

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

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————
MARCH 16 THROUGH DECEMBER 8, 2011
—————

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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*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

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2011

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

Hon. Francis Joseph Ricciardone, Jr., of Massachusetts, to be
Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey
Hon. Norman L. Eisen, of the District of Columbia, to be Amba-
sador to the Czech Republic
Hon. Robert S. Ford, of Vermont, to be Ambassador to the Syrian
Arab Republic

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeanne Shaheen presiding.

Present: Senator Shaheen, Menendez, Casey, Coons, and Lugar.
Also present: Senator Joseph Lieberman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator SHAHEEN. This hearing will come to order. Good afternoon, everyone.

Today we have two panels of nominees, but we're doing this a little differently today. So we're actually going to hear from all three nominees in the first panel, and then we'll do questioning of Mr. Ford in the second panel.

We're fortunate to have Senator Lugar here with us, and we want to try and accommodate his schedule, as well as Senator Lieberman's schedule.

So on our first panel we will consider the nominations of Norman Eisen to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic and Francis Ricciardone to be Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. And on our second panel, we will be considering the nomination of Robert Ford to be Ambassador to Syria.

Senator Casey from Pennsylvania will be here. He chairs the Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs, and he will chair Ambassador Ford's questioning portion of the second panel.

All of the posts being considered today are critical in strengthening U.S. influence in safeguarding American interests around the globe. I look forward to discussing the challenges and opportunities the United States faces in these three important countries.

Now, as I said, we're doing this a little bit differently today. And one of the differences is that both of our nominees on the first panel were nominated last year to serve in these same positions. I think I chaired one of those nomination hearings last year.

But both nominations were thoroughly considered and approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and both were held up on the Senate floor and were not ultimately confirmed by the full Senate.

Seeing the importance of having an Ambassador in these critical countries, the President chose to recess appoint both Ambassador Ricciardone and Ambassador Eisen to their positions. As a result, the two men have been serving as Ambassadors in Prague and Ankara over the course of the last 7 months.

As many of you know, a recess appointment by the President lasts for only 1 calendar year. So these two men have been renominated and the committee will reconsider their nominations.

As the subcommittee chair on European Affairs, I was supportive of those nominations last year, and I intend to support their nominations once again. Since both men have already been serving in these roles, we'll have an excellent chance to hear from them directly about the challenges they've already seen and their plans for the future.

So welcome back to the committee, gentlemen. Thank you both for being willing to go through the nomination process again and to continue to take on these difficult responsibilities at a very important time for our country.

So first today, we will consider the U.S. relationship with the Czech Republic. As an important ally of the United States in Central Europe, the Czech Republic has demonstrated exceptional leadership in Europe, particularly with respect to engaging the region's eastern neighborhood and pressing for further European integration.

The Czech Republic has made some impressive contributions to international peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. In addition, the country's unique experience with democratic transitions should provide some lessons for the United States as we navigate the ongoing transitions in the Middle East and North Africa.

Today we also consider the U.S. relationship with Turkey. Turkey remains a critical NATO ally with a predominantly Muslim population in a volatile and geopolitically strategic region of the world. Recent events throughout the Middle East and North Africa have increased Turkey's strategic importance as a center of power in this complex region.

There is little doubt that Turkey will continue to play an influential role in many of the national security threats facing the United States. I remain a proponent of a strong bilateral relationship with Turkey and its continued integration into Europe. However, it's also important to recognize where we have differences.

Turkish troops continue to occupy the Island of Cyprus, and the Turkish Government needs to do more to support a just solution in Cyprus.

In addition, Turkey's vote against a fourth round of sanctions on Iran in the U.N. Security Council raises concerns that the United

States and Turkey do not share the same threat assessment with respect to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

So I want to just briefly introduce our two nominees, and I know that Senator Lieberman is here to provide an introduction for Ambassador Eisen, so I will let him do most of that introduction.

And as I mentioned previously, Senator Casey will be introducing our second panel nominee, Ambassador Ford, when he gets here.

I want to welcome Ambassador Ricciardone, who is a highly distinguished, long-time career Foreign Service officer. He is the former Ambassador to Egypt, the former Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan, and he served previously in Turkey and throughout the Middle East. He speaks a number of languages, including Turkish and Arabic. And finally, and most importantly, from my perspective, he is a graduate of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

So again, congratulations to all of you on your nominations, and I appreciate your willingness to come before the committee.

As I said, we're fortunate to have Senator Lugar, who is the ranking member of this committee here with us this afternoon, and I know that he would like to make a statement.

Senator Lugar.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator LUGAR. I am very pleased to join you, Madam Chairman, in welcoming our nominees to three very important countries.

Our relationships with these countries are excellent, and we appreciate this opportunity to review events in each of the three as we welcome Ambassador Ricciardone, Ambassador Eisen, and Ambassador Ford to this committee once again.

Turkey is at the center of several critical issues, underscoring its importance as an ally. In particular, I hope to hear Ambassador Ricciardone's perspective on the recent resignations of Turkey's top military leaders and the effect this will have on political stability.

Moreover, we will be interested to hear more about dynamics related to upheaval in Syria, Turkey's expanding participation in regional diplomacy, and its ongoing role in the creation of a southern energy corridor.

The Czech Republic remains a very important ally in Central Europe. I will be interested to hear from Ambassador Eisen about ramifications of Prague's recent announcement that it will not participate in the current plan for the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense.

Regional energy interconnections and diversification in the Czech Republic also remain fundamental to the United States and European efforts to improve energy security for the region.

Finally, this hearing is an important opportunity for the committee to review events in Syria. The Syrian regime appears committed to the use of violence to suppress the will of its people.

In the last few months alone, more than 1,700 people have been killed with more than 10,000 imprisoned. The toll on Syrian civilians—including children—gets worse by the day.

Despite the regime's efforts to cut off the Internet, cell phones, and other forms of communication, the images continue to get out and the world has borne witness to these brutalities. The causes

of peace, stability, and economic advancement would benefit from a swift transition to a new leadership and a more representative government for all the Syrian people.

The alternative is almost certainly a cycle of ever-widening violence and the prospect of sectarian conflict.

The regime, of course, seems intent on playing up the prospects of sectarian strife, and has sought the aid of Tehran, as a means to hold on to power.

We must explore ways to work with our allies to present a clear and unequivocal message to President al-Assad and those around him that the violence must stop and that a credible political transition must begin immediately.

I note that the Government of Turkey has taken a strong stance in this regard, given the potential for increasing refugee flows. Syria's Government and business elite must understand that the current path will only deepen their isolation and intensify consequences for the regime and its leaders.

I look forward to our discussion with the nominees.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Lugar.

And, Senator Lieberman, we're delighted to have you with us to introduce Mr. Eisen.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks very much, Madam Chair and Senator Lugar. It's an honor to be here.

I should express my appreciation to you on behalf of the nominees that you did not join the herd leaving Washington after the vote at noon. And thank you for convening this hearing.

I'm here to introduce Ambassador Eisen. I'd be remiss if I didn't simply say that I have had the opportunity to get to know Ambassador Ricciardone and Ambassador Ford, and these are two extraordinary public servants, great, courageous, informed representatives of the United States in the countries on which they have served and are serving now.

I'm really honored to be here to introduce Norm Eisen. This is not a political duty. It's really a personal pleasure, because Ambassador Eisen and his wife, Lindsay, and his daughter, Tamar, are personal friends of mine and my family. And as you mentioned, I guess the reason I'm asked is that Norman is one of those stateless people who lives in Washington, DC, so I occasionally do double duty by introducing such people.

As you mentioned, Senator Shaheen, Ambassador Eisen was nominated and given a recess appointment to this point at the end of last year. Prior to his nomination, he had a distinguished career as a lawyer here in Washington, and then was special counsel for ethics and governmental reform in the White House.

