

# NOMINATIONS OF THE 112TH CONGRESS—FIRST SESSION

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MARCH 16 THROUGH DECEMBER 8, 2011

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
112TH CONGRESS—FIRST SESSION

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BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, Maryland	JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho
ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., Pennsylvania	MARCO RUBIO, Florida
JIM WEBB, Virginia	JAMES M. INHOFE, Oklahoma
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TOM UDALL, New Mexico	MIKE LEE, Utah

\*FRANK G. LOWENSTEIN, *Staff Director*

KENNETH A. MYERS, JR., *Republican Staff Director*

\*Note: WILLIAM C. DANVERS (assumed *Staff Director* position as of October 3, 2011)

## NOMINATIONS

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011

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

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D. Brent Hardt, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Co-operative  
Republic of Guyana  
James H. Thessin, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic  
of Paraguay  
Jonathan D. Farrar, of California, to be Ambassador to the Repub-  
lic of Nicaragua  
Lisa J. Kubiske, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of  
Honduras

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

Present: Senators Menendez, Rubio, and Inhofe.

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

Senator MENENDEZ. Good afternoon, everyone. The hearing will come to order.

Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee considers four nominations: Jonathan Farrar to be the Ambassador to Nicaragua, James Thessin to be the Ambassador to Paraguay, D. Brent Hardt to be the Ambassador to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, and Lisa Kubiske to be the Ambassador to the Republic of Honduras.

Let me welcome all of the nominees and their families

I will make some brief introductory remarks before I turn to Senator Rubio who is on his way from a vote on the floor, and then we will have an opening statement from each of you and time for questions.

Let me first say that the work that you are being asked to do, should you be confirmed, is of vital importance to the U.S. Government. If confirmed, you will not only be the representative of the President in your country of assignment, but of the American people. And that is why we take our task of advice and consent very seriously.

The range of countries you are being called to represent is as diverse as the challenges and opportunities in the Western Hemi-

sphere, and I am one of those who remains hopeful, while at the same time concerned about the future of Latin America.

Economic growth in the hemisphere and declining poverty indicate that the hemisphere's trajectory is positive. At the same time, sustained income inequality threatens to disenfranchise the many who are not sharing in these economic gains, and fuels the plagues that keep the hemisphere from reaching its full potential—drug trafficking, organized crime, money laundering, and corruption.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which celebrates the victory of democracy throughout the hemisphere in all but one notable country, I am concerned about a trend toward autocracy that threatens many nations in the hemisphere under which there is a guise of political and democratic elections, but elections in and of themselves are not the fulfillment totally of democracy.

In November, Nicaragua will hold Presidential and parliamentary elections under a cloud of suspicion about its adherence to the democratic principles enshrined in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. President Ortega seems determined to subjugate the country's courts and constitution to the will of one man, whose desire for power exceeds his interests in a stable, democratic future.

Honduras, which after overcoming challenges to its democracy, was last week welcomed back to the Organization of American States. They face enormous challenges from organized crime, drug traffickers, and others who have capitalized on political uncertainty to grow their trade. The homicide rate in Honduras is now an astounding 75 per 100,000 people, the highest in the world outside of war zones.

In Guyana, we engage a regime that is as much Caribbean as it is South American, and that continues to seek its place in the politics and economy of the region. And in Paraguay, people face their own challenges in strengthening their democratic form of government, combating corruption, and growing their economy. Like other governments in the region, they also face a growing narcotics problem highlighted by last week's seizure of \$131 million in cocaine.

So, the challenges each of you face vis-a-vis your host governments will be unique. If confirmed, you will play a vital role in the work that builds on our common successes and works to combat some of today's most pressing challenges.

I will give a moment to Senator Rubio and recognize him at this time.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. I apologize. I still get lost in the hallways here, but we found our way over. And I appreciate it very much.

Congratulations to all of you. I look forward to learning more about you all in today's hearing.

And at an important time, as we look to the United States vision toward the region, a critical time in the region as we see decisions being made across the region about which direction they want to go, both economically and politically.

I think that obviously the United States has been preoccupied with some pretty important issues around the world over the last 10 to 12 years. But what happens in the Western Hemisphere is of critical importance to our future, not from a defensive standpoint, but from an offensive standpoint, from an opportunity standpoint.

We have the ability, if there is more development and growth economically in the Western Hemisphere, to have more clients for the things we make and sell, and vice versa. And so, the development and growth of democratic institutions, but also of upward mobility and economic progress is of great promise to the United States with regard to the Western Hemisphere. And anything we can do to promote that is important.

So, each of you will be traveling to your posts at a key moment in our Nation's history with regard to the Western Hemisphere in general and many of these nations in specific.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding these hearings. I think this is our third hearing already, which is as many as this committee had over a 2- or 3-year period before you took over.

And with that, I look forward to hearing from the nominees.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Senator Rubio.

I am going to introduce each of you now, and then in the order in which I introduce you, I would ask you to start your statements.

So, Mr. Farrar is well known to those of us who follow Cuban issues. He is the chief of mission of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana. He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, having begun with the State Department as an economic officer in 1980.

In addition to serving as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, he has also served in a variety of posts in Latin America, including Mexico, Belize, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Mr. Farrar has a B.A. from California State Polytechnic University, an M.A. from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and today we review his nomination to be Ambassador to Nicaragua.

Ms. Kubiske is the deputy chief of mission in Brasilia. She was the deputy chief of mission of the Dominican Republic, has served in Mexico, Shanghai and Hong Kong. At the Department of State, she has served as the Western Hemisphere Economics Director in the Operations Center on the Secretariat staff. She has also served as an investment director and negotiator at the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

She has a bachelor's degree from Brandeis University, a master of science in Foreign Service from Georgetown.

Mr. Thessin is the Acting Legal Advisor to the Department of State. He provides advice to the policy officials of the Department and other government agencies on international issues and on other legal aspects of the Department's work, including requests by Congress. He has been with the Department of State since 1982 when he served as attorney/advisor for Political Military Affairs.

He received a J.D. cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1974, worked for the Federal Trade Commission, worked as counsel for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and was the senior litiga-

tion attorney for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission before joining the Department of State. We welcome you back to the committee and to this hearing.

Mr. Hardt is a career Foreign Service officer currently serving as chargé d'affaires at the Embassy for Barbados in the eastern Caribbean. His other postings include Berlin, The Hague, and the Holy See.

Mr. Hardt has a bachelor's of history degree from Yale University, master's and doctorate degrees from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. And given his wide range of assignments, he speaks Italian, Dutch, German, and French. Perhaps it is befitting that he be called upon as our envoy to Guyana, a country surrounded by Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish speakers. But we look forward to your testimony today in English.

So, with that, in the order I have introduced you, Mr. Farrar, you are up first.

**STATEMENT OF JONATHAN D. FARRAR, OF CALIFORNIA, TO  
BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA**

Mr. FARRAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Distinguished members of the Senator Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua. I am deeply grateful to the President and to the Secretary of State for their trust and confidence.

I would like to introduce the members of my family who are with me today and mention those who are not. First, my wife, Terry, who has been with me every step of the way through 30 years of Foreign Service life, and who has made innumerable personal sacrifices along the way. Also with us today are my daughter, Melissa, and our son-in-law, Jason; our son, Jonathan, and our daughter-in-law, Leigh. Our youngest son, Nathaniel, is studying in Nanjing, China, and could not join us today.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, I have had the privilege to serve my country in various capacities, covering the Western Hemisphere over the past 30 years. My career has taken our family throughout the Americas—North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

In Washington, I have had the opportunity to work on Latin American policy and programs, on human rights, democracy, law enforcement, trade, investment, nonproliferation, and other areas.

But my interest in Latin America truly began in 1973 in Jalapa, Veracruz, on a sister city student exchange program. It was a life-changing experience for me. Today, 38 years later, I still am in touch with the family who took me in and taught me more about Mexico than I ever could have learned in a textbook.

If confirmed as Ambassador of the United States to Nicaragua, I would be a credit to the government. But the most important ties between our countries are those forged between our citizens. If confirmed, I would bring to our mission my experience working with civil society in Latin America and an unwavering commitment to finding avenues to connect with the Nicaraguan people, to advance United States interests, and reflect United States values.



If confirmed, my highest priority will be the protection of U.S. citizens, including the Embassy community. I would work diligently with U.S. businesses to promote their exports and protect their investments. I will bring to that challenge my experience from three assignments as an economic and commercial officer overseas.

Bilateral trade between the United States and Nicaragua has grown by two-thirds in the 5 years since the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement went into effect. Yet, Nicaragua has a more than \$1 billion trade surplus with the United States. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. business, small, medium, and large, to increase U.S. exports to help redress that imbalance.

Nicaragua's Presidential elections are scheduled for this November. The United States and others in the international community have encouraged Nicaragua to facilitate observation of those elections by credible, domestic and international organizations. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with members of this committee and your colleagues in the Congress to shape appropriate U.S. policies, both in the lead up to those elections and afterward.

Along with the rest of Central America, Nicaragua faces considerable challenges in combating illegal drug trafficking. Our Central America Regional Security Initiative and other bilateral programs offer tools to work with the Nicaraguan Government, private sector, and NGOs to combat these challenges.

In a prior assignment, I had the honor of participating in the signing of our Bilateral Agreement to establish the International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador. If confirmed, I will bring my experience with law enforcement and counternarcotics programs in Latin America and adapt it to the particular environment in Nicaragua.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the honor of appearing before the committee today. Should I be confirmed, I pledge to serve our country to the best of my ability, and thus repay in at least a small way the many benefits which it has bestowed upon me and my family.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Farrar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JONATHAN D. FARRAR

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua. I am deeply grateful to the President and to the Secretary of State for their trust and confidence.

I would like to introduce the members of my family who are with me today, and mention those who are not. First my wife, Terry, who has been with me every step of the way through 30 years of Foreign Service life, and who has made innumerable personal sacrifices along the way. Also with us today are our daughter, Melissa, and son-in-law, Jason, and our son, Jonathan, and daughter-in-law, Leigh. Our youngest son, Nathaniel, is studying in Nanjing, China and could not join us.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, I have had the privilege to serve my country in various capacities covering the Western Hemisphere over the past 30 years. My career has taken our family throughout the Americas. In Washington, I have had the opportunity to work on Latin American policy and programs on human rights, democracy, law enforcement, trade, investment, nonproliferation, and other areas.

My interest in Latin America truly began in 1973 in Xalapa, Veracruz, on a sister-city student exchange program. It was a life changing experience. Today, 38 years later, I still am in touch with the family who took me in and taught me more about Mexico than I ever could have learned in a textbook.

If confirmed as Ambassador of the United States to Nicaragua, I would be accredited to the government. But the most important ties between our countries are those forged between our citizens. If confirmed, I would bring to our mission my experience working with civil society in Latin America and an unwavering commitment to finding avenues to connect with the Nicaraguan people to advance U.S. interests and reflect U.S. values.

If confirmed, my highest priority would be the protection of U.S. citizens, including the Embassy community. I would work diligently with U.S. businesses to promote their exports and protect their investments, and would bring to that challenge my experience from three assignments as an economic and commercial officer overseas. Bilateral trade between the United States and Nicaragua has grown by two-thirds in the 5 years since the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement went into effect, yet Nicaragua has a more than \$1 billion trade surplus with the United States. If confirmed I would work with U.S. businesses—small, medium, and large—to increase U.S. exports to help redress that imbalance.

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Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the honor of appearing before the committee today. Should I be confirmed, I pledge to serve our country to the best of my ability and thus repay in at least a small way the many benefits which it has bestowed upon me and my family.

I would be pleased to answer any questions which you may have.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Ms. Kubiske.

**STATEMENT OF LISA J. KUBISKE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS**

Ms. KUBISKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. Thank you for granting me the opportunity to appear today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Ambassador to Honduras. It is a tremendous honor and responsibility, and I, like my colleagues, I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton.

If confirmed, of course, I look forward to working closely with you and with your colleagues to advance the interests of the United States.

I would also like to take a moment, Mr. Chairman, to acknowledge my family, my husband, Dan. They are all on the third row on this side. My husband, Dan, our boys, Philip and Adam, my stepdaughter, Jessica, and her husband, Kevin, and my sister, Alex. And I also have a friend here as well—Ann Sacclaris. Each of these people has been a deep source of love and support during my diplomatic career, or as you said, our diplomatic career.

I would also like to acknowledge my parents who, in addition to offering me love, have been hugely influential in providing the val-

ues I hold today, and in encouraging me to pursue my professional dreams.

I have spent my career serving the United States in the Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and in the Department of State. Many of my overseas postings have been in Latin America, most recently in Brazil where we have a 1,100-person mission, and working with relations with Brazil at a very interesting, important time. I have also worked, as you mentioned, in the China area.

As I have understood since I studied in Peru as an undergraduate, Latin America, including Honduras, is a region that has a tangible impact on United States domestic interests, be it via the flow of people, or trade, or illicit activities. And this makes it a core interest for us.

Our economic relationship is very important. We have some 200 companies in Honduras. Almost half the Honduran imports come from the United States. And we have a trade surplus with Honduras, or at least we did based on data in 2009.

Having served as the State Department's Western Hemisphere Economic Policy director and as a negotiator at USTR, I am very aware, as Senator Rubio mentioned, that expanding our economic relationship can help Honduras develop and grow while creating jobs in the United States.

And one promising area, just as an example, is Honduras' alternative energy sector. In January, Honduras began construction on the largest windfall in Central America. And it will bring cheap, clean energy to a very poor country. And I am very happy to be able to say that the turbines are being manufactured in Pennsylvania, and that means jobs.

