankans about the United States through its ample library and film offerings, and to bring to Sri Lanka timely and topical subjects of importance to the United States. The American Center in Colombo recently commemorated World Press Freedom Day by hosting a panel discussion in which journalists, editors, and activists discussed the Sri Lankan perspective on the emergence of citizen journalism and how inadequate access to quality information undermines media freedom. The Center also hosted an American water specialist to discuss water management and a local attorney to raise children's awareness of intellectual property rights. Upcoming events

will include a celebration of World Environment Day, a presentation on implementing international conventions on women's issues, and a monthly storytelling program.

Question. During the war, what countries or political and other entities were providing material or other support to the LTTE and what was the nature of their respective support?

Answer. To best address your question, I respectfully offer to arrange a classified briefing on this subject, with the appropriate Department officials.

Question. What is the status of the military relationship between the United States and Sri Lanka? Do you see opportunities for expanding that relationship and if so, under what circumstances or conditions?

Answer. Our current engagement with Sri Lanka takes many forms—economic, humanitarian, cultural, and military—and helps us move forward our agenda to foster a peaceful and stable Sri Lanka by improving human rights, democratic governance, reconciliation, and accountability. Mindful of human rights concerns, the administration is taking measured steps to maintain military engagement with the Sri Lankan Government commensurate with our security interests in the region, and engagement is in accordance with Leahy vetting policy and law. These include demining, disaster assistance, sea-lane security, and antipiracy. We take very seriously credible allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law at the end of the conflict. We continue to urge full accountability for individuals on both sides of the conflict alleged to be responsible for those violations. We also continue to urge demilitarization of civilian affairs. Any consideration of an expansion of our military relationship could only be undertaken in response to demonstrable improvements in the protection of human rights, democratic governance, and accountability.

Question. From your perspective, what is going particularly well with the reconciliation process after the war? What are two specific concerns related to the status of reconciliation and what do you envision as your role, if any, related to these challenges?

Answer. There has been significant progress in several areas in the aftermath of Sri Lanka's long conflict, chief among them the resettlement of the majority of internally displaced persons and the rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life of thousands of former LTTE combatants. Much still remains to be done, however. As Secretary Clinton and other senior State officials have urged, we would like to see progress on further demilitarization in the former conflict zones in the North and East, the provision of basic services to returnees, provincial elections before the end of the year, answers regarding the fate of the missing for their loved ones, and further progress in implementation of the recommendations of Sri Lanka's own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. If confirmed, my role, like that of Ambassador Butenis and other senior State Department officials such as Assistant Secretary Robert Blake, would be to continue to press vigorously to achieve these goals.

Question. If confirmed, will you meet with Sri Lankan journalists to receive an update on the status of intimidation and challenges confronting journalists?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will engage directly with journalists, civil society, and NGOs to listen to their concerns and monitor trends affecting fundamental rights including freedom of expression in all its forms. Our deep concern over this issue is why we highlighted the disappearance of political reporter and cartoonist Prageeth Ekneligoda during World Press Freedom Day. We have called on the Government of Sri Lanka to credibly investigate his disappearance and call on the Government of Sri Lanka to take the steps necessary to create space for journalists to work without fear of violence or persecution, including by ending impunity for attacks and intimidation against journalists.

Question. What other countries do you view as "like-minded" with the overall U.S. foreign policy emphasis related to Sri Lanka and Maldives?

Answer. We have been working closely with a number of international partners to achieve our policy goals both in Maldives and Sri Lanka. For example, the U.S.-sponsored resolution promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka that passed with 24 votes in favor, 15 against, and 8 abstentions during the March 2012 session of the United Nations Human Rights Council had 39 cosponsors in addition to the United States (cosponsors need not be voting members of the Council). Notably, India voted in favor of the resolution, a departure from its usual policy of abstaining on country-specific resolutions and a strong statement of support for increased action by Sri Lanka to achieve reconciliation and a lasting peace.

We coordinate closely with the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group and the United Nations to resolve the ongoing political stalemate Maldives.

Question. What countries are presently contributing resources to demining operations in Sri Lanka and what would you project to be the total dollar value of international contributions toward this effort?

Answer. Demining in Sri Lanka is an important initiative for the Department of State, as it enables the timely resettlement of internally displaced persons and provides the foundation for the reconstruction and rehabilitation process. Funding provided by the Department of State is directly contributed to international non-governmental agencies. This funding is augmented by several international donors, including contributions from the Government of Japan, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, and the Australian Government. The Department of State does not track the total dollar value of international contributions. However, since FY 2003 the State Department has contributed \$27,962,000 to demining efforts in Sri Lanka.

Question. What is the status of U.S. exports to Sri Lanka and in what sectors do you envision opportunity for future export growth?

Answer. Sri Lanka is currently the 80th-largest goods trading partner of the United States with \$2.4 billion in two-way goods trade in 2011. Sri Lanka was the United States 114th-largest goods export market in 2011. U.S. goods exports to Sri Lanka were \$302 million in 2011, up 72 percent (\$128 million) from 2010. U.S. exports to Sri Lanka consist primarily of wheat, civilian aircrafts, machinery and mechanical appliances, medical and scientific equipment, electrical apparatus, plastics, and paper. If confirmed, I will work to increase U.S. exports to Sri Lanka and Maldives under President Obama's National Export Initiative. The tourism, infrastructure, transportation, and energy sectors of Sri Lanka's economy currently hold the most opportunity for growth, and Embassy Colombo is actively advocating for several U.S.-based bids in these sectors. I have a strong track record in economic initiatives and received an Honorable Mention in 2008 for the Charles E. Cobb Award for Initiative and Success in Trade Development for my work as chief of mission in the United Arab Emirates.

Question. According to the Congressional Research Service, U.S. exports to Maldives "more than doubled from \$20 million in 2008 to \$45 million in 2011." What is the basis for the doubling of exports in a short time period? What are future best sector prospects for U.S. exports to Maldives?

Answer. U.S. exports to the Maldives received a boost in October 2009 when the United States and Maldives signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). Maldives was subsequently granted Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade benefits in December 2009. The economic team at our Embassy in Colombo has worked vigorously to support the National Export Initiative, and has adopted a three pronged strategy to increase market access, outreach to encourage U.S. exports, and commercial advocacy. U.S. exports to Maldives increased by 58 percent in 2011. Areas of opportunity for U.S. businesses in the Maldives include tourism, construction, and simple export-oriented manufacturing, such as garments and electrical appliance assembly. If confirmed, I will work to increase U.S. exports to Sri Lanka and Maldives under President Obama's National Export Initiative. I have a strong track record in economic initiatives and received an Honorable Mention in 2008 for the Charles E. Cobb Award for Initiative and Success in Trade Development for my work as chief of mission in the United Arab Emirates.

Question. Please provide details/quantify the Maldives challenge with rising sea levels.

Answer. As an island nation as well as a developing country, Maldives faces significant challenges related to climate change. The islands of the Maldives lie primarily between 1 and 1.5 meters above mean sea level. The IPCC fourth assessment report, the leading international assessment on climate change, in 2007 estimated average global sea level rise at between 0.18 and 0.59 meters by 2090-2099. Many peer-reviewed studies since then have raised these estimates. Any of these scenarios threaten damage from storm surges, land erosion, and salt water intrusion in the coming decades. Of particular concern are the likely impacts associated with salt-water intrusion on freshwater supplies, increasingly damaging extreme weather events, and sea level rise and related land erosion negatively impacting infrastructure, livelihoods, and key economic sectors, including tourism.

To address this vulnerability, the United States invested \$3 million in FY11 through USAID to support an adaptation program that aims to improve access to drinking water supplies and enhance resilience to climate change. The program pro-

vides assistance to the Maldives on climate change adaptation strategies, with special emphasis on integrated water resources management. Future USAID assistance will focus on climate resilience and water security in support of the Maldives' ongoing work related to water and sanitation service delivery to the islands.