I regret that it was necessary for the President to make a recess appointment in this case, but perhaps there is a silver lining here in that we can now judge Ambassador Eisen based on his performance over the past 6 months. And that, from all that I have heard, has been really exemplary.

Since arriving in Prague, Ambassador Eisen has been a whirlwind of activity, winning plaudits from everyone from the Czech

Government to the American Chamber of Commerce, whose leader has said, "In your short time in the country, you have already made a significant impact and you have proven to be one of the most effective Ambassadors to hold this post."

He has been a tireless advocate for America's national interests in the Czech Republic, whether with regard to imposing sanctions against Iran or winning contracts for American companies.

And with your permission, I would like to insert in the record a list of essentially thank you's and testimonials from American companies who have been doing business in the Czech Republic.

Senator SHAHEEN. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Ambassador Eisen—Our Washington grapevine delivered the news this week that you might be undergoing your confirmation in the near future. If this is so, I would like to express our fervent hope that it is successful, because your presence in the Czech Republic has been and will be essential to our common efforts to advance the interests of U.S. business and to improve the standing of our country in the crucial region of Central Europe. In the months since you have taken the leadership role here, you have not only invigorated our community and increased the stature of our country in the eyes of Czech citizens, but you have also contributed substantially to the reform of public procurement and to the promotion of scientific education—two top priorities of the business community. Furthermore, your endeavors on behalf of Westinghouse and other U.S. companies have expanded their export possibilities, which should add much needed jobs in the U.S. manufacturing sector. In your short time in the country, you have already made a significant impact, and you have proven to be one of the most effective ambassadors to hold this post. We sincerely hope that the Senate will allow us to continue our common work here, and, again, you have both our best wishes and strongest support during the confirmation process.—WESTON STACEY, *American Chamber of Commerce in the Czech Republic*.

I would like to say loud "Thank You" for organizing the e-health event last week in the Ambassador's residence. The event was beyond our thoughts or expectations—perfect location, perfect audience, and overall level of the event was unprecedented. It turned out to be who is who in Czech health care with representation from MoH, VZP, other insurance funds and hospitals. Thank you so much for having this opportunity and have support and help from you and Veronika. The fact that we had presence of his Excellency, the Ambassador himself was taking the meeting on another level. Please let me know how we can express our thanks and gratitude—I believe this was the support of the U.S. commercial programs at its best. Thank you so much Stu and have a great coming Easter.—MATEJ ADAM, *IBM Healthcare*.

You and your U.S. Commercial Service team members all did much more than an outstanding job. This was the best and most amazing business trip of my life! I believe that this trip has opened many doors that no other business development tool could have. All of the exchanges were of the most professional and of an extraordinarily competent level. The U.S.C.S. Representatives in Frankfurt, Prague, and Vienna are consummate professionals and true U.S. Ambassadors. Thanks so much to everyone for this major career and law practice milestone.—WILLIAM N. HULSEY III, Esq., *HULSEY, P.C., Senior Research Fellow, IC2 (Innovation, Creativity & Capital) Institute, University of Texas at Austin*.

I am writing you to thank you for the work your team, specifically Mrs. Obrusnikova, performed in support of my short visit to Prague last week. Hana's knowledge of the Czech Republic's aerospace industry and her enthusiasm in assisting Industrial Metals is to be highly commended. As before, Hana was able to secure appointments on short notice, and rearrange for an alternative meeting last-minute when one of the planned visits was cancelled. During a 2009 Gold Key visit for Industrial Metals, Hana arranged meetings with different companies, two of which have become regular customers (Aero Vodochody and Jihostroj). In light of the growth of the regional aerospace industry, we are now renewing our efforts in

Czech Republic and with Hana's continuing support hope to expand the sales to these and other customers.—MARCEL ZONDAG, *Industrial Metals*.

Great job on the call this afternoon with Robert for Mathnasium! It means a lot to us trade specialists in ODO to be able to transition our clients to knowledgeable and capable commercial specialists in OIO, and to know they will get excellent service. I look forward to continuing to work with you to make something good happen for Mathnasium in the Czech market!—BRENT E. OMDAHL, *Atlanta Export Assistance Center*.

I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for the visit last week. I think it went extremely well thanks to your efforts. Thanks again for all your hard work, and I look forward to working together in the future as we move forward in the Czech Republic. Excellent!! I would highly recommend using this service. Not only were they very effective through the initial phases of the activity, but have continued to provide support and guidance through the followup phase. Outstanding service!!—ZACH SORRELLS, *European Operations-Eureka Research International*.

I'll write ANOTHER e-mail to you praising all the meetings you set up on behalf of Publish on Demand global and Strategic Book publishing. This e-mail is ONLY about my own publishing company participating in your FREE offer for the U.S. Commercial service catalogue show. I want to thank you for including our catalogue and our titles in your presentation! It was great to see you at the Business Centre. You were always busy with meetings and your materials were well-done. I think it's GREAT that you're having the followup event in early June. I will send you a couple more sample books for you to display. Thanks so much! It was so great to meet you, Jana, and to have all your help. My week in Prague was a totally positive experience and I will be doing lots of e-mail, mail, and even some phone call followup so hopefully we will see LOTS of sales that I can share with you for both companies!—JAN YAGER, *Publish on Demand*.

Just a note to let you know that our participation in the Prague Book Fair was helpful and provided at least one very good lead for us. Hana Whitton from the Oxford Literary Agency, which specializes in translation rights sales into various Eastern European markets, asked to be put in touch with us via the U.S. Commercial Service's stand at Prague. The U.S. Commercial Service has been a tremendous asset for our Press. Thank you and your colleagues for your capable assistance!—KATHERINE MCGUIRE, *University of Pennsylvania Press*.

The offered service was beyond our expectations. Very efficient, fast service and extremely experienced and qualified staff. Very highly recommended to any other U.S. company looking for a rep. in the Czech Republic. Extremely satisfied with the service and the outcome. Thank you so much and keep up the good service. The services that you provided are beyond our expectations. I am really thankful to accommodate our request and research the market within such a short period. The data and all the candidates you recommended are very efficient and professional companies in our field. Thank you for your ongoing support and for organizing all these 4 meetings within such a short notice.—PIERRE HATEM, *American Foodservice Concepts Corp.*

The Commercial Service is an exception resource. My contact in the Czech Republic, Veronika, was very friendly and accommodating—even providing more resources after the completion of our project. I wasn't extremely satisfied with the results of the service, but that is more likely a result of the Czech Republic not having a readiness for our products than it is a reflection on the Commercial Service. I would still surely recommend this service to any and all!—STEPHANIE JOHNSON, *Mirabella Beauty*.

The assistance from both the Arizona and Prague offices was exceptional.—SCOTT MEEHAN, *Positron Public Safety Systems/Intrado*.

Veronika Novakova was amazing to work with . . . She did a lot of work on our behalf and it turned out to be very successful. Also would like to thank Mr. Chris Damm from San Jose office for his continued hard work and time in helping set up all our IPS.—LEIGH LINDENBAUM, *Universal Exports Limited (UXL)*.

Senator LIEBERMAN. For more than 2 years before Ambassador Eisen arrived in Prague, the United States had no Ambassador in the Czech Republic, which spurred doubts and fears among our Czech allies—and as you said, they have really been great allies—about our commitment to their country. This is not a situation that we, in our national interests, should repeat.

So I hope that we can give a full confirmation to Ambassador Eisen this time. The Czech Republic has been an extraordinary partner and ally of the United States, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the promotion of democracy worldwide. The Czechs are really now among our best friends and allies in Europe, and they deserve to have an Ambassador from our country that is confirmed by the full Senate.