I also hope to build on the strong cultural and bilateral ties between our countries. We have 15,000 American citizens in Honduras. There are 100,000 Americans who visit Honduran beaches and Mayan ruins every year. In the United States—depending on the statistics you read—almost a million residents of Honduran origin. And the money that those residents of Honduras—Hondurans send back to Honduras accounts for fully a quarter of Honduras' economy.

U.S. Government investments in Honduras are also transformative. Honduras' Vice President called the Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact that completed in September the most successful development project in Honduras' history.

Honduran governments, including the current Lobo administration, have recognized the value of our close ties. Beyond the economic area, we are working to address an alarming rise in gang activity that has burdened Honduras with one of the highest homicide rates that the chairman mentioned earlier. Gang activity is a threat to U.S. national security, and so working to reverse its growth would be one of my priorities.

I also look forward to assisting our joint effort to address the underlying causes of insecurity, building on the work of U.S. Government agencies, like the Peace Corps, USAID, and nongovernmental organizations that demonstrate every day the generosity of the American people.

Two years ago, Honduras was racked by a political crisis that resulted in its suspension from the Organization of American States, or OAS. And just a week ago, as you mentioned earlier, a special session of the OAS lifted that suspension, which was a tribute to President Lobo's effort to promote national reconciliation.

Our continued engagement remains essential to strengthen Honduras' democratic institutions, and to—continuing to support the Honduran government's efforts to strengthen the respect for human rights, their efforts having included creation of a ministry of justice and human rights and the establishment of a police unit aided by the United States for victims of human rights violations.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I deeply value the potential opportunity to serve the United States in this capacity, and I thank you again. I would be pleased to answer any questions you and your colleagues may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kubiske follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LISA J. KUBISKE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for granting me the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Honduras. This is a tremendous honor and responsibility for which I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and your colleagues to advance the interests of the United States.

I would like to take a moment, Mr. Chairman, to acknowledge my husband, Dan, our boys, Philip and Adam, my stepdaughter, Jessica, and my sister, Alex. Each has been a source of love and support during my diplomatic career. I'd also like to acknowledge my parents, who have been hugely influential in providing the values I hold today and encouraging me to pursue professional opportunities.

After studying in Massachusetts and here in Washington, I have spent my career serving the United States, in the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, and the Department of State. Many of my postings have been in Latin America, most recently in Brasilia, where I served as deputy chief of mission at a mission with over 1,100 employees at a pivotal moment in U.S. relations with Brazil. I have also worked in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

As I have understood since I studied in Peru as an undergraduate, Latin America is a region of core interest to the United States, where the domestic impact of our foreign policy is tangible. Our actions have a direct impact on the lives of United States citizens, and the flows of migrants and illegal drugs to our borders.

Having served as the Department of State's Western Hemisphere economic policy director and as a negotiator at the United States Trade Representative's Office, I am acutely aware of the economic opportunities in Latin America for the United States. Our economic relationship is especially important with Honduras. To date, 200 U.S. companies operate in Honduras. Nearly half of Honduran imports originate in the United States. Our trade surplus with Honduras was \$60 million in 2009.

We can strengthen our economic ties while helping Honduras develop and grow. One promising area is Honduras' alternative energy sector. In January, Honduras began construction on the largest wind farm in Central America, which will bring cheap, clean energy to a very poor country. I am proud to report that the turbines are being manufactured in Pennsylvania, helping to create jobs in the United States.

I also look forward, if confirmed, to building on the strong cultural and bilateral ties between the United States and Honduras. Fifteen thousand American citizens live in Honduras, and 100,000 Americans visit Honduran cities, beaches and Mayan ruins every year. In the United States, there are nearly 1 million residents of Honduran origin. The money they send back to their families accounts for one-quarter of Honduras' gross domestic product. U.S. Government investments in Honduras are similarly transformative. Honduras' Vice President has called the \$205 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact, completed last September, the most successful development project in Honduras' history.

Honduran governments, including the current administration headed by President Porfirio Lobo, have recognized the value of close ties. Together, we are helping address the alarming rise in gang activity that has burdened Honduras with one of

the world's highest homicide rates. At our Embassy in Tegucigalpa, officials from the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Justice work side by side with the Honduran Government to disrupt the operations of drug trafficking organizations. Reversing this trend, a threat to U.S. national security, would be one of my top priorities. If confirmed, I would also look forward to assisting our joint efforts to address the underlying causes of insecurity, building on the work of U.S. Government agencies such as the Peace Corps, USAID, and nongovernmental organizations that daily demonstrate the generosity of the American people.

Two years ago, Honduras was wracked by a political crisis that resulted in Honduras' suspension from the Organization of American States (OAS). Just a week ago, a special session of the OAS lifted that suspension, a tribute to President Lobo's efforts to promote national reconciliation. Our continued engagement remains essential to strengthen Honduras' democratic institutions and to continue supporting the Honduran Government's efforts to strengthen respect for human rights, which has included the creation of a Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the creation of a police unit, aided by the United States, for victims of human rights violations.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I deeply value the potential opportunity to serve the United States in this capacity, and I thank you again for granting me the privilege of appearing before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you and your colleagues may have.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Mr. Thessin.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES H. THESSIN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY**

Mr. THESSIN. Mr. Chairman, Senator Rubio, I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before this committee.

When in years past I was a staffer for this committee sitting on your side of the dais, I did not expect that someday I would be here as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay. Having served the committee for several years, I continue to have the greatest respect for this institution, and will carry that with me in my new job if confirmed.

I would like first to introduce my family. With me is my wife of 38 years, Marcia, our son, Jonathan, and his spouse, Rebecca. Our daughter, Rachel, and her spouse, Will, are out of town on business, and unfortunately not able to be with us today.

I am proud of my wife and our children in so many ways, including that all five have been working daily to make this country stronger now and into the future. My wife, son, and daughter are in public service, and our daughter-in-law and son-in-law in universities.

I am very grateful and humbled that President Obama has nominated me for this position and asked me to serve. You have my commitment that if confirmed I would work tirelessly to live up to the high standards that the administration has set for its appointees, standards that I know this committee and the American people expect as well.

I come before you today as a lifelong public servant in a career that has spanned more than 35 years, working in two branches of government and in various departments and agencies. If confirmed, I will draw upon all the wisdom, knowledge, and experience that I have learned during my government experience in an effort to advance United States interests and our important relationship with Paraguay. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with the committee in this effort.

The relationship between the United States and Paraguay is strong and mutually beneficial. The United States has a strong in-

terest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to deepen its democratic structures, to advance human rights, to counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, to combat corruption and the misuse of intellectual property, and to promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system.

The people of the United States believe that these principles are important, and, therefore, we have a strong interest in their adoption by other countries. We benefit directly when other countries make these principles their own. Not only do our citizens receive fair treatment when abroad and find a safe and welcoming environment there, but our businesses are able to invest in trade in a marketplace that is fair and predictable, placing United States firms in a better position to contribute to the economic prosperity of the United States as well as that of Paraguay.

Paraguay stands at an important juncture where the United States can help make a difference. Paraguay is less than 25 years away from a period when one person ruled the country for some 35 years. And there is significant work yet to do.

During this historic period of its bicentennial, Paraguay is looking at the lessons of its past and is working to design the blueprint for its future, especially as it approaches Presidential and legislative elections.

For its part, the United States has established programs to help Paraguay institute democratic reforms, disrupt criminal organizations, develop its counter terrorism capabilities, fight corruption, and promote good governance and economic development.

If confirmed, I would give the highest priority to ensuring the well-being and safety of Americans living and traveling in Paraguay. I would also seek opportunities for trade between the United States and Paraguay, specifically promoting United States exports to Paraguay as well as advocating for United States firms doing business in that country.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our priorities with the Republic of Paraguay.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thessin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES H. THESSIN

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before this committee today. This is a great honor for me. When in years past I was a staffer for this committee, sitting on your side of the dais, I did not expect that someday I would be here as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay. Having served the committee for several years, I continue to have great respect for this institution and will carry that with me in my new job if confirmed.

I am very grateful and humbled that President Obama has nominated me for this position and asked me to serve. You have my commitment that, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to live up to the high standards that the administration has set for its appointees; standards that I know this committee and the American people expect of nominees as well.

With the chairman's permission, I would first like to introduce my family. With me is my wife of 38 years, Marcia. We are delighted at the prospect of working to advance U.S. interests in Paraguay, if I am confirmed. Also with us are our son, Jonathan, and his spouse, Rebecca. Our daughter, Rachel, and her spouse, Will, are not able to be with us, being out of town on business. I am proud of my wife and our children in so many ways, including that all five have been working daily to

make this country stronger now and into the future. My wife, son, and daughter have been in public service, working respectively as a demographer, an attorney, and an engineer. Our daughter-in-law and our son-in-law have been working in universities to help build a stronger foundation in this country for tomorrow, one training educators, the other advancing science.

I come before you today as a lifelong public servant. My career with the Federal Government has spanned more than 35 years working in two branches of government and in various departments and agencies, most recently as the Deputy Legal Adviser at the Department of State. Before beginning with the Department in 1982, I had worked for this committee for some 3 years in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I have learned much during my government service, particularly while at the Department and on the committee staff. If confirmed, I will draw upon all this wisdom, knowledge, and experience in an effort to advance U.S. interests in our important relationship with Paraguay. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee in this effort.

The relationship between the United States and Paraguay is strong and mutually beneficial. The United States has a strong interest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to deepen its democratic structures, to advance human rights, to counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, to combat corruption and the misuse of intellectual property, and to promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system.

The people of the United States believe that these principles are important, and therefore we have a strong interest in their adoption by other countries. We benefit directly when other countries make these principles their own. Not only do our citizens receive fair treatment when abroad and find a safe and welcoming environment there, but our businesses are able to invest and trade in a marketplace that is fair and predictable, placing U.S. firms in a better position to contribute to the economic prosperity of the United States as well as Paraguay. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the productive dialogue between the United States and Paraguay and will work diligently to advance these goals.

Paraguay stands at an important juncture where the United States can help make a difference. Paraguay is less than 25 years away from a period when one person ruled the country for some 35 years, and there is significant work yet to do. During this historic period of its bicentennial, Paraguay is looking at the lessons of its past and works to design the blueprint for its future, especially as it approaches Presidential and legislative elections. To help, the United States has established programs to help Paraguay institute democratic reforms, disrupt criminal organizations, develop its counterterrorism capabilities, fight corruption, and promote good governance and economic development. If confirmed, I look forward to working with President Lugo, Foreign Minister Lara Castro, the Paraguayan Government, the private sector, and civil society as we seek to advance bilateral relations and strengthen the political, commercial, and cultural ties that exist between our two countries.

If confirmed, I would also give the highest priority to ensuring the well-being and safety of Americans living and traveling in Paraguay. I would also seek opportunities for enhanced trade between the United States and Paraguay, specifically, promoting U.S. exports to Paraguay as well as advocating for U.S. firms doing business in Paraguay.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our priorities with the Republic of Paraguay.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you very much. In typical legal fashion, you have a full minute left. So, you synthesize very well.

Mr. THESSIN. I cede it back to the chair. [Laughter.]

Senator MENENDEZ. The chair is grateful to you.

Mr. Hardt.

**STATEMENT OF D. BRENT HARDT, OF FLORIDA, TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Mr. HARDT. Mr. Chairman, Senator Rubio, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee as the next United States Ambassador to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. I am grateful for the trust and the confidence that the President and Secretary of State have placed in me.

If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this committee and your colleagues in Congress to advance our Nation's many interests in Guyana and the broader Caribbean region.

Before I proceed, I would like to acknowledge the unflagging love and support throughout my career of my wife, Saskia, and my three sons, who are unfortunately preparing to leave post next week and could not be here with me today. But they have supported me in the United States in many capacities over the course of my career.

I would also like to acknowledge the care and nurture of my mother, who awakened my curiosity in the world around me.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the privilege of serving our country as a career Foreign Service officer for the past 23 years. This journey has taken me to the Western Hemisphere and Europe, including four previous postings in the Caribbean. I have worked with friends and allies to strengthen security combat drug trafficking, promote democratic values and human rights, combat HIV and AIDS, and encourage the exchange of people and ideas.

In my current position as chargé d'affaires in the eastern Caribbean, I have led our Embassy team to rebuild confidence in the United State as the region's partner of choice. I believe these experiences have prepared me well to lead the U.S. mission in Georgetown should I be confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Guyana is a country of tremendous potential with vast rain forests, productive agricultural lands, proven mineral resources and potentially large oil and natural gas reserves. But it is also a country facing considerable challenges with poverty and HIV/AIDS epidemic, ethnic and racial divisions, drug trafficking, and violent crime.

The United States has a strong interest in working with Guyana, working in partnership to meet these challenges and fulfill this potential.

If confirmed, I will work with the government and people of Guyana to solidify gains in democratic governance, bolster economic growth, and promote opportunity, especially for women and young people.

The United States also has an interest in Guyana as a key partner in strengthening regional security. Through the President's Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, we are intensifying our cooperation to counter threats of transnational crime and terrorism. That security for the citizens of the Caribbean is indispensable both to the region's future and to our own interests. If confirmed, I will work with all United States agencies active in the region to strengthen our security cooperation with Guyana.

Guyana is a nation of enormous economic potential, but with a per capita GDP of only \$2,500, it is also one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere. That is why USAID has been working with the government and private sector to diversify the economy and create new opportunities and in agribusiness, aquaculture, wood products, and eco-tourism.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our mission's efforts to strengthen Guyana's competitiveness, build its trade capacity, and reduce constraints to doing business.