RESPONSES OF MICHELE JEANNE SISSON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. According to the State Department's 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report, Sri Lanka is a Tier 2 country for trafficking. There was evidence of government complicity in trafficking through bribes and political connections for brothels.

If confirmed, how will you engage government officials to confront corruption in combat trafficking crimes? How will you encourage the government to investigate and prosecute government officials who are complicit in human trafficking offenses?

Answer. We have been working closely with the Government of Sri Lanka on sex trafficking and labor trafficking issues. The Government of Sri Lanka takes these issues seriously and has taken steps to address their trafficking problems. Most notably, the government is working with International Organization for Migration to develop victim identification procedures. We have directly engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka on their Trafficking in Person's Action Plan and the government has already begun to implement the plan. Even with this progress, trafficking in persons remains an issue of great concern. I have considerable experience in this area and was named 2005 Trafficking in Persons Ambassador of the Year for my work to combat human trafficking in United Arab Emirates. If confirmed, I will ensure that it remains a priority for U.S. Mission Colombo.

Question. A 2011 Human Rights Watch Report noted that over one-third of Sri Lankan domestic workers in Jordan are physically abused by their employer. 11 percent were sexually assaulted, 60 percent not paid any wages and over 60 percent had their passports confinement. These are abuses which indicate trafficking for forced labor.

If confirmed, how will you assist the Sri Lankan Government in monitoring the foreign labor recruiting agencies which employ Sri Lankans abroad?

Answer. I share your concerns on trafficking in persons and forced labor in Sri Lanka, where over 1.7 million citizens are employed outside their country. The Government of Sri Lanka has taken steps to monitor labor recruiting agencies which employ Sri Lankans abroad, most notably, by recently convicting two labor recruiters for fraudulent recruitment—a key contributor to forced labor. Our Embassy in Colombo has coordinated with other U.S. Missions and the Department to provide information and assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka to respond to specific cases and to help the Government of Sri Lanka address the trafficking issue generally. I have considerable experience in this area and was named 2005 Trafficking in Persons Ambassador of the Year for my work to combat human trafficking in United Arab Emirates. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of Sri Lanka, The International Organization for Migration, civil society, and other interested parties to increase protection for their citizens from domestic and international labor abuse.

RESPONSES OF BRETT H. MCGURK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi employees of the United State: As you know from our earlier conversations, I am very concerned about delays in the processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for those Iraqis who risked their lives to work for us in Iraq—particularly those who were living and working on our bases and have been "cut loose" since our withdrawal last December. How can SIV processing be expedited? What can be done to offer protection to those who are literally in hiding and on the run inside Iraq as they await issuance of their visas?

Answer. This issue is very important and personal to me. It will receive my close attention, if confirmed. Since we met in your office, I have spoken with the leading U.S. officials who have been working to address delays in processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who have risked their lives to work with us. The State Department is working closely with our interagency colleagues to streamline the SIV application process, eliminate redundant requirements, and accept electronic submissions wherever possible. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Embassy is staffed to manage applications efficiently and in a manner that provides

fair process to our Iraqi partners while also ensuring necessary background and security checks to protect the American people. In recent months, strides have been made in eliminating the backlog of Iraqi SIV cases pending security screening. Over the first half of this year, the State Department issued more SIVs to Iraqis than during all of FY 2011. In FY 2011, the Department issued 706 SIVs to Iraqi citizens. By the end of March 2012, the Department already had issued 865 SIVs to Iraqis. During April and May 2012 alone, it issued an additional 1,733 SIVs to Iraqis, based on preliminary data. Thus, the trend appears to be a positive one, and now we must ensure it continues. If confirmed, I am committed to working diligently with our interagency partners to balance the safety of American citizens with the aspirations of Iraqis who risked their lives to work with us, and now wish to resettle in our country.

Question. Iraq and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI): According to the World Bank, Iraq possesses a proven 143 billion barrels of oil, and high oil prices and increasing exports should enable Iraq's GDP to grow by about 12 percent in 2012. It is therefore critical that the Government of Iraq implement an effective and transparent process for handling and accounting for these rapidly increasing revenues. Iraq has been an Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) candidate country since 2010 and is supposed to complete the requirements to become a "compliant" country later this year. What are the prospects for this happening?

Answer. The Board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) accepted Iraq as a candidate country on February 10, 2010. Iraq has until August 9, 2012, to undergo EITI validation to determine whether the country is compliant. Iraq issued its first EITI report in December 2011, reporting \$41 billion in revenues from oil and gas exports in 2009. Iraq's second report, covering 2010, is expected on schedule by the end of the year. Iraq has hired one of the approved international validation companies to conduct its validation exercise, a highly detailed procedure to reconcile national revenue and company payment figures for extractive industries. We believe the Iraqi authorities are committed to the EITI process.

The United States strongly supports Iraq's efforts to become EITI compliant. Iraq is one of only two countries in the Middle East to have sought EITI compliant status and holds the largest reserves of any country seeking this status.

Revenues from crude oil exports account for approximately 95 percent of Iraqi Government revenues, so the EITI reconciliation exercise is tightly tied to the overall transparency of Iraqi Government revenues. All Iraqi oil export revenues flow through the accounts of the Development Fund for Iraq at the New York Federal Reserve and are subject to audit by Iraq's governmental auditing and internal control body, the Committee of Financial Experts. Iraq publishes its annual budget. The 2012 budget was reviewed by experts from the International Monetary Fund.

In September 2011, the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs awarded a \$1million grant to Revenue Watch Institute to broaden and strengthen Iraqi civil society working on EITI issues and to support a more robust implementation process. As stated in my written testimony, helping the Iraqis to meet the requirements of the EITI would be among my top priorities if confirmed. "By helping the Iraqis address these challenges, the United States can gain leverage and influence while pursuing mutual goals."

RESPONSES OF BRETT H. MCGURK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

Question. The State Department has long promised faster action to resolve the issues surrounding the delays in approving Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis who supported the U.S. effort in Iraq after the 2003 invasion.

- (a) How many SIVs have been issued, by fiscal year, since the inception of the program?

Answer. The chart below details how many Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) the Department of State has issued to Iraqi applicants under both the Section 1059 and Section 1244 programs since implementation in FY 2007. FY 2012 numbers are preliminary:

	Principal	Derivatives	Totals
2007	431	383	814
2008	518	449	967
2009	1,448	1,385	2,833

	Principal	Derivatives	Totals
2010	951	1,091	2,042
2011	322	384	706
2012*	1,137	1,461	2,598
Totals	4,807	5,153	9,960

*Applications through May 31, 2012.

- (b) How many applications have there been, by fiscal year?

Answer. The chart below details the number of approved I-360 immigrant visa petitions received by the State Department's National Visa Center (NVC) from USCIS for Iraqis applying for the Section 1059 and Section 1244 SIV Programs. FY 2012 numbers are preliminary:

	Iraqi section 1059 approved I-360s	Iraqi section 1244 approved I-360s	Combined total
FY 2007	650	0	650
FY 2008	149	48	197
FY 2009	139	1,614	1,753
FY 2010	10	1,025	1,035
FY 2011	2	2,398	2,400
FY 2012*	0	659	659
Totals	950	5,744	6,694

*Applications through May 31, 2012.

- (c) How long is the average processing time (as measured by application filing date until the date visa issuance or notice of denial) for such applications, by fiscal year?