Finally, as you may know, Norman Eisen has a deep personal connection to the Czech Republic, his mother having been born there. Both and she and his father survived the Holocaust, and it is indeed a profound historical justice, an act of justice, that the Ambassador's residence in Prague, which was originally built by a Jewish family that was forced to flee Prague by the Nazis, and which in turn the Nazis took over as their headquarters, now 70 years later, is occupied by Norman and his family.

And I might, on a point of personal privilege, add that they observe the Sabbath there every Friday night and Saturday. So if you need any evidence that there is a God, I offer that to you.

The story of Norm Eisen and his family and their path back to Europe is a classic American story, a reflection of what our country is about at its very best. And that is also precisely why the Ambassador has proven such an effective representative of our Nation, our interests, and our values; and, again, why I hope the committee can lead the Senate in sending him back to Prague as our Ambassador as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Senator LUGAR. Madam Chairman, are there members of the families here?

Senator LIEBERMAN. They are.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, I think we should ask, as you're giving your testimony, Ambassador Eisen and Ricciardone, that you should feel free to introduce your families and let us welcome them as well.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair and Senator Lugar.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman. Thank you especially for sharing the last story about the residence for the Ambassador.

As I said, we are going to begin the panel with Ambassadors Ricciardone and Eisen. And we will also be hearing the opening statement from Ambassador Ford, and then we will save his question and answer period for the second panel.

So I will ask you if you could begin, Mr. Eisen. And again, feel free to introduce family or friends who are here with you.

STATEMENT OF HON. NORMAN L. EISEN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Ambassador EISEN. Madam Chair, Senator Lugar, Senator Coons, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here again in connection with my nomination by President Obama to continue serving as the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

I am honored to have the confidence and the trust of the President, of Secretary Clinton, in representing our country.

Since you asked, I would like to introduce my wife, Lindsay Kaplan, an associate professor of English at Georgetown University, and our daughter, Tamar.

Representing the United States in Prague is a family effort, and I believe that the Czech people have come to appreciate my family as much as I do—well, almost as much as I do.

When I was last before the committee, I reflected upon my extraordinary good fortune as a first-generation American. From the vantage point of our small fast-food restaurant in Los Angeles, where I grew up, my mother, a Czechoslovak Holocaust survivor, and my father, an immigrant from Poland, could never have imagined that their son would someday serve as a United States Ambassador.

As Senator Lieberman noted, and as my mother put it recently, just a little more succinctly, "The Nazis took us away in cattle cars, and now my son has returned representing the mightiest nation on Earth."

As that sentiment suggests, my mission in the Czech Republic is strongly informed by my deep sense of obligation to this country, to the United States.

Since my arrival in Prague in January, I have worked with a talented Embassy team in three principal areas. First, the defense and security relationship between the two countries; second, commercial and economic ties; and third, shared values, particularly the shared values of good governance and of civil rights for all.

In each area, the relationship was good. But we have worked with the Czech Government, with officials across the political spectrum, with Czech civil society, and with the Czech people to make it great.

In the defense and security realm, the Czechs are staunch allies. Over the past year, they increased their contributions in Afghanistan to over 700 soldiers and civilians. Czech personnel operate in some of the most dangerous parts of the country, and they have suffered numerous casualties there.

When I recently visited Afghanistan to thank Czech and United States personnel for their service, U.S. soldiers that I met with gave the Czechs high praise. That included General Petraeus, who explained the critically important responsibilities that our Czech allies are carrying out side and day by day with their U.S. partners in Afghanistan.

The Czechs are also a staunch friend of Israel and a strong supporter of United States policy toward Iran. They are one of our very best allies in Europe on those issues and across the board. In their own neighborhood, the Czech Republic is a leading advocate within the European Union for countries like Georgia, Ukraine,

and Moldova, through the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative. Elsewhere, from Cuba to Burma to Belarus to North Korea, the Czechs are champions of human rights.

We in Embassy Prague are proud to work with our Czech partners on these issues.

Looking ahead to the future of our defense and strategic partnership, we are broadening our security cooperation, developing an approach that goes beyond any single narrow focus to one with multiple areas of specialized cooperation where the Czechs excel. The Czechs are world-class strategic partners in areas ranging from helicopters; to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear mitigation; to PRTs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

In the economic and commercial area, Embassy Prague has actively advocated for American business during my tenure. We have an open door for U.S. firms, and I have met with dozens of American companies, from the very largest to the smallest.

When they have concerns in the Czech Republic, we vigorously work to resolve them, engaging all the way up to the highest levels of government, if necessary. I've also encouraged Czech investment in the United States, traveling with government officials and Czech businesses to scout business opportunities here that will generate good, high-paying jobs in the United States.

In our commercial and economic work, we have particularly emphasized civil nuclear cooperation. The Czechs have six operating nuclear reactors and are planning an expansion worth up to \$27.5 billion. It is one of the largest opportunities for U.S. businesses of its kind anywhere in the world.

If Westinghouse, the U.S. competitor, wins that bid, it will mean an estimated 9,000 new, good jobs in the United States, across the United States. To support that bid, we have adopted a whole-of-government approach here in the United States and with Embassy Prague to establish a broad civil nuclear strategic partnership between our two countries.

So from fostering new relations between United States and Czech R&D facilities, to making regulatory exchanges, to working together to improve nuclear safety, our two nations are building a model civil nuclear relationship for the 21st century.

My third area of emphasis has been the shared values that bind our two countries together. Czech and Slovak national aspirations in the 20th century were first realized by the Pittsburgh and Washington declarations signed right here in the United States after World War I by President Wilson's great friend and Czechoslovakia's first President, a revered name in my home growing up, Tomas Masaryk.

The United States helped liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, supported the resistance against communism, and then helped transform the goals of the Velvet Revolution into reality.

I have carried that message of friendship the length and breadth of the country, visiting almost 20 cities and regions outside of Prague in just about 6 months on the job.

My message is one of warm friendship but also candor. I have supported the initiatives of those in the Czech Government, the opposition, NGOs, business, and the Czech public who are working for good government and against corruption. I believe we are build-

ing a model in Prague of how to respectfully but forcefully engage on those issues.

We have also worked with the Czech Government to promote equal rights and opportunities for all Czech citizens, irrespective of their origin or faith, including the Roma. My presence in Prague as the child of a Czechoslovak victim of Nazi persecution is by itself a powerful message in the fight against extremism and for human rights. Working with the talented interagency team at Embassy Prague, I have taken every opportunity to engage with the Czech people and their government to advance our common goals and values.

I am so, so honored to be asked to represent our country and our government.

Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Eisen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR NORMAN L. EISEN

Madam Chair and members of the committee, it is a privilege to be here again in connection with my nomination by President Obama to continue serving as the United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am honored to have the confidence and trust of the President and Secretary Clinton in representing our country. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would like to introduce my wife, Lindsay Kaplan, an associate professor of English at Georgetown University and our daughter, Tamar. Representing the United States in Prague is a team effort and I believe the Czech people have come to appreciate my family as much as I do.

When I was last before the committee, I reflected upon my extraordinary good fortune as a first-generation American. From the vantage point of our small fast-food restaurant in Los Angeles where I grew up, my mother, a Czechoslovak Holocaust survivor, and my father, an immigrant from Poland, could never have imagined their son would someday serve as a United States ambassador. As my mother put it recently, "the Nazis took us away in cattle cars, and now my son has returned representing the greatest nation on earth." As that anecdote suggests, my mission in the Czech Republic is strongly informed by my deep sense of obligation to America.