Guyana is also a leader in efforts to address global climate change through its low carbon development strategy, which seeks to preserve its rain forests. To support Guyana's efforts, our Embassy is helping to develop sustainable forestry and host country governance capacity.

In the face of a debilitating AIDS epidemic in Guyana, the United States has made major investments in combating this disease through the President's emergency plan for AIDS relief. Our \$145 million investment since 2004 has paid clear dividends in meeting this challenge. Guyana's prevention and care programs, its lab, and its state-of-the-art logistics system are models for HIV programs in the region. If confirmed, I will work with the government and other health partners to achieve enduring country ownership and sustainability of these life-saving advances in public health.

Mr. Chairman, Guyana is poised for elections later this year that can build on progress it has made as an emerging democracy. International observers deemed its 2006 Presidential elections to be free, fair, and transparent, and for the first time independence, they were also peaceful. It is important that Guyana continue along this path in the elections scheduled to take place later this year. If confirmed, I will work with the government and civil society to help strengthen democracy and governance, promote constructive political dialogue, and encourage greater citizen participation in the political process.

The United States has a special link to Guyana through the many Guyanese who live in our country. I will look to work with this talented and hardworking diaspora to find ways that they can contribute to building a more stable and prosperous Guyana.

Mr. Chairman, these are some of the opportunities and challenges that await the next United States Ambassador to Guyana. They are challenges and opportunities I welcome. If confirmed and entrusted with this office, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to forge a close and productive partnership between the United States and Guyana. I assure you that I will seek to represent the President and the American people with creativity, with dedication, and with dignity.

Thank you, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hardt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF D. BRENT HARDT

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. I am grateful for the trust and confidence President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have placed in me.

If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this committee and with your colleagues in Congress to advance our Nation's many interests in Guyana and the broader Caribbean region.

Before I proceed, I would like to acknowledge the unflagging support throughout my career of my wife, Saskia, and my three sons, who have served the United States in many capacities during our many overseas assignments.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the privilege of serving our country as a career Foreign Service officer for the past 23 years. This journey has taken me to the Western Hemisphere and Europe, including four previous postings in the Caribbean. I have worked with friends and allies to strengthen security, combat drug trafficking, promote democratic values and human rights, combat HIV and AIDS, and encourage

the exchange of people and ideas. In my current position as Chargé d'Affaires in the Eastern Caribbean, I have led our Embassy team to rebuild confidence in the United States as the region's partner of choice. I believe these experiences have prepared me well to lead the U.S. mission in Guyana, should I be confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, Guyana is a country with tremendous potential, with vast pristine rain forests, productive agricultural lands, proven mineral resources, and potentially large oil and natural gas reserves. It is also a country facing considerable challenges from poverty, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, ethnic and racial divisions, drug trafficking and violent crime. The United States has a strong interest in working in partnership with Guyana to meet these challenges and fulfill this potential. If confirmed, I will work with the government and people of Guyana to solidify gains in democratic governance, bolster economic growth, and promote opportunity, particularly for young people and women.

The United States also has an interest in Guyana as a key partner in strengthening regional security. Through the President's Caribbean Basin Security Initiative we are intensifying our cooperation to counter the threats of transnational crime and terrorism. Together we are strengthening maritime interdiction capabilities, professionalizing law enforcement agencies, reforming the juvenile justice sector, and providing new opportunities for at-risk youth. Better security for the citizens of the Caribbean is indispensable both to the region's future stability and prosperity and to our interests. If confirmed, I will work with all U.S. agencies active in the region to strengthen our security cooperation with Guyana.

Guyana is a nation of enormous economic potential. Its natural resource endowment includes gold, bauxite, diamonds, and timber. Experts estimate a 50-percent probability that the Guyana-Suriname Basin holds 15 billion barrels of oil and 42 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. With exploratory drilling anticipated later this year, we are helping prepare the ground for sound development of these resources through technical assistance of the Energy Governance Capacity Initiative (EGCI).

With a per capita GDP of only \$2,500, Guyana is also one of the poorest countries in the Hemisphere. That is why USAID has been working with the government and private sector to diversify the economy and create new opportunities in agribusiness, aquaculture, wood products, and ecotourism—a program singled out by the President of Guyana as a model for other donors. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our mission's efforts to work with the government and private sector to strengthen Guyana's market competitiveness, build its trade capacity, and reduce legal constraints to doing business.

Guyana is also a leader in efforts to address global climate change through its low carbon development strategy, which is helping to preserve its vast, untouched rain forest. To support Guyana's interest in utilizing the country's abundant forests as a development tool, our Embassy is engaged in developing sustainable forestry, ecotourism, and host country capacity to implement the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative.

In the face of a debilitating AIDS epidemic in Guyana, the United States has made a major investment in combating this disease through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Our \$145 million investment since 2004 has paid clear dividends in responding to Guyana's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Guyana's prevention and care programs, central laboratory, and state-of-the-art logistics system are models for other HIV programs in the region. Life-saving antiretroviral treatment has been provided to 89 percent of HIV positive patients in need of treatment—a sixfold increase. HIV testing among pregnant women has increased by 360 percent, and treatment of HIV-positive women increased from 57 percent in 2006 to 93 percent by the end of 2010. PEPFAR has also had a profound impact on Guyana's health systems, enhancing the country's laboratory capacity, ability to store and distribute medicines, and management of broader health services. As a result of these U.S. Government investments, Guyana now is able to take on more of the responsibility for this response. If confirmed, I will work with the government and other health partners to achieve enduring country-ownership and sustainability of these important life saving advances in public health.

Mr. Chairman, Guyana is poised for elections later this year that can build on progress it has made as an emerging democracy. International observers deemed its 2006 Presidential elections to be free, fair and transparent and, for the first time since independence, they were also peaceful. It is important that Guyana continue along this path in the elections scheduled to take place later this year. If confirmed, I will work with the government and civil society to help strengthen democracy and governance, promote constructive political dialogue, and encourage greater citizen participation in the political process. To this end, I will also encourage the government to hold local elections, which have not been held since 1994.

The United States has a special link to Guyana through the many Guyanese who live in our country, many of whom are dual nationals and who maintain close ties with family in Guyana. In fact, over 70 percent of Guyana's citizens have family living in the United States. If confirmed I will look to work with this talented and hard-working diaspora to find ways that their creativity can contribute to building a more stable and prosperous Guyana.

As a Caribbean country geographically in South America, Guyana is emerging as a bridge between the two regions. It hosts the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) headquarters, and is currently serving as the chair for UNASUR, which seeks greater integration of South American nations. If confirmed, I will also be accredited to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which brings together 15 Caribbean states to promote regional integration and cooperation. CARICOM has a vital role to play in building a secure and prosperous Caribbean, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary General and CARICOM members to advance our common interests in trade, investment, development, and citizen security.

Mr. Chairman, these are some of the opportunities and challenges that await the next United States Ambassador to Guyana. They are opportunities and challenges I welcome. If confirmed and entrusted with this office, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to forge a close and productive partnership between the United States and Guyana. I assure you that I will seek to represent the President and the American people with creativity, dedication, and dignity.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Hardt. Thank you all for your testimony. I welcome your family members and thank them for being here.

Let me start off with a round.

Mr. Farrar, tell me about the situation in Nicaragua from your perspective, as you approach the possibility of representing the United States there. What is the political landscape?

Mr. FARRAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would start by saying that it is very clear that the United States and Nicaragua have some significant differences in the area of democratic governance and human rights. We and others in the international community have joined in trying to encourage strongly Nicaragua to allow international and domestic observation of the upcoming elections. We are awaiting still the outcome of our entreaties and those of others in the international community.

There are also areas in which we are working together. I would mention counternarcotics where the United States is cooperating with certain entities in the Government of Nicaragua that have a proven track record on interdiction, particularly the Nicaraguan Navy.

And finally, as I mentioned in my opening statement, we are working together under the Central America Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA—excuse me, CAFTA—CAFTA—DR to—and trade has expanded considerably.

But our No. 1 concern going forward would be the situation domestically for the upcoming elections and whether or not international and domestic observers will be allowed to observe those.

Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. What is your view of Mr. Ortega's ability to run a second time?

Mr. FARRAR. Yes. As you know, the Supreme Court in 2000—of Nicaragua in 2009 issued a decision allowing reelection. I was not working in Nicaraguan issues at that time, so I am not privy to all of the considerations and background that went into formulation of U.S. policy at that time. But it is my understanding that the State

Department issued a statement following that decision pointing specifically at the lack of transparency and the decisionmaking process that led to that, and that that position was also echoed by our Embassy in Managua.

Going forward, I think if confirmed, it would be important for me and for Washington to be consulting closely so that as the situation evolves on the ground, we would speaking with one voice directly to the Government of Nicaragua to express our concerns. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. This is what concerns me. Ambassador Callahan had a very clear view. He said it was unconstitutional. And since President Ortega got elected in 2006, he has methodically and shrewdly consolidated his political power by subverting his country's democratic institutions and his people's basic human rights, including freedom of assembly. Now, he is in violation of the country's constitution. He is pursuing a second consecutive and third overall Presidential terms in national elections.

His electoral machination suggests he is taking no chances. He and the Sandinista supporters are thwarting peaceful demonstrations, silencing the business community, taking over media outlets, politicizing government offices, and expropriating public funds. In what is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Ortega has clearly put his own personal enrichment and empowerment over the welfare of the Nicaraguan people.

Now, that is my view, but it is a far different view than the one you expressed to me. And I am concerned, as I was hoping to hear something different today. I am concerned that if the major political view that you have on the landscape is the question of election transparency and having observers, there's far more than that going on here. And for my own sake in terms of being supportive of a nominee to go to this post, I want to see someone who is going to make sure that civil society has the support of the U.S. Government in a way that protects them from this regime and gives the wherewithal, the space, the openness, to be able to choose a really transparent democratic opportunity for their country.

And that is why I gave you an open question, to get a sense of what your view is. My concern also stems also from your time at the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba, because Cuban dissidents have said to me that during the time you have been the Interest Section there, it has been the least open to their cause and concerns. And now you are going to a country that ultimately has a lot of issues that are also about democracy and human rights.

Can you assuage my concerns?

Mr. FARRAR. Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me say that it is essential for the United States to stand up for our democratic principles, whether we are talking about Nicaragua, Cuba, or anywhere else in the world. And as we do that, it is essential as well that we speak with one voice, whether it is from Havana or in Managua, with Washington, so that our message is clear, and it is one message and one message only. We have to be able to do that directly and clearly.

We also have to be able to defend the programs that we run that stem from our principles. And over the past 3 years in Havana, I have had the opportunity to develop, implement, and carry forward

a broad range of programs to support civil society and the free flow of information to, from, and within Cuba. Facing at times substantial obstacles, we have managed to implement some very innovative programs to support civil society in Cuba. And if given the opportunity, we would certainly—I would certainly make that my top priority as well.

I am looking forward to serving in Nicaragua because I recognize that in the runup period to the election and then afterward, the role of civil society is going to be crucial. And our programs can be a limited, but significant, part of protecting civil society, protecting its role, and preserving democratic institutions. And that is something that has been a top priority of mine in Havana, and if confirmed, would be in Managua as well.

Senator MENENDEZ. One final followup before I turn to Senator Rubio. Do you share any of the concerns that I expressed a minute ago in Nicaragua?

Mr. FARRAR. Yes. I think we are quite concerned with the trends in Nicaragua. If you look at last year's human rights report, for example, it says that respect for human rights has deteriorated in Nicaragua, and it focuses particularly on some of the concerns that you mentioned—freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, respect for independent media. Yes, on a personal level and as an administration, we share some of those concerns.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Farrar, let us begin. I have been in the Senate now 5 months. I was not here during most of your role in Havana. And I want to study that a little bit because I think you are going into a potentially similar situation in Nicaragua.

I would start by just asking, what is your view or what was your view going in to your post in Havana, the role of the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba? What did you see as the mission statement for the Interest Section?

Mr. FARRAR. I would say going in, our No. 1 priority was support for civil society and to expand freedom in Cuba. Together with that, it would be protecting American citizens, which is our No. 1 priority, around the world.

Before going to Havana, I did extensive consultations here up on Capitol Hill. The one area of consensus that I found was that the Interest Section also needed to expand its contact with all levels of Cuban society. And we have tried to implement programs to carry that out as well.

Senator RUBIO. As you I am sure are aware, before you were at that post, the Interest Section had developed in a very different direction. Decisions were made that you undid. There was the infamous news ticker, the Christmas decorations. In addition to that, there were numerous complaints from dissidents and others about your reluctance to interact with them. I know in September 2009, you hosted a reception where there were regime personnel who attended, yet members of civil society in Cuba were excluded.

Were those the decisions that you made, and what was the thought process behind some of those decisions, because it took the Interest Section in a different direction than it had been going pre-

viously. What led to those decisions? How were they made? Were you involved in making them? What was the rationale?

Mr. FARRAR. Thank you, Senator. Over the past 3 years, I would say what we have done is build upon some of the programs that were already in place and expand them and implement new ones. As an area where we built upon existing programs, I would cite the training program for independent journalists. It is run by Florida International University, where we recently graduated our 500th student from those courses.

We run two Internet resource centers, one of which we rebuilt from the ground up last year. They are the largest sources of uncensored free Internet in Cuba.

We have gone beyond that by instituting basic computer courses for Cuban civil society, classes in blogging. Once we received permission from the Department of Commerce, we began preparing and distributing DVDs with free software and monthly updates to help people be able to connect.