Answer. Processing SIVs involves a number of different steps, many of which are outside the control of the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. As a result, I understand that the Department does not have general statistics on processing times for SIVs. I understand there were significant delays in returning clearances on SIV cases in FY 2011, but there has been improvement on processing times in FY 2012. The State Department's internal standards require scheduling interviews 60 days from the receipt of the application. As the numbers of SIVs issued to Iraqis in FY 2012 indicate above, our interagency partners have made significant strides in eliminating the backlog of Iraqi SIV cases pending security screening. This progress allowed us to cut the backlog of Iraqi SIVs pending final action (issuance or refusal of the visa application) by 50 percent since March. In late February, 2,832 Iraqi SIV applications were pending security vetting. A little over 3 months later, that number has fallen to 1,388.

We owe it to those Iraqis who have worked with us to ensure that this program runs as transparently as possible while also maintaining essential security checks to protect the American people.

- (d) How many are pending as of June 1, 2012?

Answer. As of June 6, 2012, there were 1,388 Iraqi SIV applications pending security clearances.

- (e) How many have been denied by fiscal year? Please list the reasons for denial and the corresponding number of visas denied for each reason, by fiscal year.

Answer. In order to provide this detailed information that you have requested on refusals, we are currently running a customized query through our files. The query will take several days to complete and will provide a detailed response as soon as possible.

Question. The Police Development Program in Iraq has been the subject of continued revision and reduction since the State Department took control of the program in late 2011. What type of information did the Defense Department provide to the State Department when it turned the program over? How many Iraqi Police have been successfully trained under State Department control? In which cities are U.S.-trained Iraqi Police located and what are the metrics for evaluating their abilities? How has the prevalence of crime and violence changed in those cities as a result of the presence of U.S.-trained Iraqi Police?

Answer. As noted in my testimony, if confirmed, I will work with the State Department and the Congress to ensure that our diplomatic presence in Iraq is secure, strategic, effective, and sustainable. This same rubric will apply to individual programs, including the Police Development Program (PDP). If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Congress and the State Department to revise and restructure any program that does not meet this test. I understand the PDP is currently undergoing a review in light of present conditions in Iraq. I strongly support this and another initiative as we work to streamline our overall mission and presence in the country.

I was not involved in the planning or development of the PDP. But I have been informed that the Department of Defense (DOD) and the State Department consulted closely during the transition period on an informal basis, and that DOD provided some operational readiness assessments to the State Department prior to closing out its programs.

I have also been informed that the PDP was designed to provide senior levels of the Iraqi Police Services and Ministry of Interior with the management, leadership, and technical skills necessary to manage and maintain Iraq's internal security and support the rule of law. With a focus on mentoring and advising, the program does not train large numbers of Iraqi Police as the DOD-led mission had since 2004.

The DOD police training program trained Iraqi Police throughout the country. The PDP is focused on Ministry of Interior (MOI) and police leadership based in Baghdad and Erbil,¹ and our advisors have traveled on occasion to other provinces.

The PDP seeks to provide the necessary tools for the MOI to build an effective police force that supports the rule of law through a set of nine goals that complement the MOI's strategic goals. To pursue these goals the PDP developed an approach based on police functions, such as investigations, criminal intelligence, and border security, each of which has supporting objectives and indicators that guide advisors in their engagements. The program is linked to a Performance Monitoring Plan, which is implemented through a monitoring and evaluation staff.

While the security situation in Iraq has generally improved, I have been informed that the Department does not have records of individual police who were trained by DOD, and it is difficult to identify a causal link between the training and levels of crime and violence. Unlike the DOD program, the PDP was never intended to provide training in basic skills to large numbers of police, including the individual responders whose presence may deter criminal activity. The program is intended, instead, to help Iraqis advance strategic institutional capacity to, and senior management of, key institutions. For example, our advisors helped establish an Iraqi interagency executive development committee, and work with the Iraqi Police leadership to address the ongoing problem of determining jurisdiction at crime scenes.

As noted above, if confirmed I look forward to participating in the ongoing review of this program to ensure that it is structured to advance U.S. interests on a sustainable basis.

Question. The Lebanese Hezbollah-associated militant Ali Musa Daq-Duq was transferred to Iraqi custody in late 2011 and released shortly thereafter. What were the legal provisions that prevented the United States from transferring Daq-Duq to another detention facility outside of Iraq? Does the United States have any credible information that Daq-Duq is now involved with or materially supporting any U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization?

Answer. I was not responsible for this case during my time in Iraq in 2011 and I was not involved in deliberations internally or with the Iraqi Government on whether and how to transfer Daqduq to another detention facility outside of Iraq. However, I have been informed that Daqduq was transferred to Iraqi custody in December due to the expiration (on December 31, 2011) of the 2008 Security Agreement. Under that agreement, the Iraqi Government had legal custody of Daqduq and we were physically holding him at their request and in accordance with Iraqi law. Per the expiration of the agreement, we had no legal basis for holding Daqduq and his transfer out of Iraq required the full consent of the Iraqi Government pursuant to existing laws.

It is my understanding that Daqduq currently remains in Iraqi custody. As the Secretary has stated, Daqduq is a dangerous individual and his release could have a detrimental effect on U.S. interests. I believe strongly that Daqduq should be held accountable for his crimes and, if confirmed, I will work closely with Iraqi leaders to explore all legal options to pursue justice in this case.

¹ Basrah hub of the program will be closed by the end of June following the mutual agreement of the U.S. and Iraqi Governments.

Question. The Iraqi Government has recently threatened U.S. oil and gas companies who have attempted to develop fields in the Kurdish region and in southern Iraq.

- (a) How is the U.S. Embassy facilitating the exposure of U.S. companies to opportunities in Iraq?

Answer. The State Department and the U.S. mission in Iraq are engaging in a vigorous outreach effort to help US firms identify opportunities in Iraq. These opportunities are significant and growing. While the obstacles to doing business in Iraq remain very challenging, one private consulting firm has reported that during 2011, U.S. companies concluded investment and commercial deals worth \$6.9 billion USD, up from \$2 billion in 2010. Moreover, U.S. exports to Iraq increased by nearly 50 percent from 2010 to 2011.

The State and Commerce Departments and the U.S. mission in Iraq are working hard with our partners to help U.S. businesses overcome key entry barriers, such as identifying Iraqi Government procurement opportunities, screened Iraqi business partners, and vetted security firms to operate in a safe and effective manner on the ground in Iraq.

Last November, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad hosted 83 U.S. firms and universities at the U.S. pavilion at the Baghdad Trade Fair, the first official U.S. presence at Iraq's flagship trade fair in more than 30 years. In March, the State Department—with participation via videoconference by our Embassy in Baghdad and consulates in Erbil and Basrah—hosted an event for over 100 companies to explain how to address the challenges of doing business in Iraq. Looking forward, I understand the Embassy plans activities that will highlight opportunities for U.S. firms in areas such as housing, electricity, and water infrastructure.

Boosting trade and investment ties between the United States and Iraq is in the interests of both countries. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities will be to ensure that U.S. companies have every opportunity to benefit from this new and potentially very wealthy market.

- (b) How does the U.S. Embassy ensure that U.S. oil and gas companies are protected under international conventions on investments?

Answer. Iraq is not yet a signatory to major conventions on the protection of international investment, such as the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. Our Embassy continues to press the Government of Iraq to participate in these conventions. Indeed, such participation is very much in Iraq's interests and is essential to attract the foreign direct investment that Iraq so badly needs. If confirmed, I will certainly take every opportunity to encourage the Iraqi Government to join appropriate international investment protection agreements like the New York Convention. With respect to investment protection in the energy sector, in the case of irreconcilable disputes, Iraq's oil contracts typically have provisions for international arbitration.

The Embassy, in cooperation with the Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program, is working also to strengthen investment protection under Iraqi law by assisting Iraq to develop specialized commercial courts. The first such court opened in 2010 and others are planned.

I believe that harnessing the U.S. private sector can be one of our strongest levers of influence in Iraq over the months and years to come. This is why, as noted in my testimony, outreach to, and facilitation for, U.S. businesses in Iraq will be one of the top mission priorities, if confirmed.