Since my arrival in Prague in January, I have worked with a strong Embassy team—Americans and Czechs—in three principal areas: defense and security; commercial and economic; and shared values, particularly the shared values of good governance and civil rights for all. In each area the relationship was good—and we worked with the Czech Government across the political spectrum, and with Czech civil society and the Czech people to make it great.

In the defense and security realm, the Czechs are staunch allies. Over the past year, they increased their contributions in Afghanistan to over 700 soldiers and civilians. Czech personnel operate in some of the most dangerous parts of the country, and have suffered numerous casualties there. When I recently visited Afghanistan to thank Czech and U.S. personnel for their service, U.S. soldiers gave the Czechs high praise and General Petraeus explained the critically important responsibilities our Czech allies are carrying out.

The Czechs are also a staunch friend of Israel and strong supporter of U.S. policy toward Iran; they are one of our very best allies in Europe. In their own neighborhood, the Czech Republic is a leading advocate within the European Union for countries like Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova through the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative. Elsewhere, whether in Cuba, Burma, Belarus, or North Korea, the Czechs are champions of human rights and we in Embassy Prague are proud to work with them on those issues.

Looking ahead to the future of our defense and strategic partnership, we are broadening our security cooperation and developing an approach that goes beyond any single narrow focus to one with multiple areas of specialized cooperation where the Czechs excel. The Czechs are world-class strategic partners in areas ranging from training Afghan helicopter pilots and crews to Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) mitigation to Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan.

In economic and commercial ties, Embassy Prague has actively advocated for American business during my tenure. We have an open door for U.S. firms, and I have met with dozens of American companies, from the largest to the smallest. When they have problems, we vigorously work to resolve them, engaging all the way up to the highest levels of government. I have encouraged Czech investment in the United States, traveling with government officials and Czech businesses to scout business opportunities here that will generate jobs.

We have particularly emphasized civil nuclear cooperation. The Czechs have six operating nuclear reactors and are planning an expansion worth up to \$27.5 billion that is one of the largest opportunities for U.S. business of its kind in the world. If the U.S. competitor wins the bid, it will mean an estimated 9,000 new, high-paying jobs in the United States. To support that, we have adopted a whole-of-government approach to establish a broad civil nuclear strategic partnership between our two countries. From fostering new relations between U.S. and Czech R&D facilities, to regulatory exchanges, to working together to improve nuclear safety, we are building a model civil nuclear relationship for the 21st century.

My third area of emphasis has been the shared values that bind our two countries together. Czech and Slovak national aspirations in the 20th century were first realized by the Pittsburgh and Washington declarations signed in the United States after WWI by President Wilson's great friend and Czechoslovakia's first President, Tomas Masaryk. The United States helped liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, supported the resistance against communism, and helped transform the goals of the Velvet Revolution into reality. I have carried that message the length and breadth of the country, visiting almost 20 cities and regions outside of Prague in just 6 months on the job.

My message is one of warm friendship and also candor: I have supported the initiatives of those in the Czech Government, the opposition, NGOs, business and the public who are working for good government and against corruption. I believe we are building a model in Prague of how to respectfully engage on those issues.

We have also worked with the Czech Government to promote equal rights and opportunities for all Czech citizens, irrespective of their origin or faith, including the Roma. My presence in Prague as the child of a Czechoslovak victim of persecution is by itself a powerful message in the fight against extremism and for human rights. Working with the talented interagency team at Embassy Prague, I have taken every opportunity to engage with the Czech people and their government to advance our common goals and values.

I am so honored to be asked to represent our country and our government. Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Before we go on to Ambassador Ricciardone, I want to just recognize—I understand the Ambassador from the Czech Republic to the United States is in the audience. So I want to recognize him.

Very nice to have you join us.

And I don't know if there are any other members of the diplomatic corps here, but welcome to all of you.

So, Ambassador Ricciardone.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANCIS JOSEPH RICCIARDONE, JR., OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Madam Chair, members of the committee, I am very honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee as Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, having, as you mentioned, served in that capacity as a recess appointee since this past January.

I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for their trust and confidence in me.

And with me today is my wife and life partner, Marie, whom I married in Enfield, NH, almost 4 decades ago, who has been my partner throughout our Foreign Service adventures in Turkey, and

long before in Iran and everywhere. So she is with me, and our daughters were unable to join us, but we all have family connections to Turkey and a great fondness for that country. Marie has studied and taught there as well.

During my 33-year career in the Foreign Service, I have had the pleasure and the privilege of having served in Turkey previously three times. And through this period, I have observed Turkey's continuing transformation into a more democratic and more open and more economically vibrant, modern state, and as a player with growing influence on the world stage.

Throughout this change and development, has been one constant, and that has been Turkey's continued commitment to its partnership with the United States and the NATO alliance. It is also a member of the G20 now and has one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

And noting Turkey's history as a majority Muslim nation and as a secular democracy that respects the rule of law, President Obama has cited Turkey's critical role in helping to shape the mutual understanding and stability not only in its neighborhood, but around the world.

If confirmed, I will continue to do everything I can to reinforce Turkish-American cooperation in support of our common goals, which are rooted in the security alliance and our shared democratic values.

For decades, Turkey and the United States have cooperated intensively to promote regional stability, including by countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; resolving regional conflicts; promoting energy security; expanding trade, investment, and economic development; and, essential and integral to all of those, strengthening democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Several such strategic priorities merge in the cases of particular and immediate consequence, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, the quest for peace between Israel and all its neighbors, and Iran's evident pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Other conflicts, as you've mentioned, Madam Chair, with historical antecedents require no less sustained and intensive joint attention and cooperation, including the unresolved issues of Cyprus and the normalization of relations with Armenia.

I have been privileged to serve in Ankara during the Arab Spring, during which I have strived to enlist Turkish support for the NATO role in Libya, for a successful transition to democracy in Egypt, and in collaboration with my colleague and friend next door in Syria to pressure the regime in Syria to cease its brutal repression and to heed the will of its people.

And just as the Turkish Government has played an important role in promoting these political transitions, its government and private sector are also keen to support economic development in Egypt and Tunisia that are so critical to long-term stability in the region by increasing their trade and investment in those countries. And wherever possible, Turkey as a government and Turkish firms are looking for partnerships with American firms.

While we share many goals with Turkey, one of the most important is countering global terrorism and networks, and Turkey has

been one of our strongest partners in that pursuit. Just last month, Turkish security officials arrested an alleged al-Qaeda cell that was plotting to bomb Western interests in Turkey, including the United States Embassy.

We support Turkey's own foremost security objective of defeating the terrorist violence, which the PKK continues to perpetrate, and which has led to the deaths of over 30,000 Turks since the 1980s.

We strongly support Turkey's efforts to improve the human rights and economic situation for the Kurds, and their democratic participation as full citizens, and the rights also of other communities of vulnerable groups in Turkey.

As the United States maintains its longstanding support for Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union, we will continue to press for the reforms required for accession. It's important to note the Turkish citizens themselves are demanding further progress on promoting human rights and the rule of law, most certainly including freedom of speech and religious freedom.

And in my return to Turkey, it has been my privilege to meet with the heads of each of the religious minorities, the ancient Jewish community of Istanbul; His All Holiness Bartholomew II, whom I had first met over a couple of decades ago with the then-First Lady, Secretary Clinton, and met again 2 weeks ago with the Secretary; the head of the Syriani Church; and the head of the Armenian Church as well; as well as the Baha'i community leader.

The United States supports a transparent and inclusive constitutional reform process to strengthen Turkey's democracy. We regard freedom of expression as central to democracy, and we believe the reform process offers a unique opportunity to strengthen the protections afforded to journalists, to nongovernmental organizations, and to minorities.