We created a distance learning center. We had no facility. We constructed this distance learning center using a railroad shipping container that we have converted into a center that now has DVC capability, Internet stations, computers, so that students in Havana can take college level courses in Spanish at our distance learning center.

The reason we did that was shortly after I arrived in 2008, we tried to begin a scholarship program for Cuban students to study in the United States, two programs, one a leadership program in the summer and the second a year at a community college. We advertised that program as you only can in Cuba, through word of mouth, by passing out leaflets on the street, giving leaflets to other people to pass on to friends and acquaintances. We had over 700 students apply for those scholarships from around Cuba. We selected the 27 best. None of them received exit permits to depart Cuba from the government, so we had to find other ways to connect, which we did.

We have begun training classes for English teachers and English language students. The median age of learning English language classes is 23. We are connecting with college level students in Cuba today, I would say, for the first time.

In the past year, we have nominated and she won the prize as one of the International Women of Courage, Yoani Sanchez. We recently nominated the Damas de Blanco, and they received the Global Human Rights Defenders Award from the State Department for 2010. When it came time for both to receive their awards, none of them received permission to leave Cuba to accept those rewards. So, we put on ceremonies for them in Havana so that they could receive their prizes.

Last month's ceremony with Damas de Blanco was the first time that the 12 75ers who were released over the past year were all gathered together. And since that time, we have gathered them together again several other times, and they have met on their own.

Senator RUBIO. I apologize. I do not want to interrupt because this is a list of accomplishments, and those are significant, and we can talk about those. I think we will have a second round and however else the chairman wants to proceed. But I think the question

was really related to the nature of the Interest Section and its mission.

Before you arrived, the Interest Section was viewed as having a more adversarial—would you concede that it was considered more adversarial by the regime before your arrival?

Mr. FARRAR. I don't want to characterize how it was before I arrived, but what I would say is the Interest Section has, is—

Senator RUBIO. The Interest Section changed after you arrived. And the changes that you made, specifically some that I outlined, but its view, its mission statement, would you not concede that its mission changed, the way it conducted business changed in terms of its interaction with the government?

Mr. FARRAR. I think the mission statement support for civil society and in democratic progress did not change. What changed was we tried to expand the ways that we go about doing that.

Senator RUBIO. OK, the way that you went about doing that, right. And so, would you characterize the way they used to do things before as more aggressive? You know, obviously the ticker, the Christmas decorations, things that clearly antagonized the Cuban Government. You took the Interest Section in a different direction in terms of its tactics. My question is, What was the thought process behind using these different tactics? Well, why did you decide to go in that direction after the Interest Section had been going in the other direction? I just want to know the thought process behind it, the justification. You know, what prompted you to go that route?

Mr. FARRAR. Yes. I would say that our goal was to support civil society in Cuba and to expand the Interest Section's contacts with all levels of Cuban society. And in order to do that, we had to come up with new programs that we could use to reach out, to reach out more broadly than we had done in the past. And that is the direction that we went.

Senator RUBIO. But was it your view that by taking down some of these programs that antagonized the regime that you would have more space to carry out these programs? Was the thought that if we do not go over the top—if we do not offend or try not to offend the regime, we will have more space to carry out our mission. Was that your view?

Mr. FARRAR. No. I think we were looking for the programs that would be most effective. If I could go back for just a second to the distance learning program. We did not have any facility in order to implement such programs. We had to get this shipping container moved on to the premises of the Interest Section, which took a long time, but we were able to do.

Subsequent to that, I have been called into the Foreign Ministry four times for their presentations on how this program violates the Vienna Conventions, a view with which we completely disagree. But our No. 1 concern is not what the possible effect might be on the Government of Cuba. It is what will be most effective in terms of supporting civil society and expanding the free flow of information to, from, and within the island.

Senator RUBIO. OK. You know, there were—and I know I have gone over time, so we can come back to this or we can move on in a second. But your relationship and your description of dissidents

and the dissident movement on the island has been described as reluctance and disinterest. What is your view and what was your thought process regarding dissidents on the island and your relationship with them in comparison to that of your predecessors at the mission?

Mr. FARRAR. I think we—and I—have a long and deep relationship with civil society in Cuba. And if anything, it is a broader relationship than it has been in the past. Civil society in Cuba knows that the Interest Section is the bulwark of support, that we have the interests of the Cuban people at heart. And the programs we have, the outreach that we do, is all aimed at that.

I think events, such as the one that I described, where we gave the award to the Dames de Blanco for the global human rights defenders. And we brought together in one room them and their relatives who had been released, and provided a venue frankly for them to begin to talk with one another and to see how, now that they have reincorporated themselves into daily life, how they want to go about promoting civil society in Cuba. That is something that the Interest Section can offer and probably there is no other institution in Havana that can do so.

Senator RUBIO. My last question on this round, and it goes directly to this point. There is a press report that on April 2009 and dispatch that you signed, you said that Cuba's pro-democracy activists and their focus on human rights did not resonate with Cubans, who are more concerned about having greater opportunities to travel freely and live comfortably. Does that remain your view, that Cuba's pro-democracy activists and their focus on human rights does not resonate with Cubans?

Mr. FARRAR. Yes. I am not sure of the source of that quote. If it is—has to do with WikiLeaks, we of course cannot comment on the validity or not of a source such as that.

I have said many times that our No. 1 objective in Havana has been support for civil society, expanding their operating space, and trying to improve the information flow and out of the island. At other times I have said that they are the conscience of Cuba, and I stand on that. Thank you.

Senator MENENDEZ. We will do a second round here. I will get to some of you. I do not want you to feel left out of the process. I know you would rather have questions than not have questions.

But I just have one more followup, Mr. Farrar. This is the nature of the challenge here. When I hear you respond to Senator Rubio, you talk about broader civil society, and that is admirable. But every time our questions are about human rights activists and political dissidents, your responses are of broader civil society. Why is it that human rights activists and political dissidents inside Cuba who I have talked to, including during a recent trip to Spain where I met 50 of those who were released from Cuban jails, say they feel that there was less engagement, less access from the Interest Section during your tenure.

I do not believe having your political affairs director smoking a cigar with a narcotics trafficker is reaching out to civil society. If you were going to some other country, maybe this would not be an issue. But many of us on this committee, and certainly I as the



chairman of the subcommittee, have serious concerns about where Nicaragua is headed.

So the ability to engage not just with civil society, but with human rights activists and political dissidents languishing inside of their country to create the space that is necessary for the proper democratic process to take place is very important. That is why it is critically important for us to understand where you came from so we can know what to expect of you in your next post.

I want to give you the chance to give me some sense of how you will engage differently in Nicaragua. And maybe your answer is there is no difference, in which case, you know that would be it.

Mr. FARRAR. Senator and Mr. Chairman, I share your concern about strengthening and supporting civil society. That is what we have endeavored to do over the past 3 years.

If I may go back to the example of Damas de Blanco, after our ceremony presenting them with the Global Human Rights Defenders Fund Award, 2 weeks later we brought back the former 75ers to give them 2 days of intensive training on computers, on the world that had passed them by during their 8 years in Cuban prisons.

We are engaged in looking for practical ways that we can help human rights activists, civil society members, get their message out and engage better to advance the cause of democracy and human rights. And it is that same mission of trying to find ways that will work that I would, if confirmed, look to carry forward in Nicaragua.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you for your answer. Ms. Kubiske, let me ask you, President Zelaya has returned to Honduras. That was part of the condition for Honduras' return to the OAS, along with assurances of the government that his political allies would be allowed to participate in politics.

Can you comment on what you view as the political climate in Honduras and the meaning of Zelaya's return for the stability of the Lobo government?

Ms. KUBISKE. I think in the first instance, it was quite a triumph that Honduras, with the help of neighbors in the hemisphere, were able to get to the point where Honduras could be brought back into the OAS. And so, they are now in a position to move forward.

Having said that, I understand that the atmosphere continues to be fragile and polarized. There is no question about that.

As part of the project of national reconciliation as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, there was a condition of Zelaya's return. And so, we hope and we urge—I hope and I urge—if I were confirmed, that he would play a constructive role.

Senator MENENDEZ. What do you think is the stability of the Lobo government?

Ms. KUBISKE. I think they have—I am going to answer it indirectly to be frank. They have taken many important steps forming a unity government that has opposition members in it and establishing a truth and reconciliation commission to go over what happened in the past and to try to make recommendations for how to prevent it.

I think I would see my role as putting a lot of priority on strengthening democratic institutions because there is an issue of

having a system that will avoid a political crisis, such as the one that occurred in 2009.

Senator MENENDEZ. Let me ask you a question that is local in nature, but I would like to get your commitment should you be confirmed to work with me on this.

In May of last year, a constituent of mine, Joe Dunsavage disappeared off the coast of Honduras in his boat, and despite extensive efforts, neither he nor his boat were recovered. His brother, his wife, and his kids have been seeking a certificate of presumptive death from the Department for more than a year to no avail. Will you work with me in trying to help this family come to a conclusion so that we can have them have a measure of closure and be able to deal with the challenges of their estate?

Ms. KUBISKE. The short answer is absolutely. The longer answer is what happens to American citizens is a core objective of our foreign policy and taking care of people. I know that the Embassy and the State Department both have worked hard on the case, but I would welcome the opportunity, if I were confirmed, to take a closer look and see if there is anything more we can possibly do.

Senator MENENDEZ. I appreciate that. We look forward to doing that with you.

Mr. Thessin, with reference to Paraguay, I mentioned that it captured an enormous amount, in monetary terms, of cocaine, 875 kilos. What do you view as the nature of our counternarcotics cooperation with Paraguay? And how committed do you think the Paraguayans are to a strong bilateral relationship with the United States to control illicit activity of that and other sorts in the Tri-Border region?

Mr. THESSIN. Counternarcotics is an area that is obviously a high priority for the United States Government—the President, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the country. And DEA has a very close working relationship with the Paraguayan authorities. They have been training units to go out and look for and seize narcotics that might be transiting the country. They have reported to me that they have been receiving good cooperation.

If confirmed, I would continue to make counternarcotics a high priority. This is important to the United States. Beyond that, the Tri-Border Area is an area of particular concern for United States and Paraguayan law enforcement. The area is notorious for corruption, for money laundering, for smuggling. And whenever you have that kind of money floating around from illicit gains, there is also concern then that it is used to—some of it is going to fund terrorism in the Middle East, for example.

There is no corroborated evidence that there is an active terrorist cell in that area. But it is an area that we have clearly in our focus, as do the Paraguayans, and the Argentines, and the Brazilians. So, if confirmed, this is an area we will give tremendous attention. We will work with the Paraguayan government to build its democratic institution to deepen its roots so that the government can deliver services and be trusted by the people.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Mr. Hardt, let me just ask you, I know we often overlook Guyana in the panoply of Latin American nations, but on the economic front it has resources that are a basis for growth and development.

And I understand it has agricultural, aquacultural, eco-tourism, mining, wood products, as well as possible oil reserves offshore that could be as extensive as those that are found in Angola.

What would you do if confirmed to help track U.S. foreign investment to help develop these resources?

Mr. HARDT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If confirmed, I would certainly look to continue the programs that we have ongoing in Guyana already to foster economic growth and opportunity. The areas you mentioned do have a lot of potential, but they also have a number of obstacles. And through USAID programs, we have been working to try to identify new markets, develop institutions within each of these sectors to strengthen their outreach to potential markets, and to create more opportunity for these sectors, certainly on the oil and gas front, which is a potential game changer in many ways for Guyana.

We are working through an energy governance capacity initiative to build the government's ability, should this oil prove to be as our geological surveys anticipate that they would have the ability to manage it, to regulate it, and to ensure that the oil goes to the development of the country and the people of Guyana in a way that will raise them out of their current level of poverty.

Senator MENENDEZ. We are closing our USAID mission—in Guyana. And we have programs like PEPFAR that we are closely engaged in there. Since you are in Barbados now, do you think that the mission in Barbados can be as effective in monitoring the progress and coordination of those programs that we have going with USAID?

Mr. HARDT. Well, I know that the mission in Barbados can be very effective. I am pleased—

Senator MENENDEZ. It was not a trick question—

[Laughter.]

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. I am sure they are effective in Barbados. The question is, Can they be as effective in operating and over-viewing what is going on in Guyana?

Mr. HARDT. Well, certainly I do not think it can ever be said that you can be more effective than being on the ground. That is going to be the most effective way to manage a program. But obviously AID is making—is facing budget limitations, and in the context they are seeking to reutilize some of their efforts. We have excellent working relationships within the region. We are working regionally on the PEPFAR program in the partnership framework. We are working regionally on the Caribbean Basin and Security Initiative. So, we have a pattern of working regionally, and I think we can continue that. And, you know, I look forward to engaging, you know, with our Embassy in Bridgetown—when I am Georgetown, if confirmed, and believe we can continue the good programs that we have ongoing already.

Senator MENENDEZ. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. And just to wrap up, Mr. Farrar, and then I want to move to some other questions. First of all, I did not thank you for your service to our country, a long career, and to your family as well for doing that. And you and I have never met. We have not spoken before on these issues, and I look forward to talking to you more about these in the future.

I just want to leave on the record what my concerns are, not just specifically about the nomination, but in general about the situation in Nicaragua. You have a government there that's conducting an all-out assault on the constitutional order and on the independence of government institutions. You have a—Daniel Ortega, who is using his relationship with Hugo Chavez not just for personal enrichment, but to create an alternative basically government in terms of funding mechanisms, for many things that are happening.