Question. There have been allegations in the press regarding e-mail exchanges between you and Gina Chon, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. (<http://cryptome.org/2012/06/mcgurk-chon/mcgurk-chon.htm>) Please explain the nature of your e-mail exchanges with Ms. Chon using your State Department e-mail address.

Answer. On the morning of June 5, 2012, the day before my confirmation hearing, personal e-mails between me and my now beloved wife, Gina, were made public by others without authorization. They appear to be a printed copy of an e-mail exchange that took place 4 years ago. The State Department has not authenticated the e-mails. I do not recall sending some of the statements that have been quoted in the media. My wife does not recall receiving them. But I take full responsibility for my relationship with Gina and for our exchange of personal messages.

These e-mails appear to have been sent from my State Department blackberry, the only reliable way to communicate at the time in Iraq. Personal e-mail accounts were not available on handheld devices and incidental personal use from an official account is authorized under State Department regulations (5 FAM 723).

The printed exchanges reflect a series of personal messages from shortly after we first met. At times, they contain flirtatious banter, but also my adherence to profes-

sional boundaries. I did not share sensitive information with Gina. I was a source for her stories only when formally briefing media organizations as I did often over the course of 2008. As an investigation by the Wall Street Journal found, there is “no evidence that her coverage was tainted” by our relationship, which was then in its earliest stages.

Regarding my relationship with Gina, I take full responsibility for my conduct. By the summer of 2008, I had been in and out of Iraq regularly for 4 years. I had a difficult time when home connecting with those who had not served there. My marriage fell apart and friendships suffered. Gina, who had also been in and out of Iraq since 2004, became the love of my life, is now my wife, and I would not be here without her.

Media coverage of the e-mails rests on inaccurate assumptions. For example, one oft-cited exchange refers to a dinner at the home of an Iraqi official. This official often hosted large gatherings, attended by political leaders, journalists, and civil society figures. When I determined that this particular dinner was invite only, I made clear that Gina’s attendance was “no go.” Another oft-quoted statement of mine says: “If treated to many glasses of wine, you could be the chosen vultures” (plural). This was a joke, written in response to Gina’s description of an evening with her colleagues from multiple news organizations involving “many glasses of wine”—something that was rare in Baghdad at that time.

When it came to official activities or information, I wrote clearly: “Can’t tell you about it, of course.” In short, when read in context, the e-mails contain instances of inside humor and sarcasm but also observed professional boundaries.

At the time of these personal messages, my assignment was to secure follow-on security arrangements with the Iraqi Government and a broader strategic framework for U.S. relations with Iraq. That mission was not compromised and was achieved under extremely difficult circumstances and immense pressure. As the last three Ambassadors shared with the committee last week, my professional experience makes me “uniquely positioned to build on all that America has sacrificed over this past decade and to establish the strongest possible relationship between our two countries.”

Four years have passed since the date of these leaked e-mails. I am now happily married and have spent much of this period either in Iraq or in New York where I was working on Iraq issues in academia. I am grateful that the current and two former Ambassadors believe I have “the right vision for leading the mission and [that I] enjoy the full trust and confidence of the current leadership team at the Embassy.” As I shared with the committee in my testimony, I have a coherent plan for leading the mission and I look forward to the committee judging my candidacy on the merits.

Question. Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 imposes restrictions on assistance to any unit of a foreign country’s security forces for which there is credible evidence that the unit has committed gross violations of human rights. U.S. embassies are heavily involved in ensuring compliance with this requirement. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy effectively implements section 620M? In particular, what actions will you take to ensure, in a case in which there is credible evidence that a gross violation of human rights has been committed, that assistance will not be provided to units that committed the violation? What steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy has a robust capacity to gather and evaluate evidence regarding possible gross violations of human rights by units of security forces?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Embassy fully complies with the State Department’s legal obligations pursuant to the Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, also known as the Leahy law, for its programs in Iraq. The State Department screens all candidates for Department-funded training courses and other assistance for gross human rights violations pursuant to standard Leahy vetting procedures. Specifically, I will ensure that Embassy Baghdad continues vetting recipients of U.S. security assistance through the INVEST (International Vetting and Security Tracking) system, which is used for all countries whose security forces are proposed for assistance from the United States.

I will also, if confirmed, engage with the Government of Iraq when human rights concerns related to Iraqi security force units arise, and will inform the Iraqi Government if funds are withheld from any units pursuant to the Leahy law. The U.S. Embassy will continue working with the Iraqi Government and promoting the importance of respecting human rights through diplomatic means.

RESPONSES OF BRETT H. MCGURK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR

Question. Hopes for a stable power-sharing government in Iraq in the wake of the U.S. troop withdrawal last year have faded. Prime Minister Maliki gives every appearance of a man seeking absolute power—levying charges against his main Sunni rival and refusing to implement power-sharing agreements.

- What is your plan for engaging opposition parties effectively to ensure U.S. influence remains strong in a post-Maliki Iraq?

Answer. To help ensure that Iraq remains on the course envisioned in its own constitution—a united, federal, democratic, and pluralistic state—we must work to engage with and strengthen Iraq's institutions. As explained in my written testimony, there are examples of the Parliament acting as an independent check on executive authority. The United States can work to encourage "issues based" alliances within Parliament, which can help Iraq transcend a political culture dominated by ethnosectarian blocs. The most recent political dispute has seen interesting cross-sectarian alliances. The Sadrist bloc, for example, has joined with members of Iraqiyya and the Kurdish alliance to pressure the Prime Minister. At the same time, the Prime Minister has built alliances with key Sunni constituencies from within Iraqiyya to pressure his opponents. If confirmed, I will plan to engage every political bloc on a neutral basis and seek to build on areas of agreement and narrow areas of disagreement. It will be important to ensure that channels of communication remain open between all parties—especially between Baghdad and Erbil. My approach, if confirmed, will be active personal engagement. We cannot dictate outcomes but we can and must facilitate dialogue, search for opportunities for compromise, and then seize on those opportunities. Finally, if confirmed, I will encourage the Iraqis to remain focused on their scheduled elections—local elections next year and national elections in 2014. It will be essential for Iraq's democratic trajectory to ensure that these elections take place freely, fairly, and on time.

Question. One of the challenges to stability in Iraq remains the stalled process to settle territorial disputes between the Kurds and Iraq's Arabs. What more can the United States do to play a constructive role in helping the parties get beyond this impasse?

Answer. We continue to support a durable solution to Iraq's disputed internal boundaries (DIBs). This includes supporting the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's (UNAMI) efforts to reconvene the High Level Task Force or any other mechanism that will bring national and provincial leaders together to look for a long-term resolution to Iraq's disputed internal borders. We continue to make clear (and UNAMI agrees) that a referendum regarding resolution of DIBs, including ultimate administrative control over the province of Kirkuk, should confirm a political settlement negotiated by stakeholders before a vote can take place. The proposed census, which article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution also calls for, remains on hold primarily due to disagreements among parties in the north on codifying ethnicity in disputed areas. We also encourage a potential UNAMI role in mediating these disagreements to find common ground. As noted in my testimony, I believe article 140 continues to provide the roadmap for a durable solution but the United States must remain actively engaged to build compromises around the many questions that article 140 does not answer, or (in most cases) leaves to resolution at a later date.

Security in the DIBs region is the responsibility of the Iraqis. However, we will continue to play a mediation role when asked to ensure relevant national and provincial leaders find a diplomatic solution to any territorial or other security-related disputes in the DIBs. We will also continue to provide security training and rule of law programs to complement the high-level dialogue. Our Office of Security Cooperation and its relationships with top Iraqi security officials will also have a central role to play in maintaining a peaceful settlement in these areas.