The President and the Secretary have established economic cooperation with Turkey as a strategic priority and have emphasized the importance of supporting American firms and promoting Turkish-American trade and investment. During the President's April 2009 meeting with Turkish President Gul, both leaders agreed to elevate our economic relations to the level of our already strong political and military relations. So Turkey is a leading focus in the President's new export initiative to double United States exports globally in 5 years.

It has been a special privilege to return to Ankara over these past 6 months to strengthen the communications and the friendship between our two peoples in all fields of private as well as official endeavors, including the fields of education, science, and health.

I know this committee and this Senate have strongly supported public diplomacy, and I have tried to make a special effort to communicate with the Turkish people and bring private American groups and Turks together.

I believe that increasing contacts and communications between Americans and Turks must be a primary means of advancing our interests on all of the issues we face together today.

So, Madam Chair, ranking member, Senator, if confirmed to continue my service as Ambassador in Ankara, as in my service in all other posts in the past, I will trust to your support and advice, and

that of your colleagues and constituents who are interested in the interests the United States has at stake in Turkey.

Thank you so much for this hearing.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ricciardone follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR FRANCIS J. RICCIARDONE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, having served in that capacity as a recess appointee since January 20, 2011. I am grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for their trust and confidence in me. With me today is my wife, Marie, who both studied and taught in Turkish universities. During my 33-year career in the Foreign Service, I have had the pleasure of having previously served three times in Turkey, most recently as the Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires from 1995 to 1999. Through more than three decades I have observed Turkey's continuing transformation into a more democratic, more open, and more economically vibrant, modern state and a player with growing influence on the world stage. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues, as well as with the many private American organizations with a strong interest in Turkey and throughout the region, to advance United States interests in this critically important and complex relationship.

Turkey remains as ever a key ally and strategic partner of the United States and an important member of the NATO alliance. It is also a member of the G20 with one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Noting Turkey's history as a majority Muslim nation and as a secular democratic state that respects the rule of law, President Obama has cited Turkey's "critical role in helping to shape mutual understanding and stability not only in its neighborhood, but around the world." If confirmed, I will continue to do everything possible to reinforce Turkish-American cooperation in support of our common goals.

For decades, Turkey and the United States have cooperated intensively to promote regional stability, including by countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; resolving regional conflicts; promoting energy security; expanding trade, investment, and economic development; and, essential and integral to all of these, strengthening democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Several such strategic priorities merge in cases of particularly immediate consequence, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, the quest for peace between Israel and all its neighbors, and Iran's evident pursuit of nuclear weapons. Other conflicts with historical antecedents require no less sustained and intensive joint attention and cooperation, including the unresolved issues of Cyprus and normalization of relations with Armenia. I have been privileged to serve in Ankara during the "Arab Spring," during which I have strived to enlist Turkish support for the NATO role in Libya, for a successful transition to democracy in Egypt, and pressure on the regime in Syria to cease its brutal repression and to heed the will of its people. Just as the Turkish Government has played an important role in promoting these political transitions, the Turkish Government and private sector are keen to support economic development in Egypt and Tunisia that are so critical to long-term stability in the region, by increasing their trade and investment in these countries. Wherever possible, they are looking for partnerships with U.S. companies.

Let me describe Turkey's role in relation to our foreign policy priorities. If confirmed, my continued responsibility will be to strengthen Turkey's cooperation with us in all of these areas, as a key bilateral partner and also as an essential NATO ally.

United States-Turkey cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan has been robust and critical to our success. Turkey shares our vision of a stable Iraq and actively helps the Iraqi people develop a sovereign state that is at peace with itself and its neighbors. This requires progress in Iraq's security, political, and economic infrastructure, and in each of these areas Turkey has been an essential partner for our mission. Turkey's high-level strategic dialogue with the Government of Iraq and its outreach to the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government have contributed to the stability of Iraq. Turkey also is contributing to Iraq's progress by hosting regional meetings on political and economic cooperation, and through trade and investment that promote Iraq's reconstruction and help develop Iraq's oil and electricity infrastructure.

Additionally, Turkey is a crucial logistics hub, supporting U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly 70 percent of the air cargo for our mission in Iraq transits Incirlik Air Base, which is also the primary refueling stop for flights to Afghanistan. Turkey provides blanket clearance for U.S. aircraft supporting these operations and authorizes the use of its bases and ports to support humanitarian and reconstruc-

tion operations in Iraq, as well as the retrograde of U.S. forces from Iraq over the course of 2011. The Habur Gate border crossing serves as a key line of communication to Iraq; through it, 25 percent of our fuel and 40 percent of other sustainment requirements enter Iraq. There are more than 1,700 U.S. military personnel stationed in Turkey. Turkey has a long tradition of hospitality to our service men and women, including hosting the USS *Eisenhower* in January.

Turkey is one of our strongest partners in the fight against international terrorism. Turkey and the United States are working together to fight the regional transit and support of international terrorists, and last month arrested an alleged al-Qaeda cell plotting to bomb western interests in Turkey, including the U.S. Embassy. I have urged the Turkish Government and Parliament to pass stronger legislation against terrorist financing, and hope the Parliament will pass the Government's bill when it reconvenes this autumn.

We support Turkey's foremost security objective of defeating the terrorist violence which the PKK continues to perpetrate, which has led to the deaths of over 30,000 Turks since the 1980s. We support Turkey's operations against the PKK; we cooperate with EU partners to cut off PKK facilitation efforts in Europe; and we support the growing cooperation between Turkey and Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, against the PKK elements that find refuge in Iraq. We are in consultations with Turkey to step up law enforcement cooperation against terrorism. Turkey's leaders also recognize the need for political, economic and cultural measures to counter PKK terrorism. Turkey's "National Unity Project" or "Democratic Opening" aims to improve the human rights and economic situation for Kurds and other communities of vulnerable groups in Turkey. We believe that further pursuit of this initiative can help not only to undermine the terrorism still conducted by the PKK, but it will also advance and strengthen Turkish democracy and the human rights of all Turks. A record number of Kurds were elected as independents to Parliament in June and we commend their professed commitment to participation in a non-violent, lawful political process to secure the full rights of all Turkey's Kurds as Turkish citizens.

From my current service in Ankara as well as my tenure as Deputy Ambassador in Kabul, I can attest that Turkey has also been an essential partner in Afghanistan, where it has longstanding cultural and historical ties and has been a leading proponent of Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Turkey shares our goal of a stable Afghanistan that can protect itself from al-Qaeda and any other terrorists who would use that country as a base for international terrorist attacks. Turkey has some 1,600 troops serving in the International Security Assistance Force, commands the Regional Command for Kabul, and this year has sent still more civilian humanitarian relief and development assistance experts to establish its second Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Jowzjan province. It is also a leader on training the Afghan National Security Forces. Turkey has pledged to train a brigade's worth of Afghan National Army troops. Just last week, I was proud to participate in the opening of Turkey's special training center in Sivas for the Afghan National Police. Turkey has also pledged \$300 million for development projects in Afghanistan, built schools and clinics, and invested in the repair or construction of bridges and roads and the drilling of new wells, as well as facilitated economic development through support to the agriculture, marble and carpet sectors. In addition to our cooperation with Turkey through NATO/ISAF and our two Embassies on the ground in Kabul, we see Turkey undertaking an influential and highly positive role in rallying international support for Afghanistan's economic development, and in fostering political reconciliation of its violent conflict with the Taliban. In support of cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Turkey has hosted trilateral summits in Turkey with the participation of both the Afghan and Pakistani Presidents, and later this year will host another summit of Afghanistan and its neighbors.

Turkey and Israel are both important partners of the United States. The two countries have shared vital political, economic, security, and military ties for many years. The strains in their relations since the May 2010 Gaza flotilla incident, risk setting back the vitally important interests of both those countries, and of the United States, in regional peace and stability. Therefore we have underscored to both countries the importance to them, to us, and their region of repairing their mutually beneficial relationship. Secretary Clinton continues to urge both sides to find a way to put the flotilla incident behind them, and we hope that efforts toward this goal over the past year will soon meet with success.