You have a government that is openly supporting Moammar Gadhafi, openly supported Russia's invasion of Georgia, and the creation of states out of that invasion.

And in the face of that, we have to send someone to be the face of the United States in Managua. And I think that should be someone who is going to be forceful. You are not going to Luxembourg. It is not Lichtenstein. This is a place that is headed in the wrong direction in a hurry, and America needs a forceful presence there.

And I have to be honest. We do not know each other well. I have only known about your record from what I have read in preparing for this hearing today. But I am concerned about some of the decisions that you made at the Interest Section in Havana. We have complaints—numerous complaints from dissidents and human rights activists. We have instances of invitations to Castro regime officials at the expense of others in civil society to be at certain events. Some other decisions—you know, some of the things, talking about the Christmas tree and the Christmas stuff that was taken down, the ticker. And these may be symbolic, but they were certainly part of a forceful presence in the area.

And then to top it all off, we have State Department officials visiting Havana, and instead of staying at the Interest Section, and maybe there is a good reason why they did not stay there, they stayed at the Hotel Nacional, which in addition to being an expropriated property, appears to me to be a security risk to stay in a place like that in a country like that.

Suffice it to say that it is my opinion, just from the little I know, and I could be dissuaded—I mean, that is what I want to hear today—that the strategy that you adopted at the Interest Section was not to offend or to try to avoid offending or being abrasive with the Castro government because you felt perhaps it would give you more space to function and carry out your mission.

Obviously you have the right to respond to that, and maybe you view it very differently. But I am concerned about that because it is not what I think I would like to see as the strategy in Managua. And maybe there are distinctions, and maybe you will handle that post differently. I would give you the opportunity to respond to that. I do have questions for all four panelists as well. But if you would like to respond to that.

Mr. FARRAR. Yes. Thank you, Senator I think I have a 30-year record of service to the United States. My previous position before going to Havana was as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor where I worked with civil society around the world. While I was in the Bureau there, we developed some of the very programs that we were then able to take advantage of and use in Havana. I am talking

about programs such as the Global Human Rights Defenders Fund, which was created while I was in the Bureau.

Civil society, human rights, is near and dear to my heart. It has been part of my career for almost 30 years now. In Havana, we have been trying to find the most effective ways to communicate, to expand space for civil society.

The world changes, and we come up with new programs in order to be able to connect. Some of those new programs are ones that I described—the blogging classes, the computer classes, distributing free software. We still do some of the old methods as well. In the first 8 months of this fiscal year, we distributed 21,000 copies of the El Nuevo Herald in Cuba. Some of the old methods work, but we need to be innovative and creative in trying to work with civil society, whether it is in Cuba or whether it is Nicaragua or anywhere else around the world. And that is truly what I have dedicated my time to. Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. OK. I have the same question for all four panelists.

We are facing, as you all well know, fiscal constraints and a great debate going on in this city about what America should be spending money on, particularly when it comes to foreign aid and foreign programs. Have you given thought to one investment—if you were prioritize and come up here in your new post a year from now, 6 months from now, make a recommendation on one investment that you think would give us, for lack of a better term, the most bang for our buck, in your particular assignments, have you identified such a program? Have you given some thought to which one program would give us the highest rate of return on our investment in each of your respective countries? It does not have to be a specific program. I mean, it could be area of expenditure. Where should our focus be basically when we spend money on foreign aid or other presences in the different countries? And, I guess, Mr. Hardt, we will hear from you.

Mr. HARDT. Certainly. Over the past few years I have been working in the Caribbean to implement the President's Caribbean Basin and Security Initiative. And I think that program is ideally suited to the needs of the region. When we developed it, it was based on listening to people in the region, hearing what their concerns and priorities are, and trying to respond to that. And it combines a nice mix of traditional support for capacity building among law enforcement and military groups, but also efforts to look at the root causes of crime in the region and to support at risk youth and educational programs for young people. And I think this balance is clearly what we need to be doing. We need to obviously go after the drug traffickers and the criminals, but we also need to deal with the fertile ground that creates them. And certainly I would hope that we would be able to keep that program strong.

Mr. THESSIN. Senator, that is a very good question that I have given a lot of thought to.

My procedure for doing—for looking at something like this would be to talk to the country team and to talk more with Washington about their experience on the programs because I am not as familiar with them as they are.

But I think, though, when you look at what Paraguay needs right now, it is to help institutionalize its democracy. That is the kind of programs that the President in Paraguay has asked for our help. And that includes things like helping to fight corruption, helping to train the police, helping to make the government deliver its services more effectively to the people. And those are programs that I think pay off because that may be the engine for starting a country that is less corrupt, that has less corruption in it, that has better government services, where the government is trusted, where democracy takes deeper root. And I think that is very much in our interests, and that is the first place that I would look to try to protect.

Mr. FARRAR. Thank you, Senator. I would cite areas that I do not think would actually cost any more money. The first would be looking ahead to the run up to the election in November and beyond. I think we should examine the mix of civil society programs for Nicaragua to make sure, together with the Congress, that we have the right mix moving forward, depending upon what the situation is on the ground there at that time.

The second I would mention would be in the area of counter-narcotics, to look at the agencies that we are working with in Nicaragua, make sure we have the right ones there, but also to encourage Nicaragua to take advantage, to use the opportunity to train officials at the International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador. They have access to that. They are not using it. That is a space that could be utilized. Thank you.

Ms. KUBISKE. Senator, you have asked a very fair question. I think the problems in Honduras interrelate. If you ask Hondurans what is their top concern, it is insecurity and the culture of impunity, and that is obviously an area that we need to focus on.

If you look from the narrowest, most hard-nosed United States perspective, you can say that we need to support helping Hondurans have opportunities in Honduras so that they do not, as somebody has pointed out, have choices between joining a cartel and drugs or going illegally or sometimes legally to the United States.

I cannot tell you one area because I think the way to answer that question is to see what kind of assistance cannot be provided from another source. But I would be happy to talk with you later and to talk with others and give you a much more specific, concrete example if that would help you.

I do have a very strong view that to have a successful economy, you need to have opportunities for poor people. And so, a big part of what I would like to see more of is support for the kinds of programs that provide job-related skills to Hondurans, or that connect Hondurans to markets. Hopefully, those things would be win-win for both of us.

But as I said, it is very hard to disentangle the citizen security part from the economic part.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, thank you all for your appearance and your answers. Thank you for your service to our country, each and every one of you, and for your willingness to serve. Senator Inhofe has asked unanimous consent for a series of questions to be included in the record. Without objection, they are so ordered.

The record will remain open for 48 hours. During those 48 hours, I can assure you that there will be a series of questions that will come forward, and I would urge each of you to answer as quickly as possible since it will expedite the consideration of your nomination.

Senator MENENDEZ. With that, the committee is adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 3:16 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

##### RESPONSES OF D. BRENT HARDT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* In November, Guyana will host Presidential and parliamentary election. The election board, however, has expressed concern that 49,000 voters have not claimed the registration cards that allow them to cast ballots.

- What steps is the government taking to address this issue?
- What role will the United States and international community play in ensuring that the elections are free and fair—both in the lead up to the election and on election day?

*Answer.* Although the date for the 2011 national elections has not been set, they are expected to be held between October and December. As of June 4, 46,687 registration cards were unclaimed according to the Public Relations Officer of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). The GECOM has a systematic plan to distribute the cards, which includes advertising the availability of the cards on the radio and distributing lists of individuals who have unclaimed cards to all political parties. GECOM will soon begin delivering unclaimed cards to residents in remote areas of Guyana via a network of temporary field offices. The Government of Guyana intends to invite observers from the Caribbean Community and the Organization of American States to monitor the elections, but at this time, no formal invitations have been extended.

The Embassy, through USAID, is the most visible international elections donor. It is working actively to ensure that the elections are free and fair through technical assistance to GECOM, grants to civic organizations and NGOs to promote voter participation and open dialogue, including a program addressing first time voters, and a grant to facilitate the participation of disabled persons in the election.

*Question.* Closure of USAID mission in Guyana. Last fall, USAID announced plans to close its AID mission in Guyana. USAID's presence has allowed it to coordinate PEPFAR programs in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control. USAID has also been a key factor in coordinating our aid with donors like the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the British Department for International Development (DFID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the European Union.

- What kind of message do we send to Guyana and to the Caribbean region as a whole when we withdraw coordination of much-needed programs in health care and disease prevention?
- Will the mission in Barbados be as effective in monitoring the progress and coordination of these programs?

*Answer.* In order to achieve its global sustainable development objectives, USAID is consolidating resources in priority countries and sectors. As a cost-saving measure, USAID plans to manage its Guyana projects from its regional office in Barbados. USAID has determined that it can manage and coordinate these activities from Bridgetown and achieve cost savings.

USAID's Office in Barbados is a regional platform that already manages an extensive and robust HIV/AIDS program in the Caribbean and has a strong professional staff. Despite the pending closure of our USAID office in Guyana, we have sought to assure the Government and other health and civil society partners that USAID will remain active in Guyana implementing our HIV/AIDS, CBSI, and economic growth programs.

RESPONSES OF JAMES H. THESSIN TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
 SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Question.* Tri-border Region—International Terrorism: We don't hear much about Paraguay. It's the size of California and has a population of 6½ million people. It's tucked away between Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil. We share in interest with Paraguay in ensuring that this Tri-Border Area does not become a nesting ground for narcotics or, even worse, terrorist activities. There continue to be reports linking the tri-border region to international terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. A 2009 RAND study examined how Hezbollah has benefited from film piracy proceeds in the tri-border and the State Department terrorism report maintains that the United States remains concerned that Hezbollah and Hamas sympathizers are raising funds among the sizable Middle Eastern communities in the region. Hezbollah is also linked to two bombings in Argentina: the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires that killed 30 people and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people.

Is it your sense that Paraguay is committed to a strong bi-lateral relationship with the United States and to controlling illicit activity in the tri-border region? If confirmed, what priority would you place on addressing the proliferation of illicit activities in the region and in encouraging the regional governments to seriously address the panacea of criminal activity that is known to occur in this area?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to make it a high priority of Embassy Asuncion to work to counter terrorism, violent extremism, and narcotics trafficking while addressing illicit activity in the Tri-Border Area, including corruption, money laundering, and piracy of intellectual property.

It is my sense that Paraguay is committed to a strong bi-lateral relationship and to controlling illicit activity in the Tri-Border Area. I will work with the Government of Paraguay to maintain this strong relationship and to continue to support Paraguay's efforts in this area. However, poverty, corruption, and the limited capacity of Paraguay's security services all challenge its law enforcement efforts.

This is where the United States has the potential to do much to help Paraguay strengthen its democratic institutions, including through the continuation of our efforts in the areas of counternarcotics, money laundering, law enforcement training, information-sharing, and counterterrorism. As Ambassador to Paraguay, I will work hard to do just that. I will also work with our country's leading experts in Washington and our Ambassadors to Brazil and Argentina on how the United States can best coordinate its work with Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay to control illicit activities in the Tri-Border Area.

*Question.* Counternarcotics: Last week, Paraguay captured a record haul of 875 kilos or \$131 million in cocaine. U.S. drug enforcement agents were reportedly called in after workers at the private Phoenix river port grew suspicious about rice from the Tri-Border region. What is the nature of our counternarcotics cooperation with Paraguay and other countries in the region? Are these countries sufficiently trained and equipped to cope with those growing problem? To what extent is corruption, particularly by officials, an issue with respect to the trafficking of narcotics?

*Answer.* The recent seizure of 875 kilograms of cocaine in a container of rice at a Paraguayan river port illustrates one of the biggest law enforcement challenges facing Paraguay: the use of the country as a transit route for Andean cocaine headed to Argentina, Brazil, Europe, and elsewhere. Paraguay is also a source of marijuana for neighboring countries.

Counternarcotics responsibilities are shared by Paraguay's Anti-drug Secretariat (SENAD) and the Paraguayan National Police (PNP). The leadership of both institutions strongly supports law enforcement cooperation with the United States and regards illicit narcotics trafficking as one of the most serious threats facing Paraguay. The recent cocaine seizure you mention took place as a result of the fine cooperation that exists between U.S. and Paraguayan authorities.

Corruption is a significant factor hampering Paraguayan law enforcement, but progress is being made. Both SENAD and the PNP receive financial and operational support from the U.S. Government. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration supports sensitive investigative units (SIUs) in both SENAD and the PNP, and those units have had several successes in recent months, including the 875 kilogram seizure.

If confirmed, I would make it a high priority to support U.S. counternarcotics efforts, including DEA's efforts to counter illicit trafficking by land, air, and water and to improve controls in Paraguay's container ports.



I appreciate your question regarding regional efforts to combat narcotics trafficking. As with Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina have cooperated effectively with the United States on counter narcotics matters. All three countries have had successes against narcotics trafficking; all three have policies and programs designed to confront official corruption. We believe that all three countries are committed to advancing their ability to counter this serious problem.

RESPONSES OF JONATHAN FARRAR TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* In many Latin American countries, there seems to be a tendency toward autocracy and longevity in office. Different countries handle the temptation differently. Mexico has one 6-year term. They proclaim "Sufragio Efectivo—No Reelección" or Effective Suffrage—No Reelection. It was adopted in their constitution as a result of 30 years of dictatorial rule and a revolutionary struggle that last over 10 years.

Many nations have held constitutional referendums or used other means to remove limits on Presidential terms—to extend it to two terms, in some cases three terms. In the case of Venezuela under Chavez, term limits have been removed completely.

- What is your sense of this trend toward autocracy?