As noted in my testimony, if confirmed, I also will visit the Kurdistan region regularly to ensure face-to-face interaction and to strengthen regular bridges of dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil. I have been personally involved in helping to resolve flashpoint disputes in the DIBs and it will remain a central priority of mine, if confirmed, to ensure that our engagement is regular and continuous to dampen any potential conflicts far before they can begin.

Question. The drawdown of U.S. forces challenges our ability to confront the terrorist threat posed by al-Qaeda in Iraq. How effective are the Iraqi Security Forces in meeting this threat and what role is the United States prepared to play in strengthening their capabilities?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony, al-Qaeda in Iraq retains the capacity to launch attacks—mostly directed at Iraqi civilians and Iraqi security forces—approximately every 30–40 days and the level of attacks this year are consistent with those in the first half of 2011. Since the U.S. withdrawal, Iraqi Special Forces have demonstrated the capacity to locate and take down AQI cells, as seen earlier this year following a series of AQI attacks in Anbar province (focused in the Haditha area). While Iraq's Special Forces are among the most capable in the region, their effectiveness can be enhanced through cooperation with U.S. assistance. If confirmed, I will work closely with Iraqi leaders to ensure that we are doing all we can to help Iraqi forces eliminate al-Qaeda's leadership and uproot its networks from Iraqi soil.

Question. Iran's influence in Iraqi affairs remains a significant concern, and Iran's support for Shiite factions in Iraq has been long established. As Ambassador to Iraq you must be able to represent U.S. strategic regional objectives amidst this volatile relationship.

- How will you leverage your relationships with Iraq's leaders to forward key U.S. objectives on Iran, such as nonproliferation, sanctions, state-sponsorship of terrorism, and human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that our key objectives on Iran, such as those related to nonproliferation, sanctions, state-sponsored terrorism, and human rights, are part of our dialogue with the senior leaders of the Iraqi Government as well as with leaders across the political spectrum. The United States also will continue to support the development of democratic institutions in Iraq that serve the needs of the Iraqi people and withstand Iranian political influence. In addition, Iraqi outreach to neighboring states and with other countries in the region will keep Iraq oriented toward its Arab neighbors through improved diplomatic and commercial ties, as opposed to relying on Iran to make progress in these areas. I will also ensure open and regular channels of communication between my office in Baghdad and our ambassadors in regional capitals, most of whom I have worked with for many years. I've found that such regular communication can be essential to identifying opportunities and advancing U.S. interests in the region.

As I noted in my testimony, Iranian efforts to influence Iraq in a negative manner are balanced by the simple fact that Iraqis vigorously defend their independence and sovereignty. Years of conflict during the Iraq-Iran war have led the Iraqi people to be deeply distrustful of Iranian intentions. Also, followers of Shia Islam in Iraq, led by Grand Ayatollah Sistani, maintain different views from those in Iran with regard to the appropriate role for religious figures to play in politics. If confirmed, I will make clear that the U.S. Embassy is open to engagement and dialogue with all Iraqis of good will to include, in particular, the Shia religious leadership in Najaf.

In 2007 and 2008, I was involved in planning and preparing for trilateral talks with Iranian diplomats in Baghdad. I was also an active participant in regional engagement efforts, to include the U.N.-sponsored neighbors conferences between 2006 and 2008, which included Iran. I have learned first-hand Iran's tactics and levers of influence within Iraq and I will align the mission, if confirmed, in a manner that helps our Iraqi partners build an independent state free of such interference. The centerpiece of this will be the Strategic Framework Agreement, which envisions a globally integrated Iraq—precisely the opposite of what Iran desires.

As noted in my testimony, helping the Iraqis expand their oil sector will be essential to Iraq's development, stabilizing global markets, and retaining pressure on the Iranian regime. This will also be a top priority, if confirmed.

Furthermore, we must harness the power of U.S. private industry, one of our strongest levers of influence that remains yet undeveloped. The demonstrated Iraqi desire for U.S. firms to help build the backbone of their security forces, airlines, and energy sector gives us a good foundation for this effort.

On the specific issues of sanctions and state sponsorship of terrorism, I plan to continue working with Iraq's key politicians and leaders not only to preserve the hard-won security and political progress for which I saw Iraqis sacrifice their lives, but also to push for more progress in developing a sound and independent political system that can successfully counter Iran's nefarious influence and meddling. It is worth noting the role of the Iraqis as host for the May 23 P5+1 talks in Baghdad. The Iraqis demonstrated a clear interest in a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to international concerns about Iran's failure to meet its obligations with respect to its nuclear program. This is an important step for the Iraqis as they resume their place in the international community and learn to conduct their own foreign policy.

Finally, I remain committed to incorporating human rights into my engagements with all Iraqi politicians and throughout the various spheres of Iraqi society—relying on Iraq's own constitution as the centerpiece of my argument. It is not enough

to have security and prosperity. For Iraq to reach its full potential, all Iraqis must enjoy the right to freedom of expression, worship, and the right to political participation. We saw Iraqi exercise their political will at the ballot box in March 2010. The time will come for them to return to the polls. As I emphasized in my testimony, ensuring that these future elections happen freely, fairly, and on time, will be essential to securing Iraq's democratic gains.

Question. The crisis in Syria continues to dominate the region. As we look to the Arab League and other regional partners to play a stronger role in pressing Bashar al-Assad to cease the violence, what is your assessment of the role that Iraq's leadership can play in this regard and in stopping spill-over effects from further destabilizing Iraq?

Answer. The Iraqi Government follows a general foreign policy of nonintervention in the affairs of neighboring countries. When it comes to Syria, however, Iraq has a mixed record. In August 2009, the Iraqi Government blamed Syria for a series of bombings and sought Arab League and U.N. Security Council assistance for an investigation. More recently, the Iraqi Government has acted hesitatingly in the wake of unfolding events in Syria. After at first retaining a neutral stance, the Iraqi Government has more recently said publicly that the Syrian President's dictatorship must come to an end and that the days of one party rule in Syria are over. On June 2, Iraq joined the Arab League in its most recent condemnation of the Syrian Government's continued violence against civilians, including the massacre in Houla. Iraq's concern regarding the situation in Syria is driven by fear among Iraqi leaders that a sudden collapse of the Assad regime could lead to a sectarian upheaval that could spill over Iraq's western border. The United States will continue to urge Iraq to call for the immediate departure of Assad, and to support a political solution to the crisis in Syria, as outlined by U.N.—Arab League Joint Special Envoy Annan's six point plan and UNSCRs 2042 and 2043.

As for what I can do from Baghdad: if confirmed, I will (1) remain constantly engaged with U.S. ambassadors in regional capitals and at the highest levels of the White House and State Department and (2) ensure the Syria situation is assessed and approached multidimensionally within Iraq: with the Central Government, with the Kurdistan Regional Government, and with the tribes of western Iraq. It will be essential to seize opportunities where they exist and to ensure that the Iraqi Government both adheres to its Security Council obligations and remains within the Arab League consensus on the Syria situation. As I stated in my testimony, all Iraqis must know: "U.S. policy is firm: Bashar al-Assad must go. The longer he remains, the greater the threat to the Syrian people, to the region, and to Iraq."

Question. Our Embassy in Baghdad is our largest. How sustainable is that posture and what is your assessment of plans to reduce U.S. civilian staff in the wake of the military withdrawal?

- Absent attractive incentive packages (such as "linked assignments") what steps would you take to ensure that you get the best people to take assignments in Iraq?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony, the current size of the Embassy reflects an "all contingency" plan that was developed in light of the uncertainties facing our mission over the early part of this year. Now that we are 6 months into the first year without a substantial U.S. military presence, we are able to plan for a more institutionalized and sustainable presence. If confirmed, my aim will be to build a mission that is secure, strategic, effective, and sustainable. This will require a consolidation of our footprint and a reduction in personnel. We are also moving to a posture that allows us as much as possible to live off the local economy, decreasing dependence on offshore contract firms. I believe the current planned reductions are a good start in this regard.