On Iran, we work closely with Turkey on a range of the challenges we face with Iran. Turkey shares a long border and history with Iran. Turkey has said that it shares the international community's concerns about the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, and repeatedly has reaffirmed its commitment to upholding U.N. Secu-

rity Council resolutions in this regard. But we have not always agreed on tactics regarding Iran, particularly with regard to sanctions. Turkey shared our disappointment that Iran failed to engage meaningfully in the talks hosted by Turkey in Istanbul last January between Iran and the U.N. Security Council's permanent five members plus Germany. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to urge Turkey to persuade Iran to engage directly and seriously with the IAEA and P5+1 on the international community's concerns about its nuclear program. On sanctions, we continue to urge Turkey to fully enforce U.N. sanctions, which Turkey has publicly pledged to implement. We also are engaging vigorously with Turkey to ensure that the CISADA (Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act) sanctions are fully respected and to educate Turkish entities of the consequences should Iranian companies attempt sanctioned transactions via Turkey.

The United States continues its longstanding support for Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union. The prospect of EU accession has been a strong impetus for Turkish reform. Over the past few years, Turkey has implemented meaningful political and economic reforms necessary for EU membership, but more needs to be done. Turkish citizens themselves are demanding further progress on promoting human rights and the rule of law, including freedom of the media and religious freedom. They seek, for example, the rights of minority religious institutions freely to own their property and operate their institutions. There could be no more powerful modern testimony to Turkey's historic legacy of religious tolerance than reopening the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary. Just this past month, I was privileged to join Secretary Clinton in advocating for the reopening of Halki Seminary and protecting the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate during her recent visit to Istanbul, and I will continue my advocacy until this is addressed. If confirmed, I look forward to celebrating the reopening of Halki Seminary with His All Holiness Bartholomew, and the leaders of the Government of Turkey (including the democratic opposition) who, I dare hope, will show the courage and foresight needed to redress a historical wrong.

The division of Cyprus has gone on far too long. The United States encourages the negotiations between the two communities under the auspices of the U.N. Secretary General, and we urge the leaders of the two communities to seize the moment to negotiate a settlement that reunifies the island into a bizonal, bicomunal federation. Turkey and Greece can play a constructive role in helping the Cypriot parties toward a lasting solution to their differences, and we continue to urge them to do so.

Facilitating regional integration is a high priority for the United States. Rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia will foster increased stability and prosperity in the entire Caucasus region. We commended the governments of Turkey and Armenia on signing the historic protocols on normalization of relations on October 10, 2009, in Zurich. During her visit last month, Secretary Clinton again urged Turkey to ratify the protocols, and we will continue to support programs that build understanding between Turks and Armenians. Last year, the Government of Turkey permitted Armenians to celebrate religious services at the ancient Akhtemar Church in Lake Van, for the first time in decades. I was glad to see increasing numbers of private Turkish citizens turn out this past spring in five cities across Turkey to protest the 2007 murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, and to call for justice against the perpetrators. Last week, the courts convicted and sentenced the murderer to 22 years in prison, and we understand that official investigations, urged by President Gul himself, continue into the conspiracy that reportedly supported the heinous assassination.

The President and Secretary Clinton have established economic cooperation with Turkey as a strategic priority, and have emphasized the importance of supporting American firms and promoting U.S.-Turkish trade and investment. During President Obama's April 2009 meeting with Turkish President Gul, the two leaders agreed to elevate our economic relations to the level of our already strong political and military relations. To follow through on this commitment, the United States and Turkey launched a Cabinet-level dialogue—the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation—during Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Washington in December 2009. In addition to our official dialogues, we have launched a public-private sector U.S.-Turkey Business Council to advise the U.S. and Turkish Governments on strategies for increasing trade and relationships, improving the business climate, and eliminating impediments to trade and investment. Turkey is a leading focus in the President's New Export Initiative to double U.S. exports globally in 5 years. Turkey's economic role has only grown in importance since 2009, as its booming economy is increasingly important to the global economy and to propelling regional growth. Turkey has set an ambitious goal of becoming a top-10 economy by 2023, which will triple the size of the economy and create more

opportunities for U.S. firms. The Turkish Government and private business associations enthusiastically have supported our Global Entrepreneurship Program, and our "Partnership for a New Beginning," both intended to foster a culture of entrepreneurship, especially among the young.

Building on our close cooperation in the 1990s that helped make Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) a reality, the United States and Turkey are working together to bring Caspian gas to European markets for the first time through a new route called the "Southern Corridor." We welcomed the June 2010 agreement signed by Turkey and Azerbaijan on the gas purchase and transit of Azerbaijani gas to Turkey as an important milestone in laying the foundation for the Southern Corridor. The corridor would provide commercial benefit for the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia and also create a long-term partnership based on mutual interests with Europe. Overseeing the safe passage of oil through the Bosphorus Straits and the transport of oil through the BTC pipeline, which pumps nearly a million barrels of oil a day to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, Turkey plays an important role in world energy markets.

Many Americans, including my family and I, have had wonderful experiences living and working in Turkey. It has been a special privilege to return to Ankara over these past 6 months to strengthen the communications and friendship between our two peoples in all fields of private as well as official endeavors, including the fields of education, science, and health—in which my wife has practiced while on previous service in Turkey. Led by this committee, the Senate has formally recognized the importance of public diplomacy. Increasing contacts and communications between Americans and Turks must be a primary means of advancing our interests on all issues we face today. If confirmed, I pledge that all members of U.S. Mission Turkey will continue warmly to welcome the advice and support of the American people, both through our elected representatives and through direct and continuous contact and communication. In particular, I would pledge the highest standards of service to the American community and American travelers, whether for business or for the private advocacy of the cause of freedom and human rights supported by our administration and our Congress.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, if confirmed to continue my service as Ambassador, in my service in Ankara as in my past service at other posts, I will trust to your support and advice, and that of your colleagues.

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.
Ambassador Ford.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT S. FORD, OF VERMONT, TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

Ambassador FORD. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, Senator Lugar, Senator Coons, I'm really honored to appear before you today, and I'm grateful for the trust and confidence placed in me by President Obama and Secretary Clinton in renominating me to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Syrian Arab Republic at a time when it is more critical than ever that our voice be heard clearly by the Syrian regime and, more importantly, by the Syrian people themselves.

Under the President's recess appointment, I have been working in Syria since late January. I have to say it has not been an easy job, but the strategic stakes and the strategic opportunities for us that we have in Syria now are quite dramatic. And there is a hugely important story about the struggle for human dignity now under way in Syria.

I arrived in Syria about a month before the protests started. In the past 5 months, those protests have grown slowly in size, and they now extend across all of Syria. The protesters demand respect for their basic rights, freedom of speech, freedom to march peacefully, and they demand an end to corruption, and above all they demand that their government treat them with dignity.

I want to emphasize here, we talk about the Arab Spring in Washington. The key word is dignity—treating people with dignity.

But government's response has been brutal. It has been outrageous. Nearly 2,000 people have been killed by the Syrian security forces and thousands more arrested and held in barbaric conditions. One cannot have but admiration for the protesters' courage and also their ingenuity, and that they have stayed generally peaceful despite bullets, beatings, and the constant risk of arrest and torture.

In my 6 months, I have seen two principal tasks in front of me. First, to insist to the Syrian officials, and to convince them, that opening more space for the Syrian people to express themselves is vital for the credibility of those officials, for the credibility of that government, and for Syria more largely.

There have been a few small positive steps taken by the government. They have released many political prisoners. They have allowed some meetings by the political opposition.