Answer. The region's commitment to democratic development is widespread and strong. This commitment gives Latin Americans a special role in helping support other nations making the difficult transition to democracy today. As Secretary Clinton has noted, "This hemisphere can do much more to guard against threats and challenges to democracy closer to home. In some countries, insecurity and a lack of opportunity remain real obstacles. In others, democracy is being rolled back rather than strengthened. Cuba remains a glaring exception to the democratic convergence. That is something that all of us have to face up to and work toward dealing with." I share Secretary Clinton's commitment to protecting fundamental freedoms and, if confirmed, I will work to promote democracy and respect for human rights in Nicaragua.

The United States has expressed its concerns in Nicaragua regarding the Supreme Court decision which cleared the way for President Ortega to run for reelection. As Ambassador to Nicaragua, I would commit my efforts and those of the Embassy to engaging with civil society, which often serves as a bulwark against the future undermining of democratic institutions.

*Question.* Since his reelection in 2006, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has methodically and shrewdly consolidated his political power by subverting his country's democratic institutions and his people's basic human rights, including the freedom assembly. Now, in violation of the country's constitution, he is pursuing a second consecutive and third overall Presidential term in national elections this November. His electoral machinations suggest he is taking no chances. He and his Sandinista supporters are thwarting peaceful demonstrations, silencing the business community, taking over media outlets, politicizing government offices, and expropriating public funds. In what is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Ortega has clearly placed his own enrichment and empowerment above the welfare of the Nicaraguan people.

I hope that you will agree that the deteriorating political situation in Nicaragua is alarming and likely to worsen without greater international engagement. With Nicaragua's opposition party fractured, civil society is the only meaningful check against this increasingly authoritarian Ortega regime, and yet, civil society organizations are operating with few resources and under constant threat from Sandinista forces. Prodemocracy activists valiantly fighting to protect democracy need greater U.S. support—both moral and financial.

- Can you assure the committee that you will be an ally and advocate for those brave men and women defending human rights in Nicaragua, and in what ways do you believe we can step up our support for civil society groups in Nicaragua?

Answer. I can assure the committee that I share its concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions in Nicaragua. If confirmed, I will continue to be a passionate advocate for human rights and democracy and work with human rights defenders. I will be outspoken about the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions, and urging greater respect for human rights, transparency, and separation of powers. I have worked closely with civil society in Latin America during a career that spans three decades. Additionally, I will bring

to bear my experience to ensure that our efforts are the most effective possible in the environment which prevails in Nicaragua today.

I will continue to advocate for the engagement of civil society at the local and national level, a viable independent media, an informed citizenry, strengthened local government, and effective political party participation. All of the programs that further these goals are crucial to building a sustainable democratic foundation in Nicaragua and must be protected in the face of declining resource levels for U.S. assistance.

*Question.* Mr. Ortega is illegally seeking another Presidential term. What do you believe U.S. policy should be toward his candidacy?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government expressed its concern in 2009 about the manner in which the Nicaraguan Supreme Court made its decision allowing the reelection candidacy of President Ortega. The United States and others in the international community are concerned that the upcoming elections be a valid expression of the true will of the Nicaraguan people. We must speak up in defense of our democratic principles and convey our concerns about threats to democratic institutions as they arise. For that reason, the United States has pressed for the presence of credible domestic and international observers to enhance prospects that the elections will be carried out in a free, fair, and transparent manner and to provide effective witness if they are not.

We must be prepared to discuss our concerns directly with the Nicaraguan Government, both in Washington and in Managua, in a coordinated manner. If confirmed, I would do so vigorously.

*Question.* Mr. Ortega is not only seeking reelection; he is also looking to secure 56 seats in the National Assembly—a supermajority that would allow him to rule without any real checks on his power. Understanding that time is running out for an effective domestic and international election observation initiatives, what can the U.S. Government and the international community do to persuade Mr. Ortega to immediately accept independent election observers?

*Answer.* The administration has said clearly that the manner in which the upcoming elections are held and observed will inevitably affect Nicaragua's relationship with the international community, including the United States. Allowing credible and timely domestic and international observation of the upcoming elections would demonstrate whether they represent a valid expression of the will of the Nicaraguan people and assuage concerns of the international community.

*Question.* The current Government in Nicaragua, and the Government in Cuba, where you served as chief of mission, are similar in many respects, including their strong alliance with Hugo Chavez and their hostility toward the United States. How would you describe U.S. policy toward Cuba, before and after you becoming chief of the U.S. mission in Cuba?

*Answer.* U.S. policy toward Cuba has consistently been to advance the national interests of the United States by assisting the people of Cuba to freely determine their own future. The policies and programs that the Obama administration has put in place aim to advance those vital objectives.

In January 2011, President Obama directed changes be made to regulations governing travel, nonfamily remittances, and U.S. airports providing licenses to charter flights between the United States and Cuba. These measures were taken to support civil society in Cuba, reduce the dependence of the Cuban people upon the state, and enhance the free flow of information to, from, and within Cuba. President Obama has stated that these steps, combined with the continuation of the embargo's controls over trade and investment with Cuba, are important steps in reaching the widely shared goal of a Cuba that respects the rights of all of its citizens. These latest measures were undertaken to build upon the President's April 2009 actions to help reunite divided Cuban families, to facilitate greater communication between the United States and Cuba, and to increase humanitarian flows to the people of Cuba.

*Question.* Could you share with the committee the lessons you learned in Cuba about how to deal with the Castros' regime and how you would apply those lessons to your post in Managua, if confirmed?

*Answer.* My experience over the past 3 years in Cuba has reaffirmed my conviction developed over 30 years in the Foreign Service with regards to the essential role which the United States must play in supporting those who are helping to build an independent civil society in the face of severe government reprisals. This includes our support for pro-democracy activists, human rights defenders, independent media, and other courageous men and women who peacefully demand greater re-

spect for universal and basic rights such as freedom of association, expression, and information. In Cuba, I have been persistent and vocal in standing up for these rights and those who demand them, and creative in supporting them, while responding to the evolving needs of those on the ground who are leading the fight to exercise these fundamental freedoms.

The position of the United States on the release of political prisoners in Cuba has been clear and consistent: all political prisoners should be released and be able to decide for themselves whether to remain in Cuba. In the ceremony I held at the Interest Section presenting the State Department Annual Human Rights Defenders award to the Damas de Blanco, my remarks highlighted our common commitment to see the day when there are no more political prisoners in Cuban jails for nothing more than peacefully exercising their basic rights.

In addition to the Damas, whom I nominated for the 2010 Human Rights Defender Award, I also proposed that the Department recognize Dr. Darsi Ferrer in 2009 for that year's award, and Yoani Sanchez for the 2010 International Women of Courage Award. Sanchez won, while Dr. Ferrer was one of the three runners up. I nominated these individuals because I felt that publicly recognizing the valor and legitimacy of independent activism, regardless of the Cuban Government's reaction, is critical and an important element for promoting human rights and democracy, particularly in countries which systematically violate human rights like Cuba.

Moreover, during my 3 years at the Interest Section, I focused on ensuring our commitment to human rights and democracy at the Interest Section truly is missionwide, and I have not budged from our principled stance, both in Havana and in Washington, even when those with whom we work have come under attack. Our Foreign Service officers have been harassed by government-sponsored mobs and media when carrying out their duties of observing peaceful protests. In close coordination between the Interest Section and Washington, we have answered our critics and resisted Cuba's pressure to curtail our outreach activities and human rights observation. Our Interest Section engages directly with civil society activists, including members of Cuba's political opposition, former political prisoners, human rights activists, and broader civil society activists.

As noted in our most recent "Human Rights Report," the United States has serious concerns with the deterioration of the respect for human rights and democratic institutions in Nicaragua, especially in the areas of freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and respect for independent media. Similar to what I did in Cuba, I will work with friends and allies in the international community on the ground who share our commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and be ready to speak up in defense of our democratic principles and to convey our concerns, both directly to the Government of Nicaragua and more broadly, about any threats to democratic institutions.

At the same time, we must sustain consistent efforts to help protect those who may be persecuted for their peaceful dissent and to strengthen democratic institutions in Nicaragua regardless of the outcome in November. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the committee and other Members of Congress in adopting the appropriate policies for both the preelectoral period and beyond in order to ensure that Nicaraguans don't follow the same lamentable fate as their Cuban counterparts.

As I have noted elsewhere, the Interest Section recently began Digital Video Conferences to connect human rights activists in Cuba with their counterparts elsewhere in the region. One of our first conferences linked Cuban human rights defenders with their counterparts in Nicaragua. Helping to create such linkages is a vital part of the mission of the Interest Section and of Embassy Managua, and one upon which if confirmed I would seek to build in Managua.

*Question.* Do you believe that it is possible for U.S. policy to embolden rather than discourage hostile actions by anti-American regimes? Could you tell us what has been achieved by a policy of "engagement" with Havana? Do you think a similar policy of "not giving offense," in other words of curtailing U.S. efforts found objectionable by the regimes, to be the proper formula in dealing with Managua and Havana?

*Answer.* The administration has consistently stood up for democratic principles in our policy toward Cuba, and the activities of the Interest Section have been in pursuance of those principles. We have made it clear to Havana that this is our guiding and nonnegotiable stance, and that we will not waver under any circumstance in the defense of democratic principles.

President Obama has made it clear that advances in bilateral relations are not possible absent significant changes in Cuba. However, the United States has engaged with Cuba in specific areas where it is in our national interest to do so. In

2009, the United States resumed biannual talks with Cuba on migration to ensure that migration from Cuba is conducted in a safe, legal, and orderly manner. Without exception, I have brought USG representatives together with Cuba's most prominent and active human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, and other dissidents to learn from their experiences and to demonstrate to the international community that Cuba's civil society is an important interlocutor. We were unequivocal that we would not budge from these activities, even if it led to the cancellation of the discussions. This is the type of work that I had the honor of directing while in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and in which the United States engages around the world. Cuba is no exception, and neither would be Nicaragua.

The United States has implemented a broad range of strategies to strengthen civil society, including human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, independent journalists and others in Cuba and to defend those persecuted for their beliefs or for peaceful protest. We have done so in the face of unrelenting Cuban harassment and propaganda attacks, both in print and in television and radio, which have singled out private Cuban citizens seeking to exercise their individual freedoms, and the Interest Section and members of its staff for supporting them. The staff of the Interest Section has been targeted especially when observing peaceful protests in Havana, despite the fact that such observation is a practice fully in accordance with diplomatic practice under the Vienna Conventions. In coordination with Washington, the State Department and the Interest Section have pushed back vigorously and directly with the Cuban Government against such abuses.

As Ambassador to Nicaragua, I would continue to stand up for the democratic principles of the United States as I have done throughout my 30-year career in the Foreign Service. Working with Washington, and in consultation with Congress, I would endeavor to put in place in Embassy Managua the most effective policies possible to advance U.S. national interests and strengthen democratic institutions in Nicaragua. Working in coordinated within the administration, I would address directly with the Nicaraguan Government, and more broadly with the international community when appropriate, bilateral disagreements as they arise from our vital engagement on these issues.

*Question.* What do you see as the primary mission for the U.S. Embassy in Nicaragua at this time? Is support for civil society actors part of that mission? If yes, what is your specific plan to reach out to and support civil society? What Embassy resources will you dedicate to supporting civil society?

*Answer.* The primary mission for the U.S. Embassy in Nicaragua is to promote U.S. national interests by assisting with Nicaragua's long-term development as a democratic, prosperous, and stable partner for the United States, to the benefit of the citizens of both countries. The mission is focusing its efforts on assisting Nicaragua in developing democratic governance, sustainable and broad-based economic growth, and law enforcement. A vibrant civil society is vital to these goals, which I would seek to engage fully, if confirmed.

During my time in Havana, we have found creative means to support civil society in Cuba. Given the inability of many Cuban activists to gain permission to travel outside the country, the Interest Section uses Digital Video Conferences and other technology to help them build relationships with their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere in the hemisphere. Just recently we hosted digital video conferences between human rights activists in Cuba and their counterparts in other countries.

Unfortunately, most civil society groups in Nicaragua are woefully short of resources, and many of the international donors on which those organizations rely have pulled out of Nicaragua. We must endeavor to maintain active and creative engagement with a beleaguered Nicaraguan civil society. Embassy Managua has brought Nicaraguan journalists to the United States on International Visitors Programs.

If confirmed, I will be outspoken about the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions, and urging greater respect for human rights, transparency, and separation of powers. I will bring my experience from years of work in the region to lead Embassy Managua in its search for innovative means to engage with civil society, and to continue efforts at the local level in Nicaragua to engage with the development of a new generation of leaders.

*Question.* Are you concerned about efforts by the Government of Nicaragua to undermine the integrity of the elections? Will you demand, as forcefully as possible, the presence of international election observers preceding and during the forthcoming elections? What Embassy resources will you commit to monitoring direct and indirect efforts by the Government of Nicaragua to undermine the integrity of the

elections? Will you work with other foreign embassies to observe the elections and report on irregularities, including reporting to international media on any such irregularities?

Answer. For elections to be truly democratic, they must be a valid expression of the will of the people. For that reason, the United States has pressed for the Nicaraguan Government to invite credible domestic and international election observers to enhance prospects that the elections will be carried out in a free, fair, and transparent manner and to provide effective witness if they are not. If confirmed, I would commit the entire Embassy, in coordination with our international partners, to be actively engaged in monitoring and reporting on the November elections. Such monitoring and reporting must cover not just the election day and its aftermath but also the critical period leading up to the actual voting. As always, I will be ready to speak up in defense of our democratic principles and to convey our concerns, both directly to the Government of Nicaragua and more broadly, about any threats to democratic institutions.