Iraq remains a difficult environment for American employees of all agencies. The Department of State expects a full package of incentives to remain in place for the next several years, although there may be some alterations. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to ensure that service in Iraq produces a record of achievement that is not overlooked in promotions, awards, and assignments. I will also endeavor to recruit those who have served Iraq in the past to draw on the nearly decade of experience our Foreign Service professionals have in the country. To succeed in Iraq we will need the best people, with the most experience, operating on the ground.

Question. Please respond to the following questions with regard to the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program for Iraq:

- (a) Please provide the number of Iraqi SIVs that have been issued, by fiscal year, since the inception of the program;

Answer. The chart below details how many Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) the Department of State has issued to Iraqi applicants under both the Section 1059 and Section 1244 programs since implementation in FY 2007. FY 2012 numbers are preliminary:

	Principal	Derivatives	Totals
2007	431	383	814
2008	518	449	967
2009	1,448	1,385	2,833
2010	951	1,091	2,042
2011	322	384	706
2012*	1,137	1,461	2,598
Totals	4,807	5,153	9,960

* Applications through May 31, 2012.

- (b) Please list the number of applications, by fiscal year, since the inception;

Answer. The chart below details the number of approved I-360 immigrant visa petitions received by the State Department's National Visa Center (NVC) from USCIS for Iraqis applying for the Section 1059 and Section 1244 SIV Programs. FY 2012 numbers are preliminary:

	Iraqi section 1059 approved I-360s	Iraqi section 1244 approved I-360s	Combined total
FY 2007	650	0	650
FY 2008	149	48	197
FY 2009	139	1,614	1,753
FY 2010	10	1,025	1,035
FY 2011	2	2,398	2,400
FY 2012 ^a	0	659	659
Totals	950	5,744	6,694

* Applications through May 31, 2012.

- (c) Please list the average processing time for an SIV, by fiscal year.

Answer. Processing SIVs involves a number of different steps, many of which are outside the control of the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. As a result, I understand that the Department does not have general statistics on processing times for SIVs. I understand there were significant delays in returning clearances on SIV cases in FY 2011, but there has been improvement on processing times in FY 2012. The State Department's internal standards require scheduling interviews 60 days from the receipt of the application. As the numbers of SIVs issued to Iraqis in FY 2012 indicate above, our interagency partners have made significant strides in eliminating the backlog of Iraqi SIV cases pending security screening. This progress allowed us to cut the backlog of Iraqi SIVs pending final action (issuance or refusal of the visa application) by 50 percent since March. In late February, 2,832 Iraqi SIV applications were pending security vetting. A little over 3 months later, that number has fallen to 1,388.

We owe it to those Iraqis who have worked with us to ensure that this program runs as transparently as possible while also maintaining essential security checks to protect the American people.

- (d) Please list the total number of pending SIV applications as of June 1, 2012.

Answer As of June 6, 2012, there were 1,388 Iraqi SIV applications pending security clearances.

RESPONSES OF BRETT H. MCGURK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi employees of the United States: As you know from our earlier conversations, I am very concerned about delays in the processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for those Iraqis who

risked their lives to work for us in Iraq—particularly those who were living and working on our bases and have been “cut loose” since our withdrawal last December. How can SIV processing be expedited? What can be done to offer protection to those who are literally in hiding and on the run inside Iraq as they await issuance of their visas?

Answer. This issue is very important and personal to me. It will receive my close attention, if confirmed. Since we met in your office, I have spoken with the leading U.S. officials who have been working to address delays in processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who have risked their lives to work with us. The State Department is working closely with our interagency colleagues to streamline the SIV application process, eliminate redundant requirements, and accept electronic submissions wherever possible. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Embassy is staffed to manage applications efficiently and in a manner that provides fair process to our Iraqi partners while also ensuring necessary background and security checks to protect the American people. In recent months, strides have been made in eliminating the backlog of Iraqi SIV cases pending security screening. Over the first half of this year, the State Department issued more SIVs to Iraqis than during all of FY 2011. In FY 2011, the Department issued 706 SIVs to Iraqi citizens. By the end of March 2012, the Department already had issued 865 SIVs to Iraqis. During April and May 2012 alone, it issued an additional 1,733 SIVs to Iraqis, based on preliminary data. Thus, the trend appears to be a positive one, and now we must ensure it continues. If confirmed, I am committed to working diligently with our interagency partners to balance the safety of American citizens with the aspirations of Iraqis who risked their lives to work with us, and now wish to resettle in our country.

Question. Iraq and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI): According to the World Bank, Iraq possesses a proven 143 billion barrels of oil, and high oil prices and increasing exports should enable Iraq's GDP to grow by about 12 percent in 2012. It is therefore critical that the Government of Iraq implement an effective and transparent process for handling and accounting for these rapidly increasing revenues. Iraq has been an Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) candidate country since 2010 and is supposed to complete the requirements to become a “compliant” country later this year. What are the prospects for this happening?

Answer. The Board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) accepted Iraq as a candidate country on February 10, 2010. Iraq has until August 9, 2012, to undergo EITI validation to determine whether the country is compliant. Iraq issued its first EITI report in December 2011, reporting \$41 billion in revenues from oil and gas exports in 2009. Iraq's second report, covering 2010, is expected on schedule by the end of the year. Iraq has hired one of the approved international validation companies to conduct its validation exercise, a highly detailed procedure to reconcile national revenue and company payment figures for extractive industries. We believe the Iraqi authorities are committed to the EITI process.

The United States strongly supports Iraq's efforts to become EITI compliant. Iraq is one of only two countries in the Middle East to have sought EITI compliant status and holds the largest reserves of any country seeking this status.

Revenues from crude oil exports account for approximately 95 percent of Iraqi Government revenues, so the EITI reconciliation exercise is tightly tied to the overall transparency of Iraqi Government revenues. All Iraqi oil export revenues flow through the accounts of the Development Fund for Iraq at the New York Federal Reserve and are subject to audit by Iraq's Governmental auditing and internal control body, the Committee of Financial Experts. Iraq publishes its annual budget. The 2012 budget was reviewed by experts from the International Monetary Fund.

In September 2011, the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs awarded a \$1million grant to Revenue Watch Institute to broaden and strengthen Iraqi civil society working on EITI issues and to support a more robust implementation process. As stated in my written testimony, helping the Iraqis to meet the requirements of the EITI would be among my top priorities if confirmed. “By helping the Iraqis address these challenges, the United States can gain leverage and influence while pursuing mutual goals.”

RESPONSES OF BRETT H. MCGURK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. In July 2010, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Jim Jeffrey said the following on Iran's role in Iraq during his confirmation hearing “Iran attempts to exert its

influence through financial and political backing for political parties, high-level engagement with Iraqi leaders, and support for Shia militant groups. But, we should recognize that Iran's efforts continue to run into the natural independence of Iraqis."

- (a) Do you believe that this analysis still holds? How does Iran exert its influence in Iraq today?

Answer. Yes, this analysis still holds. As noted in my written testimony, "Iran has tremendous influence in Iraq, sharing a 3,000 kilometer border, as well as interwoven religious, cultural, and economic ties." Iran largely failed, however, in its efforts to create Iraqi Shia extremist militia groups capable of driving U.S. forces from Iraq, as these groups publicly pledged to do time and time again. Over the course of this year, the three primary Shia extremist groups have largely gone to ground—although we must retain a vigilant eye on their activities. Iran's influence is now primarily economic and political; and this is where we must focus our efforts to push back: through active political engagement, strengthening our economic and commercial ties with Iraq (including private sector engagement), and deepening our permanent ties—in education, defense, culture, commerce—under the Strategic Framework Agreement.