However, as I said, in general, their behavior has been atrocious. And their recent actions that we read about in the newspaper these days only underline again that the Syrian Government is unwilling to lead the democratic transition that the Syrian people themselves demand.

My second vital function in Damascus is to work with the Syrian opposition. I have spent enormous amounts of time discussing with them their ideas for the future and discussing with them the kinds of questions that other Syrians and the international community will ask about them.

It's really important now to give Syrians an ear and to amplify their voices, especially when the international media is barred from Syria.

I have been trying to draw the attention of the Syrian regime and the attention of the international community to the legitimate grievances the Syrian people have with their government. The Syrian people want to be heard.

I wish the members of this committee could have seen how enthusiastic the protesters in Hama were to have a chance to talk to the American Ambassador.

The crisis in Syria, however, is not about the United States directly. As I said, it offers us opportunities to promote respect for our principles and our ideals. The Syrian crisis offers us opportunities eventually to reinforce stability and peace in the Middle East.

But Syrians must resolve the crisis. The manner in which the crisis is resolved has to be a Syrian one.

My job is to help establish the space for Syrian activists and for Syrian thinkers, for Syrian business people, and for the Syrian people generally to develop and organize the political transition that must occur if Syria is to be stable again.

Syria's 23 million people are already thinking about what happens when Assad is no longer President of Syria. I believe that we and the Syrian people share a vision of what Syria could be, an open and democratic country where governance is based on consent of the governed, a unified and tolerant country where Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Alawites, Christians and Druze see themselves as Syrians first, and they celebrate Syria's rich cultural diversity;

a strong country at peace with its neighbors and exercising a stabilizing influence in the region; a strong country that plays a responsible role in the broader international community; and a country that does not support Iranian efforts to destabilize the region or give support to terrorist groups like Hezbollah.

As the President said on July 31, Syria will be a better place when a democratic transition goes forward. I and my team in Damascus, my colleagues at the Department of State and throughout the U.S. Government, and, most importantly, the Syrian people are working to make that vision a reality.

Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee, and I look forward to responding to questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Ford follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ROBERT S. FORD

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I am grateful for the trust and confidence placed in me by President Obama and Secretary Clinton in re-nominating me to serve as United States Ambassador to the Syrian Arab Republic at a time when it is more critical than ever that our voice be heard clearly by the Syrian regime and, more importantly, the Syrian people.

I last testified before this committee on March 16, 2010. Almost 1 year to the day later, the Syrian regime sparked what has become a nationwide uprising when it responded with deadly force to a peaceful protest over the arrest of a handful of youths in Dara'a. Since March 2011, over 1,600 people have been killed and more than 10,000 arrested in a ruthless attempt to cow the Syrian people into submission—an attempt that has failed. The Secretary reiterated on August 1 that President Assad has lost his legitimacy with the Syrian people. And the President on July 31 laid out my instructions: to stand with the Syrian people, increase our pressure on the Syrian regime, and work with other countries to isolate the Assad government.

I want to salute the courage of the Syrians who risk bullets or vicious beatings or arrest and torture but who will not be intimidated from demanding their government respect their basic rights. They are demanding nothing outlandish. They demand simply that the Syrian Government respect the basic rights laid out in the United Nations Charter of Human Rights—a charter that the Syrian Government signed. They want their government to respect the freedoms of speech and assembly, the right to just and fair governance, and freedom from the fears and wants that have resulted from decades of corrupt, incompetent, and brutal rule at the hands of an unaccountable clique. They want to be treated like human beings—with respect and dignity.

My team and I see it as an integral part of our mission to give these people an ear and a voice. To amplify their hopes and legitimate grievances so that the international community and most importantly the Syrian regime pays attention. I am convinced that my French colleague and I were welcomed in Hama because after weeks of fearless and peaceful protest, and on the verge of a potential crackdown, someone from outside Syria took notice. I wish you could have seen the eagerness of the Hama people to talk to me about their experiences with the Syrian intelligence services and how they were determined to push their demands for respect and dignity from their government no matter what the pressure from the Syrian Government.

When I return to Syria in a couple days, I will continue through my actions and my presence to demonstrate solidarity with the Syrian people and our rejection of the regime's empty promises, senseless violence, and sectarian fear-mongering.

Assad and his circle will not endure forever, but it is not entirely clear who or what will follow. An additional focus of my work on the ground, which I do not advertise widely, is getting to know the leading activists and assessing their needs and opportunities for the United States to help. They are independent. They do not want American military involvement.

The crisis in Syria is not about the United States directly. It does offer us opportunities to promote respect for our principles and ideals. It offers us opportunities eventually to reinforce stability and peace in the Middle East. But Syrians must resolve the crisis. The manner in which it is resolved must be a Syrian one. I see my

job as helping establish the space for Syrian thinkers, political activists, and those who lead the street protests to organize their plan for the political transition that must occur if Syria is to know stability again. We have had some success in establishing that space through my frank discussions with elements in the Syrian leadership who claim to want a political solution to the crisis. And the Syrian opposition is slowly becoming an effective, broad-based opposition.

While the regime has generally dismissed new U.S. sanctions as "business as usual," President Obama's decision to take the unprecedented step of designating Bashar Assad personally, and our efforts to coordinate that step with the Europeans, absolutely stung. Our coordination on multilateral steps, such as at the United Nations, also stung. And new sanctions, coupled with the regime's own violence and mismanagement, have signaled to markets that Syria is increasingly "radioactive." Trade, tourism, investment, and foreign reserves are down, and the economy is hurting badly. Some of Assad's close business associates have contacted us to plead their cases. Another part of my job in Damascus is to identify how we can apply unilateral American actions to boost pressure and how working with our partners on multilateral actions we can help bring this crisis to a quicker and less bloody end. A new U.N. Security Council resolution would be useful in that effort. As we mull our steps, we aim to ensure that we neither harm the Syrian people nor prejudice their ability to recover economically, socially, and politically.

It is time for us to start thinking about the day after Assad. Syria's 23 million citizens already have. I believe that we and they share a vision of what Syria could be: an open and democratic country where governance is based on consent of the governed. A unified and tolerant country where Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Alawis, Christians and Druze see themselves as Syrians first and celebrate their nation's diversity. A strong country at peace with its neighbors and exercising a stabilizing influence in the region. A strong country playing a responsible role in the broader international community. A country that does not support Iranian efforts to destabilize the region or give support to terrorist groups like Hezbollah. As the President said on July 31, Syria will be a better place when a democratic transition goes forward.

I, my team in Damascus, my colleagues at the Department of State, and throughout the U.S. Government and most importantly the Syrian people are working to make this vision a reality.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you all very much for your testimony.

As I indicated in introducing Ambassadors Eisen and Ricciardone, you were both recess appointments, so I would really like to begin this afternoon by asking you each to address the situations that required your recess appointments, and why you believe the Senate should confirm you this year?

And I'll ask you to begin, Mr. Eisen.

Ambassador EISEN. Madam Chair, as you noted, the Czechs are some of our closest allies in the region and in the world, and an Ambassador was needed after a hiatus to work on critical issues like Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, and the potential \$27.5 billion civil nuclear export opportunity worth thousands of United States jobs.

It is my understanding that my nomination was held over concerns about a personnel matter handled by my office when I worked in the White House. We attempted to resolve those concerns, but were unable to do so. And given the important security and economic issues on which we worked with the Czechs, the President determined that a recess appointment was appropriate and, indeed, was necessary.

Since my arrival in Prague, we have made strong progress on all those issues, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, the nuclear contract, and many other important areas in the relationship. Those remain as vital as ever.