*Question.* When President Carter visited Cuba he met with some dissidents. Did you or your staff help with the list of invitees? Was Martha Beatriz Roque, the former political prisoners and opposition leader invited? If not, why not?

Answer. My USINT team and I welcomed and briefed President Carter and his staff during his March 2011 visit to Cuba. Per requests from President Carter's team, we shared a list with them of Cuba's most prominent and effective civil society leaders that included former political prisoner Martha Beatriz Roque. President Carter and his staff organized their two meetings with civil society entirely on their own and without USINT participation, and they selected those they wished to meet. No USINT official was present at the meetings. Consequently, I cannot verify whether Ms. Roque received an invitation to attend, or attended, either of those meetings.

*Question.* Soon after you became chief of mission in Havana, some dissidents made it known that their access to the USINT became more limited? Was that your decision? How frequently did you personally invite dissidents to the USINT?

Answer. My staff and I meet with Cuban civil society daily, individually and in groups, both inside and outside the mission. In FY 2010, USINT officials held over 600 meetings with human rights activists alone, many of them at USINT. In that same period, Cubans made more than 13,000 visits to USINT's Internet centers to exercise their right to freedom of information.

I frequently host representatives from Cuba's civil society in my home, as do other officers in the mission. Members of Cuban civil society know that they can count on our support for their efforts to expand civil liberties and disseminate accurate information on activities in Cuba. Representatives of civil society, including many dissidents, are active participants in the various distance learning and on-site courses USINT offers, including training for independent journalists, librarians, and bloggers.

*Question.* How many U.S. diplomats work at the U.S. Interest Section? How many Cuban nationals work there? How are they hired? Does the Cuban Government play a role in who works at the Interest Section? Does the Cuban Government receive payment for those workers? How much? In your estimation are there any of those workers Cuban intelligence officers? In addition to them, how many of the Cuban workers working at the USINT are susceptible to pressure by the Cuban authorities to gather information at the USINT?

Answer. The United States Interest Section (USINT) is limited by the Cuban Government to no more than 51 permanent U.S. Government employees. Similar to U.S. missions around the world, USINT also employs local nationals, third-country nationals and eligible family members (EFMs). Because of the limitation on permanent U.S. Government employees, USINT employs relatively more EFMs and third-country nationals than would other U.S. missions of similar size. USINT currently contracts 297 local Cuban nationals. As is the case for all foreign missions operating in Cuba, the Cuban Government Agency Palacio de Convenciones (PALCO) must approve any Cuban national USINT plans to hire. USINT pays a fee to PALCO for every Cuban employee. We paid PALCO \$988,867 in fees in fiscal year 2010 for this purpose. The strict security procedures followed by USINT take into full account the operating environment in Cuba, including the process by which local nationals are hired.

*Question.* In both Cuba's and Nicaragua's case, did you meet with a broad spectrum of the Cuban American and Nicaraguan communities in the United States?

Answer. Prior to my arrival at the U.S. Interest Section in July 2008, I was serving as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). In that capacity, I personally met with a broad spectrum of NGOs working to bolster human rights, democracy, and the free flow of information to, from, and within Cuba. My meetings included representatives of those NGOs who were grantees of DRL programs and those who worked with USAID and its programs, many of whom were leaders from the Cuban American community. I also met with a broad spectrum of human rights organizations, policy foundations, and academics working on issues of human rights and democracy in Cuba.

Because I am still in my post as the chief of mission of the U.S. Interest Section, I have not yet had the opportunity to undertake similar consultations with the community in the United States engaged on such issues regarding Nicaragua. If confirmed, I would look forward to such consultations as a vital element in preparing myself to be the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua.

*Question.* One symbolic, nevertheless important efforts in previous years were the Christmas decorations and the lights on the USINT building in Havana that stood as a sign of hope in the mostly dark oceanfront of the city. Why were those lights turn off? Were the Cuban authorities pleased with the blackout? Did you try to turn the Christmas lights back on during your time there?

Answer. Throughout my assignment in Havana, the U.S. Interest Section has featured illuminated Christmas decorations on our grounds and at my residence. Indeed, consistent with U.S. support for religious freedom, I expanded USINT's holiday decorations to include lighted displays honoring Chanukah and Ramadan. All of these displays remain clearly visible at night from Havana's oceanfront during the appropriate holidays. Reactions, or potential reactions, from the Cuban authorities play no role whatsoever in these manifestations of the support of the United States for religious freedom.

I take extremely seriously the promotion of international religious freedom and strive to set a personal example. My wife and I have attended religious services at 75 Catholic parishes, churches, and chapels within the travel limits imposed upon the personnel of the Interest Section by the Cuban authorities. I also have attended religious services at various churches at the invitation of five Protestant denominations as well as interfaith ecumenical services.

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RESPONSES OF LISA KUBISKE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* In many Latin American countries, there seems to be a tendency toward autocracy and longevity in office. Different countries handle the temptation differently. Mexico has one 6-year term. They proclaim "Sufragio Efectivo—No Reelección" or Effective Suffrage—No Reelection. It was adopted in their constitution as a result of 30 years of dictatorial rule and a revolutionary struggle that last over 10 years.

Many nations have held constitutional referendums or used other means to remove limits on Presidential terms—to extend it to two terms, in some cases three terms. In the case of Venezuela under Chavez, term limits have been removed completely. What is your sense of this trend toward autocracy?

Answer. I am committed to protecting fundamental freedoms and, if confirmed, I would continue to work to promote freedom and democracy throughout the hemisphere. In Honduras, the constitution limits the President to a single, 4-year term. The Honduran Congress has taken steps that would permit amendments to that restriction through a public consultation. Additionally, members of the Honduran Resistance are advocating significant changes to the constitution. Ultimately, these decisions rest with the Honduran people. From the U.S. Government perspective, it is important that any reform process be transparent and consistent with Honduran law, and that potential reforms adhere to democratic principles.

*Question.* In May 2010, a constituent of mine—Joe Dunsavage disappeared off the coast of Honduras in his boat. Despite extensive search efforts neither he nor his boat were recovered. His brother, wife, and kids, have been seeking a certificate of presumptive death from the Department for more than a year to no avail. What assistance can you provide to this grieving family? The Department has told the family that they must file a request through the Honduran court system, which will take at least another year to process. What reasonable steps can be taken to expedite this process?

Answer. Assisting American citizens overseas is a core objective of our foreign policy. At my June 8 hearing, I committed to working with you to help this family. I stand by this commitment to take a closer look to determine if there is anything more we could possibly do. If confirmed, I would review the correspondence on this issue and consult with U.S. and Honduran authorities to help this family obtain the necessary document as quickly as possible.

*Question.* Honduras still has one of the highest murder rates. Press reports have the official 2010 homicide total pegged at 6,236 deaths. That would be a homicide rate of 75.6 per 100,000 people. Honduras has also one of the highest rates of inequality in Latin America. With a Gini coefficient rate of 53.8 in 2008, it is not far behind Haiti, which was at 59.2 before the earthquake. As we make inroads in the fight against drugs in Mexico, Honduras is one of the countries of the northern triangle in Central America that is assaulted by drug-trafficking organizations. How deficient are the resources and institutional capacity of the government to counter the well-established drug trade? What are the most important steps we can be taking to help the government fight the narcotics trade?

Do you believe that we are presently investing sufficient resources through CARSI to address the escalating citizen security and narcotics issues in Honduras?

Answer. Threats to citizen security in the region are a serious and growing problem, and the Honduran Government needs support in many areas.

The U.S. Government appropriately buttresses the efforts of the Government of Honduras to fight transnational organized crime by strengthening the capabilities of the police and rule of law institutions, while encouraging respect for human rights. It also provides support to specific counternarcotics operations. Additionally, U.S. Government programs supplement Honduran efforts to address the root causes of crime, including the lack of economic opportunities, because it is impossible to disentangle citizen security from economic development. The U.S. Government also works with others in the international community to identify who else can provide expertise and resources in support of these efforts. It is vital to the security of the Honduran people and to the United States that we do all we can to continue to work in these areas.

*Question.* Presently in Latin America the Millennium Challenger Corporation has just one compact in El Salvador. The Honduras compact closed at the end of last year and the MCC board decided against a second Honduras compact because Honduras did not meet the MCC's controlled corruption indicators, based largely on the political events in the country. Do you anticipate that the resolution on the political crisis and Zelaya's return to Honduras will allow funding for a new compact to proceed? Are you aware of any other reasons that MCC would now decline to consider a new compact for Honduras?

Answer. Honduras performed admirably in implementing its 5-year compact. However, it did not meet the selection criteria for a second compact this year, having received a score on the Control of Corruption indicator that fell just below the median for its peers.

The Government of Honduras is working to address this concern, and the MCC is assisting Honduras in monitoring its reforms to provide supplemental information for the MCC Board to consider at its next meeting on country selection in December. For our part, the U.S. Government is helping Honduras improve governance through programs managed by several agencies, including USAID and the Departments of the Treasury, Defense, and State. If confirmed, I would continue to support this robust assistance to Honduras, including efforts to improve respect for human rights, so that it might achieve its goal of qualifying for a second compact.

*Question.* The State Department recently released a report that lists those countries where U.S.-owned businesses have investment disputes and, in some cases, expropriation claims against the host government. Honduras is on that list. If confirmed, what kind of priority will you devote to ensuring those claims are processed and cleared?

Answer. Both at USTR and the Department of State, I have been exposed to a number of investment disputes, and I developed a deep respect for the enforcement of treaty obligations in this area.

There are several outstanding investment disputes in Honduras involving American citizens. If confirmed, I would make appropriate efforts to ensure the prompt resolution of these cases. This is not only a question of basic fairness; if Honduras wants to succeed in attracting foreign investment, it is imperative that it establish a positive investment climate.

RESPONSES OF JONATHAN FARRAR TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question #1.* A series of measures were taken during your time as chief of mission in Havana—for example, taking down the news ticker that ran across the facade of the U.S. Interest Section—that significantly shifted U.S. policy in the island.

- What was the reasoning behind the decision to end this creative method of bringing uncensored information to the Cuban people?
- Were you asked for advice on this decision? If so, what was your advice?

*Answer.* U.S. policy remains focused on the need for democratic reforms and improved human rights conditions in Cuba. There has been no shift in U.S. priorities with regard to our efforts to increase the flow of uncensored information to, from, and within the island in order to support the ability of the Cuban people to freely determine their future.

The billboard was installed in January 2006 because of the Cuban Government's restrictions on the free flow of information. By summer 2009, it had become evident that the electronic billboard had outlived its usefulness. The billboard suffered numerous breakdowns and required significant maintenance, and new and more effective outlets of information for Cuban citizens had emerged. The Cuban Government placed numerous obstacles in front of USINT to impede the ability of Cubans to read the billboard. As a result, when the billboard became only partly operational in June 2009, the administration decided to focus its efforts to expand the free flow of information for Cubans in other, more effective areas.

Since 2006, we have seen an increased flow of independent information to and from Cuba as a result of USG training of independent journalists and the emergence of bloggers in Cuba. Increased family travel to Cuba and the increased availability of cell phones and other communications devices in Cuba has contributed to improved access to information. The administration announced new measures on Cuba on April 13, 2009, and again on January 14, 2010, including measures intended to increase the free flow of information to Cuba.

Other, more effective methods of bringing uncensored information to the Cuban people include more than 13,000 subscribed sessions at USINT's two Internet centers; more than 30 courses and workshops offered to groups such as independent journalists hosted by USINT; regular DVCs with off-island interlocutors; the distribution of CDs, DVDs, flash drives, laptops, and cameras, some loaded with free (licensed) software, and the distribution of nearly 15,000 copies of the *Nuevo Herald* and 16,000 copies of USINT's news clippings in FY 2010 alone. We also distribute thousands of books, magazines, and our own newsletters to independent libraries and journalists throughout the island.

*Question #2.* Prior to your assignment to Havana, a symbolic, but nevertheless meaningful initiative, had been the Christmas decorations that adorned the U.S. Interest Section building in Havana and stood as a sign of hope in the mostly dark oceanfront of the city.

- What policy considerations went into the decision to end this initiative?
- Did the State Department consider the potential reaction from Cuban authorities?
- If so, has the United States received any indication of the reaction of the Cuban authorities to the blackout?

*Answer.* Throughout my assignment in Havana, the U.S. Interest Section has featured illuminated Christmas decorations on our grounds and at my residence. Indeed, consistent with U.S. support for religious freedom, I expanded USINT's holiday decorations to include lighted displays honoring Channukah and Ramadan. All of these displays remain clearly visible at night from Havana's oceanfront during the appropriate holidays. Reactions, or potential reactions, from the Cuban authorities play no role whatsoever in these manifestations of the support of the United States for religious freedom.

I take extremely seriously the promotion of international religious freedom and strive to set a personal example. My wife and I have attended religious services at 75 Catholic parishes, churches, and chapels within the travel limits imposed upon the personnel of the Interest Section by the Cuban authorities. I also have attended religious services at various churches at the invitation of five Protestant denominations as well as interfaith ecumenical services.

*Question #3.* As far as the end of distribution of shortwave radios, was that the result of a recommendation from the U.S. Interest Section, or an order from the Department? What was your advice on that policy shift?



Answer. USINT's distribution pattern for material support to Cuban civil society reflects a variety of factors, including available funding for procurement; our ability to import materials; and a shifting technological environment. Perhaps more importantly, our material support for independent civil society is driven by the demands of civil society itself.