- (b) How has Iraq recently exhibited its natural independence against influence from Iran? What can we do to help support that "natural independence"?

Answer. I have been involved in a number of conversations with Iraqi leaders to push back against nefarious Iranian influence. Last summer, when U.S. troops were coming under fire from Iranian-backed extremist groups, Embassy Baghdad pushed for Iraqi Security Forces to move into Maysan province to protect our people and detain those responsible. The Iraqi security forces did and the attacks nearly ceased. Iraqi leaders have also sought to ensure a growing supply of oil to international markets which is not in Iran's interest. The Shia religious leadership in Najaf professes a vision of Shia Islam that undercuts the legitimacy of the Iranian regime. And, of course, Iraqi security forces (with our help) defeated Iranian-backed militia groups that had been controlling much of Basrah in the spring of 2008. This was a major turning point in Iraq's trajectory. Furthermore, as I noted in my testimony, "The vast majority of Iraqis seek to live in a globally integrated nation, whereas Iran seeks to further isolate Iraq from the world. It is between these competing visions—an Iraq that is globally integrated versus an Iraq that is isolated and dependent on Iran—that the United States retains substantial advantage and influence." Our vision for Iraq is one that most Iraqis share and it is codified in the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Having stronger, effective government institutions will also support Iraq's ability to withstand Iranian political influence. We continue to support the development of democratic institutions in Iraq that serve the will and needs of the Iraqi people. In addition, developing stronger ties with other neighbors and the larger Middle East region will temper Iraqi ties to Iran. We are urging all of the regional players to engage directly with the Iraqi Government. Iraq's hosting of the Arab League summit in Baghdad was a significant and positive step in Iraq's integration into the region. Iraq is resolving longstanding issues with Kuwait and also building political ties as well as exploring economic/energy cooperation with other GCC states and Jordan. Finally, encouraging military-to-military engagements between Iraq and GCC states will be one of my top priorities at the Embassy, if confirmed.

Question. Iraq has unique concerns with respect to the unrest in Syria. The ongoing violence and apparent failure of Annan's peace plan has increased calls for greater regional efforts to remove Assad from power and support a democratic transition in Syria.

- What do you make of the Iraqi relationship with Syria and how will you use your position to urge the Iraqi Government to play a more constructive role bilaterally and through the Arab League to bring about a democratic transition in Syria?

Answer. The Iraqi Government follows a general foreign policy of nonintervention in the affairs of neighboring countries. When it comes to Syria, however, Iraq has a mixed record. In August 2009, the Iraqi Government blamed Syria for a series of bombings and sought Arab League and U.N. Security Council assistance for an investigation. More recently, the Iraqi Government has acted hesitantly to unfolding events in Syria. After at first retaining a neutral stance, the Iraqi Government has more recently said publicly that the Syrian President's dictatorship must come to an end and that the days of one party rule in Syria are over. On June 2, Iraq joined the Arab League in its most recent condemnation of the Syrian Government's continued violence against civilians, including the massacre in Houla. Iraq's concern re-

garding the situation in Syria is driven by fear among Iraqi leaders that a sudden collapse of the Assad regime could lead to a sectarian upheaval that could spill over Iraq's western border. The United States will continue to urge Iraq to call for the immediate departure of Assad, and to support a political solution to the crisis in Syria, as outlined by U.N.-Arab League Joint Special Envoy Annan's six point plan and UNSCRs 2042 and 2043.

As for what I can do from Baghdad: if confirmed, I will (1) remain constantly engaged with U.S. ambassadors in regional capitals and the Iraq and Syria policy teams at the State Department and (2) ensure the Syria situation is assessed and approached multidimensionally within Iraq. It will be essential to seize opportunities where they exist and to ensure that the Iraqi Government both adheres to its Security Council obligations and remains within the Arab League consensus on the Syria situation. As I stated in my testimony, all Iraqis must know that "U.S. policy is firm: Bashar al-Assad must go. The longer he remains, the greater the threat to the Syrian people and to the region, and to Iraq."

Question. Despite efforts to expedite processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Iraqis who assisted the United States Government during the war, there continues to be a significant backlog of visas. In the meantime, applicants are under threat and some have been killed for their work with U.S. forces.

- (a) How many cases of SIV principal applicants are currently in the pipeline? How many principal applicants have been granted SIVs since the beginning of 2012?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony, addressing the delays in security vetting of Iraqi SIV applications is an issue I take personally. I have known Iraqis who lost their lives after cooperating with us and others who have either resettled in the United States or never had an application processed. It is my understanding that in recent months, the United States has streamlined the application process to conform with existing laws and ensure reasonable security checks while also eliminating redundant requirements and accepting electronic submissions wherever possible. We are seeing some progress in eliminating the backlog of Iraqi SIV cases pending security screening. As of June 6, there were 1,388 Iraqi SIVs applicants whose visas were pending security clearances. Over the first half of this year, the State Department issued more SIVs to Iraqis than during all of FY 2011. In FY 2011, the Department issued 706 SIVs to Iraqi citizens. By the end of March 2012, the Department already had issued 865 SIVs to Iraqis. During April and May 2012 alone, the Department issued an additional 1,733 SIVs to Iraqis, based on preliminary data. If confirmed, I pledge my utmost efforts to ensure that the Embassy is appropriately staffed to efficiently process SIV applications, and to ensure as much as possible that Iraqis who have worked with us and wish to resettle in the United States undergo a fair process with reasonable security checks.

- (b) How many cases are pending for applicants through the direct access visa process? How many direct access visas have been granted since the beginning of 2012?

Answer. Approximately 40,000 Iraqis have pending applications for the direct access in-country refugee resettlement program in Iraq. Of that number, more than 25,000 Iraqis are pending case prescreening and their required in-person interviews with the Department of Homeland Security. Since FY 2007, we have admitted more than 8,200 direct-access Iraqi applicants to the United States from Iraq. Of that number, we admitted more than 530 from Iraq in FY 2012. If confirmed, I will ensure close cooperation from the Embassy and through the interagency to process these cases as rapidly as possible while maintaining reasonable security checks. It will be a priority to ensure that Iraqis who worked with us feel welcomed not only at the U.S. Embassy in their capital city but also in the United States.

- (c) What is your plan to recognize the bravery of these individuals by further expediting this backlog of applicants?

Answer. The SIV program was implemented in Iraq as a means to both recognize and provide protection for those Iraqis who risked their lives, and the lives of their families, to further U.S. goals in Iraq. The best solution for helping those in danger awaiting SIV and refugee processing is continued swift processing of their applications, including the security vetting process. Ensuring the success of these programs will be a top priority, if confirmed. As I stated in my written testimony: "Iraqis who risked their lives to work with us should feel welcomed, even as we uphold essential security checks."

RESPONSES OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

Question. Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 imposes restrictions on assistance to any unit of a foreign country's security forces for which there is credible evidence that the unit has committed gross violations of human rights. U.S. embassies are heavily involved in ensuring compliance with this requirement.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy effectively implements section 620M?
- In particular, what actions will you take to ensure, in a case in which there is credible evidence that a gross violation of human rights has been committed, that assistance will not be provided to units that committed the violation?
- What steps will you take to ensure that the Embassy has a robust capacity to gather and evaluate evidence regarding possible gross violations of human rights by units of security forces?

Answer. Urging the Government of Tajikistan to improve its human rights performance will be one of my top priorities, if confirmed as Ambassador to Tajikistan. Embassy Dushanbe already routinely conducts Leahy vetting in accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Still, given the importance of human rights monitoring, I would lead a review of our Leahy vetting procedures to ensure we are conducting these reviews based on the most complete information. Such efforts could include leveraging the growing reach of the Internet; maintaining steady contact with activists, NGOs, journalists, and others; increasing outreach to local police and government contacts; and encouraging victims and their families to come forward. If confirmed, I will continue our coordinated work with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in Washington and maintain use of the International Vetting and Security Tracking (INVEST) system to maximize the breadth and depth of our vetting activities.

I cannot speculate broadly on hypothetical cases of gross violations of human rights, as each case is unique, but I can pledge to follow U.S. law: If our coordinated vetting processes reveals credible information that a member or unit of the security forces is responsible for gross violations of human rights, the Embassy will prohibit that unit or individual from receiving assistance. We will use the tools at our disposal, including end use monitoring and our bilateral security agreements, to ensure U.S. assistance is never provided to those committing such violations.

Question. Does Russia have plans to redeploy its troops to the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border following NATO's post-2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan? If so, what implications does that have for U.S. policy in the region? Would the United States support such a Russian deployment?

Answer. I cannot speak to Russia's long-term intentions with regard to border guard deployments on the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan following NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. It is conceivable that Russia may desire to redeploy troops to the border given Russian concerns over the large volume of Afghan origin narcotics that transit Tajikistan en route to Russia. Russia has had a Border Advisory Group in Tajikistan ever since their main forces left in 2005, but neither country characterized these advisers as "troops."

Any potential deployment must take into account the sensitivities of Tajikistan. On a number of occasions in the past, Tajikistan has refused to permit Russian troops along the border. While I cannot speculate on the potential U.S. reaction to Russian deployments, we fully respect Tajikistan's sovereign right to determine the best course forward on foreign policy matters.

RESPONSE OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT TO QUESTION SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. While U.S. operations in Afghanistan continue, we must rely on close cooperation with Tajikistan in order to manage the flow of goods and people in and out of Afghanistan. However, we must balance this strategic imperative with our serious concerns about human rights in the country, including the repression of media freedom and political opposition and restrictions on the rights of women and ethnic and religious minorities.

- How are we pushing the Government of Tajikistan to rectify these abuses? Are discussions of human rights with Tajik officials effective in producing positive change? If not, what else could we be doing?

Answer. Promoting and protecting freedom of the press, the rights of women, religious and ethnic minorities is an integral part of our engagement with the Govern-

ment of Tajikistan. We consistently raise these and other human rights issues with all levels of the government.

In May 2012, Assistant Secretary Robert O. Blake, Jr., hosted the third round of U.S.-Tajikistan Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABC), which served as a vehicle to frankly discuss our wide range of bilateral issues. Our delegations to the ABCs regularly include representatives of the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Office of Central Asian Affairs, and Office of International Religious Freedom, the Office of Central Asia in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In addition to meetings with officials of the Government of Tajikistan, when in-country, Assistant Secretary Blake and I regularly meet with civil society, including human rights, business, and political leaders to discuss these issues.

The goal of the ABCs is to increase the level of our engagement. We see opportunities for progress in all areas of our dialogue over the coming year, including strengthening respect for human rights and religious freedom, promoting democratic governance, and enhancing the rule of law. In our interactions with the Government and people of Tajikistan, we seek to ensure Tajikistan continues to be a stable country with secure borders and an improving economic climate.

When Secretary Clinton visited Tajikistan, she stressed the importance for the governments and leaders to provide the space necessary for citizens to have a voice in their government, to pursue their aspirations, and promote their ideas. If confirmed, I will work hard to convey to the Government of Tajikistan the importance of an open, democratic, tolerant society which can provide a firm foundation for a secure, stable, and prosperous nation.

RESPONSE OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT TO QUESTION SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Does the Tajik Government respect human rights, in your view? Has trafficking in persons decreased? Are there political prisoners in Tajikistan? How should the United States address human rights problems in Tajikistan?

Answer. The Government of Tajikistan has a great deal of work to do on the human rights front but their engagement on this issue has recently increased. The most significant human rights problems included torture and abuse of detainees, restrictions on freedoms of expression and religion (especially regarding the prosecution of journalists and repression of faith groups), and violence and discrimination against women. We continue to remind Government officials that a free and open exchange with the public is in the government's interest and a sign of a modern state.

During the 2011 Trafficking in Persons reporting period, encompassing the 2010 cotton harvest, the Government of Tajikistan took strong measures to prevent forced child labor in the cotton harvest, including disseminating widely a directive that ordered the enforcement of existing prohibitions against forced labor and accrediting and assisting NGOs to monitor the cotton harvest. These actions in part resulted in Tajikistan's upgrade from Tier Two Watch List to Tier Two in the 2011 (and most recent) TIP Report. During the last cotton harvest, the government continued these efforts, fulfilling the first recommendations in the 2011 TIP Report.

We have repeatedly recommended that the Government of Tajikistan vigorously investigate and prosecute suspected trafficking offenses, especially those involving forced labor, and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including local officials who force individuals to participate in the cotton harvest. We also raise frequently the need for the Government of Tajikistan to continue to educate school administrators and teachers about Tajik laws against forced labor of children.

On the issue of political prisoners, according to the State Department's 2011 Human Rights Report, Tajik authorities claimed that there were no political prisoners and that they did not make any politically motivated arrests. Opposition parties and local observers claimed, however, that the government selectively prosecuted political opponents. Due to lack of transparency there is no reliable estimate of the number of political prisoners.

Promoting and protecting basic freedom is a key USG interest. In May 2012, I participated in the third U.S.-Tajikistan Annual Bilateral Consultations, hosted by Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Robert O. Blake, Jr., which served as an additional vehicle to frankly discuss the wide range of bilateral issues—including human rights. During the discussions, we expressed concern about restrictions on religious freedom such as the Parental Responsibility Law and reiterated continued need for the Government of Tajikistan to improve its human rights record. At the ABC and in other settings, we encourage the Government of

Tajikistan to explore ways to combat violent extremism through the promotion of human rights—including religious freedom—in Tajikistan.

I can assure you that I will continue to raise these issues as a top priority in Tajikistan, if I am confirmed as Ambassador.

RESPONSES OF SUSAN MARSH ELLIOTT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. (1) According to the State Department's 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report, Tajikistan is a Tier 2 country for human trafficking. Tajikistan serves as a source country for sexual exploitation and forced labor. The annual cotton harvest has been a concerning event where numerous instances of forced labor of children occurs.

- If confirmed, what is your strategy to combat the use of forced labor during the annual cotton harvest?

(2) There have been reports where school aged children were forced to pick cotton during the harvest but government officials did not prosecute the teachers and farmers involved.

- If confirmed, how do you plan on addressing the issue of enforcement of antihuman trafficking laws, particularly in cases of forced labor during the cotton harvest?

Answer. During the 2011 Trafficking in Persons reporting period, encompassing the 2010 and 2011 cotton harvests, the Government of Tajikistan took strong measures to prevent forced child labor in the cotton harvest, including disseminating widely a directive that ordered the enforcement of existing prohibitions against forced labor and accrediting and assisting NGOs to monitor the cotton harvest. These actions in part resulted in Tajikistan's upgrade from Tier Two Watch List to Tier Two. During the last cotton harvest, the government continued these efforts, fulfilling the first recommendations in the 2011 TIP Report. The International Organization on Migration's (IOM) 2012 "Report on the 2011 Tajik Cotton Harvest," which was released in March 2012 and funded by the Department of State's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau, noted that the Tajik Government took action on reported cases of forced child labor during the cotton harvest.

We have repeatedly recommended that the Government of Tajikistan vigorously investigate and prosecute suspected trafficking offenses, especially those involving forced labor, and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including local officials who force individuals to participate in the cotton harvest. We also raise frequently the need for the Government of Tajikistan to continue to educate school administrators and teachers about Tajik laws against forced labor of children.

If confirmed, I will vigorously raise with the Government of Tajikistan the issue of enforcement of antihuman trafficking laws, particularly in cases of forced labor during the cotton harvest. Also, I will follow closely our assistance in this area to ensure that it is achieving the intended results.