The number of shortwave radios distributed has decreased in recent years primarily due to changes in technology, which have changed the way in which Cuban society accesses and disseminates information on events on the island and abroad. These days, shortwave radios are not as frequently requested as in the past. As a result, I have focused on expanding the free flow of information for Cubans in other, more effective and innovative ways. Instead, our contacts are making use of the free, uncensored Internet access we provide through two Information Resource Centers to exercise their rights of information and expression, and to connect with larger audiences in real time and in two-way exchanges. Independent journalists and other key elements of civil society also appreciate our help in accessing the electronic tools of today's journalistic trade. We offer daily news clippings and copies of the *Nuevo Herald*, and monthly CDs and DVDs filled with software updates, news, and other valuable information. We maintain Web sites and Facebook pages in both English and Spanish on which we post daily updates on U.S. policy and other initiatives. We also provide distance learning courses in Spanish which offer information on technology, civil organization, English teaching, and communication skills.

*Question #4.* During a September 2009 visit to Cuba by then-Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Bisa Williams, the U.S. Interest Section in Havana hosted a reception where officials from the Cuban regime were invited, but representatives of independent civil society were excluded.

- What role, if any, did you have in planning this event?
- How many other events were held during your tenure in Havana that followed this pattern of exclusion? What was their purpose?

Answer. During her September 2009 visit to Cuba, Acting DAS Williams cohosted with me a roundtable with independent civil society members that included some of Cuba's best-known political dissidents. In addition, she and a USINT official visited blogger Yoani Sanchez's home, where Ms. Williams held discussions with Ms. Sanchez and other prominent Cuban bloggers. During the visit, USINT also hosted a reception for 55 members of civil society, including many dissidents.

USINT has maintained a robust civil society outreach strategy during my tenure. We are the only foreign mission in Havana that invites independent civil society representatives, including political dissidents, to our national day celebration. Our last Fourth of July official event, in 2010, included over 75 opposition activists, as well as dozens of other representatives from broader independent civil society. Every high-level State Department visitor to Cuba during my assignment has had the opportunity to meet with and seek the views of independent civil society members, including dissidents, despite threats from Cuban Government officials to shut down the visits. I frequently host these meetings, either at USINT or in my residence.

In addition, I have hosted numerous targeted events for other sectors of civil society, such as for Cuba's religious and cultural communities, a Human Rights Day/Nobel Peace Prize event, a Human Rights Week film festival, and charity events for an independent NGO that helps children with cancer, to name a few examples. I also hosted a reception honoring the Damas de Blanco as the winners of the 2010 Human Rights Defenders Award, a luncheon honoring Yoani Sanchez as a 2010 International Woman of Courage, and a 2009 reception honoring Dr. Darsi Ferrer as the winner of an honorable mention for the 2009 Human Rights Defenders Award—all independent civil society members who were nominated by USINT during my assignment in Havana.

*Question #5.* Information from surveys done by internationally recognized NGOs inside Cuba show that more than three-in-four Cuban adults have expressed support for voting for fundamental political change if given the opportunity.

- As chief of mission, what was your assessment and advice to the State Department regarding the relevancy of Cuban pro-democracy organizations in relation to the views and priorities of the Cuban population?
- How did you arrive to these views?
- Would you provide to the committee copies of any and all communications you had with the State Department on this topic?
- Given your experiences in Cuba, do you agree that a post-Fidel Castro scenario, in which Raul Castro and the current leadership of the Cuban regime maintains firm control of, is against U.S. interests?

Answer. The past 3 years in Cuba has reaffirmed my experience from 30 years in the Foreign Service, including service during the prior administration as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, of the vital role played by civil society in building the elements of a democratic society. Pro-democracy groups and human rights activists are the conscience of Cuba, and deserve our support and that of the international community. I have been outspoken about the important role these groups play and the need to publically promote greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the Interest Section, we have worked closely to support the work of all elements of Cuban civil society, including pro-democracy groups, human rights activists, independent journalists, and many others working to expand freedoms and increase the flow of information and reporting from Cuba. In doing so, we have built upon existing programs and begun many new ones to reach out to additional audiences, especially to the youth of Cuba.

As outlined in the response to question #7, the Interest Section in a very challenging environment has undertaken a variety of programs, such as Distance Learning courses, blogging courses, free software distribution, and many others to reach out to new audiences and serve long-time participants eager to learn new skills. At the same time, we rebuilt from the ground up one of our two Internet Resource Centers and have carried forward the Florida International University training program for independent journalists which is held in our DVC facilities. We recently graduated the 500th student from that successful program.

The President has stated clearly that major changes would be necessary in Cuba for there to be a significant change in our bilateral relations. The continued denial of the ability of the Cuban people to freely determine their own future clearly would not meet that standard. The administration's policies and programs aim to support the aspirations of the Cuban people to freely and democratically determine their own future. As the chief of mission of the Interest Section, the successful development and implementation of the democracy programs at USINT has been and remains my priority.

*Question #6.* The Cuban Government requires Cubans to obtain an exit permit, in addition to a valid Cuban passport and a foreign visa, before allowing Cubans to travel abroad.

- Are there Cuban families who have been granted U.S. visas, stranded in Havana awaiting the Cuban regime exit permit?
- How many are they, how long have they been waiting?

Answer. Yes. We track this issue closely and raise it with the Cuban Government (GOC) during the Migration Accords Talks held semiannually. The practice of denying exit permits denies these families the right to leave any country, including their own, and generates additional workload for USINT because we must reissue travel documents to persons whose original documents expired due to denials.

Documented cases of exit permit denials continue to decline since FY 2009, where USINT recorded 797 reported instances of exit permit denials. In FY 2010, USINT documented 443 cases of exit permit denials. We expect the downward trend to continue based on numbers so far this fiscal year. In FY 2011 YTD, we have documented 155 new cases of exit permit denials to principal and derivative visa applicants. At the same time in FY 2010, we had documented 259 cases of permit denials. Thus in FY 2011 YTD, we have witnessed an almost 40 percent drop in exit permit denials over the same time in FY 2010.

*Question #7.* Following the detention and subsequent sentencing by the Cuban regime of a USAID subcontractor in Cuba, the administration has placed severe restrictions on U.S. democracy programs.

- Have these restrictions improved the regime's record on human rights or in any way encouraged it to directly engage Cuba's independent civil society and pro-democracy organizations in a dialogue toward greater political freedoms?

Answer. The U.S. Interest Section has not retreated from democracy programs since the indefensible arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Alan Gross. On the contrary, since December 2009, under hostile conditions the Interest Section has successfully undertaken new initiatives and expanded our existing programs including the following:

- After the refusal of the Cuban authorities to give exit permits to students chosen for scholarships to study in the United States, the Interest Section constructed and inaugurated a new Distance Learning Center to provide college-level courses taught by U.S. professors in Spanish to students in Cuba.
- The Interest Section began new programs to teach courses in computing, blogging, the English language and other subjects. After receiving clearance

from Washington, the Interest Section also began distributing free software with monthly updates to assist Cubans to communicate with the outside world and among themselves.

- After soliciting volunteers from other American embassies in the hemisphere, the Interest Section recently began Digital Video Conferences to connect Cuban human rights activists with their counterparts in other Spanish-speaking countries.
- When one of our two Internet Resource Centers showed serious signs of deterioration, we rebuilt it from the ground up into a new facility to house this vital program.
- The Interest Section remains firmly committed to the Florida International University training program for independent journalists which is held in our DVC facilities. We recently graduated the 500th student from that successful program.

Cuba's human rights record remains poor, as evidenced in the Department's most recent "Human Rights Report." Programs such as those described above are a vital part of our overall effort to assist the Cuban people to prepare for the day when they can freely determine their own future.

Following the arrest of Mr. Gross and the completion of GAO audits which found weaknesses in the awarding and oversight of Cuba grants and contracts in Washington, the administration strengthened its oversight and management of those programs in close consultation with Congress.

*Question #8.* Remittances and travel are among the most important sources of hard currency for the regime.

- What would be the regime's response to a suspension of U.S. remittances and travel until this American citizen is allowed to return home, and every Cuban with a U.S. visa is allowed to leave the country?

Answer. We have no way of predicting the response from the Cuban regime to any number of variables. It has shown from its beginnings that maintaining power is its paramount priority, and that all other considerations, including actions taken by the United States, are subordinate to this overriding objective.

We continue to call on the Cuban Government to immediately and unconditionally release Alan Gross. We are deeply concerned about his and his family's well-being. He should be reunited with his family to bring an end to their long ordeal.

We also call on the Cuban Government, including during face-to-face meetings at the Migration Talks, to respect the rights of its citizens to leave any country, including their own.

*Question #9.* The current governments in Nicaragua and Cuba are similar in many respects, including their strong alliance with Hugo Chavez and their hostility toward the United States.

- How would your experience in Cuba inform your work in Nicaragua?

Answer. My experience of more 30 years in the Foreign Service, including my tenure as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, underlies my core belief in the critical role played by civil society in expanding and defending democratic freedoms. My experience over the past 3 years in Cuba only serves to reaffirm that belief, and the important role which U.S. programs can play in building, strengthening, and defending civil society. In developing such programs, we must be persistent and creative, and listen to the needs of those on the ground leading the fight to expand space for civil society and to increase the free flow of uncensored information. As we have over the past 3 years, we must be ready at all times to defend our policies and programs, both in-country and in Washington, and to speak with one voice to our critics when we do so.

I am as committed to engage the Nicaraguan civil society as I have been with their Cuban counterparts during the last 3 years. If confirmed, I will be outspoken about the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions and urging greater respect for human rights, transparency, and separation of powers.

Unlike Cubans, Nicaraguans have been able to elect and openly support the candidates of their choice. The role of civil society in the 2011 elections and beyond will be crucial in sustaining Nicaragua's democratic institutions. The United States has urged the Government of Nicaragua to facilitate international and domestic observation of the November elections, including during the registration and campaign periods. In taking this stand, the United States is working with friends and allies in the international community who share our commitment to freedom and democracy. At the same time, we must take a longer view and sustain consistent policies and

programs that will help to nurture and defend civil society in Nicaragua and strengthen democratic institutions there regardless of the outcome in November. If confirmed, I would work with the committee and other Members of Congress in shaping the appropriate policies and programs for both the preelections period and beyond.

*Question #10.* In Nicaragua, President Ortega continues to aggressively undermine fragile Nicaraguan institutions to extend his grip on power.

- What is the administration's strategy to persuade Nicaraguan officials to respect the constitutional order and the independence of government institutions in Nicaragua?
- What is your assessment of civil society groups within Nicaragua?
- If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to actively work with civil society organizations in Nicaragua to foster respect for independent, democratic institutions?

*Answer.* The administration is concerned about the apparent erosion of democratic institutions in Nicaragua and is working with other donors to coordinate international support for credible domestic and international observers to monitor the preparations for and conduct of the November elections. We are strong supporters of independent media and civil society, including human rights organizations, and through U.S. assistance we support technical assistance and training for emerging democratic leaders and citizen groups in order to bolster civil society engagement, and improve local governance. U.S. assistance also strengthens the capabilities of the media to professionally and accurately report about Nicaragua's deteriorating human rights and democracy climate.

During my time in Havana, we have found creative means to support civil society in Cuba. Given the inability of many Cuban activists to gain permission to travel outside the country, the Interest Section uses Digital Video Conferences and other technology to help them build relationships with their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere in the hemisphere. Just recently we hosted digital video conferences between human rights activists in Cuba and their counterparts in other countries.

- Unfortunately, most civil society groups in Nicaragua are woefully short of resources, and many of the international donors on which those organizations rely have pulled out of Nicaragua. We must endeavor to maintain active and creative engagement with Nicaraguan civil society. Embassy Managua has brought Nicaraguan journalists to the United States on International Visitors Programs.
- If confirmed, I will be outspoken about the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions, and urging greater respect for human rights, transparency, and separation of powers. I will bring my experience from Havana to lead Embassy Managua in its search for innovative means to engage with civil society, and to continue programs at the local level in Nicaragua to engage with the development of a new generation of leaders.

RESPONSES OF LISA J. KURISKE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY  
SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

I have written a letter to Honduran President Lobo Sosa and to Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) CEO Yohannes on behalf of CEMAR, a cement company owned by American citizen Oscar Cerna that was illegally expropriated by the Honduran Government in 2004. I share a deep concern for the actions taken by the Honduran Government during the Maduro Presidency, and perpetuated by subsequent Honduran Governments regarding CEMAR and its legitimate claim to seek compensation for this expropriation. To date, there has been no substantive progress to compensate CEMAR's owner for this illegal taking.

I have urged the Honduran Government and our State Department to take action to ensure that this claim is satisfied. I am convinced that if our Ambassador to Honduras addresses this claim with the Honduran Government and makes it one of her highest priorities, Honduran officials will settle this claim.

*Question.* Should you be confirmed by the Senate, will you make the settlement of this claim one of your highest priorities?

*Answer.* I view the protection of U.S. investments as a core function of the job. If I were confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, resolution of investment disputes would be one of my highest priorities.

Although the U.S. Government does not take a position on the merits of investment disputes, I would be happy to meet with Mr. Cerna upon his request. If con-

firmed, I would monitor this case closely and encourage the Honduran Government and Mr. Cerna to resolve their dispute.

*Question.* Should you be confirmed, will you pledge that within 60 days of your arrival at post you will notify President Lobo Sosa and his advisors that I, as a Member of both the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, will make it a priority to prevent MCC funding and other types of funding to Honduras, unless his government reaches a settlement of the CEMAR claim?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would convey your message to President Lobo.