And I believe that progress, the energy that not only I have put in, but the entire Embassy team in Prague together have put in,

and the good work that they and we have done, I think, is the best case for the continued presence of an Ambassador in the Czech Republic.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Ricciardone.

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to address that question.

As you pointed out yourself, and as Senator Lugar has pointed out, Turkey is a pivotal country at a critical place geographically, in a very tense moment of conflict throughout the region. It has influence in all of those issues that are of strategic concern to the United States, moreover, internally is going through a hugely important and deliberate process of change, the Turkish people deciding their own direction and their future.

And they do look to us as they go through this. They care about what we think.

We have an extraordinarily talented Embassy team that I found on arrival in January, and there is one now, even through our summer transition. They do the heavy lifting of diplomacy every day, and they do a lot without an Ambassador, in fact.

But the fact is that having an Ambassador present improves the United States access and the ability to speak every day with people at the top of government and the different institutions of government, including the military as well as the civilians and with the public in a way that cannot be done otherwise.

So I am very grateful that the President appointed me. I am grateful to have been there in particular throughout this period of the Arab Spring with so much going on in the region, where Turkey has swung in and helped play a stabilizing role in those transitions.

I regret I was unable to resolve the concerns of an individual member of the Senate, a former member of the Senate. I will be honored and grateful to address any concerns from any member regarding my past service or my current service in Turkey or anywhere else.

And I thank you for the opportunity to get at some of that today, if there are any concerns. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

As I understand, part of the questioning or questions that were raised had to do with your tenure in Iraq and as Ambassador to Egypt. Were there any particular concerns that you would like to address today that were raised?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. I was very proud of my service in Iraq. Before Saddam Hussein went down, I worked with the Iraqi opposition, the democratic opposition to Saddam Hussein, under President Clinton and Secretary Albright.

My job was to help organize, support, and invigorate the Iraqis who were working for a post-Saddam future, and it was really a privilege to be part of that. I did that to the best of my ability and closely worked with Members of the Congress who were keenly interested.

If there are particular questions, I am not entirely sure what they are. I'm sure I must have antagonized some members of the

Iraqi opposition. I was upholding American policy, not necessarily what all Iraqis wanted.

I worked very closely in Egypt with not only the government but very much with civil society. The theory of the case we had was we had to press on all fronts, starting with a very stubborn President Mubarak, who was committed and set in his ways; and with the people around him, with his government, with his state, and very much with civil society.

I was privileged to go to the headquarters of opposition movements to continue the flow of funding provided by the United States through USAID to civil society groups. I understand that remains an issue with the Government of Egypt, but I was proud to continue to do that, and I took up the issue with President Mubarak himself and told him we were determined to keep doing that.

Again, I'm glad to answer to any particular questions that may come up.

I made it a point to meet with all of the religious community leaders. It was one of the great experiences of my life to have a Passover Seder in Cairo while the imprecations against the pharaoh were being called down.

I met with His Holiness Pope Shenouda many, many times, and sought his advice on how best to advance the cause of freedom for Egypt's Christians. I met with the Greek patriarch. I met with the Russian Orthodox patriarch.

I took up the cause of the Baha'is with Mubarak himself and had a small success on that front.

I worked hard and won some and lost others, but that is the nature of our business.

Glad, again, to address any particular questions on that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you for the effort to clarify some of those concerns that had been raised.

I was very surprised, as I am sure a lot of other people were, to see so many of Turkey's generals step down over the weekend. And I just wondered if you could give us your assessment of what that means for the civilian government, what it means in terms of the military, how do we interpret what happened?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As to what this means for Turkey, its democracy, its civilian government, the Turks themselves are analyzing all of that and debating it and deciding what it means. And we're asking them.

For what it means for the United States and our security relationship with them, I am very, very confident that it has not caused a setback in any way. On the contrary, this time of the year, there is always a turnover in the leadership, in any case. This turnover happened in a different way, by means of a resignation under evident protest for particular reasons articulated by General Kösener. We look forward to working with the new leadership.

The security relationship, though, goes beyond individuals. It is based on institutions. Turkey is a state of law and strong institutions that are durable even though they're dynamic and in change. I have every confidence that our security relationship will continue to be strong, that our military leaders will meet with the new Turkish military leaders.

I look forward on getting back to Ankara to meeting with the new military leadership. I am very confident things will be just fine.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. My time is up.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Ambassador Eisen, the Czech Republic was expected to host missile defense radar under the Bush administration's missile defense plan for Europe, but that plan was scrapped in 2009 in favor of the so-called phased adaptive approach.

Even though Prague recently announced it was not interested in the administration's current proposal for participation in the phased adaptive approach, it appears open to considering future participation in projects.

What do you see as the lay of the land there? Has the discussion in any way disrupted our relationship? And how would you propose we proceed?

Ambassador EISEN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

It has not. This has not disrupted the relationship. This has been an active subject of conversation.

And I am pleased to tell you that the government is strongly supportive of the NATO missile defense plan, the phased adaptive approach as adopted at Lisbon.

You are, of course, quite right that an earlier conversation that we had with the Czech Government about the shared early warning system, which was prior to the adoption of a NATO missile defense strategy at Lisbon, was overtaken by events.

The Czechs felt that the limited data that they would receive under the SEW system, the Shared Early Warning, was no longer necessary today, although we previously made the offer because of the broader adoption of the phased adaptive approach.

But part of the result of the good conversations, the good partnership between the Czech Government and United States, including the United States Embassy in Prague, has been strong, strong embrace of the phased adaptive approach as adopted by NATO at Lisbon. So it's full-steam ahead. We're in as good a place as ever on that.

Senator LUGAR. Let me say, you've noted that a key priority for the United States policy in the Czech Republic is to enhance regional energy security through means including diversification. In your view, what are the most pressing areas for cooperation in this sphere?

Ambassador EISEN. There is a critical energy security issue in the Czech Republic. One hundred percent of the Czech Republic's nuclear fuel is supplied by Russia, 70 percent of their oil, 65 percent of their gas. We've made diversification a priority of our engagement.

The greatest single opportunity to achieve energy security is through the expansion of the Czech civil nuclear capacity. They have six outstanding high-functioning nuclear reactors now, and a very strong regulator. Unlike other nations, they have a very strong national commitment, not just a government commitment, but strong public support, for this critical alternative energy source in the 21st century.

And we've really focused there not just on the Westinghouse bid to expand Temelin, which has such a high dollar value, almost \$28 billion potentially, and so many U.S. jobs. But that's really just one part of this partnership, and we have worked very hard in Embassy Prague, and, indeed, throughout the United States Government on the whole partnership. One of the first things I did was come back to talk to all of the interlocutors and work on a whole-of-government approach to build a 21st century partnership between our two countries that goes beyond just that bid.

So we're working on R&D together. We're working on education, on regulation together in both our countries. And that has been an important part of our work.

I traveled recently with the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic to Texas to sign an agreement under our Joint Declaration on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, which we have between the Czechs and Texas A&M University, a leading provider of degrees in civil nuclear engineering, and the Czech CENEN, the Civil Nuclear Engineering Network in the Czech Republic, so our two nations can build in this area in the 21st century.

Senator LUGAR. Is there public support in the Czech Republic? That is, do ordinary citizens understand this problem?

Ambassador EISEN. There is, Senator Lugar.

One of the most gratifying moments for me in returning to my mother's homeland was the rational and the calm approach that the Czech Republic took post-Fukushima to their energy needs, the need for energy security, to diversify energy sources. There is strong national consensus in favor of expanding nuclear, and a strong government consensus.

And some of the risks factors that one sees elsewhere, whether it's tsunamis or earthquakes, are not present there. So it is a very, very good location for that expansion.

We are very pleased to work, again, not just on that bid, which is certainly important, but on a broad partnership for civil nuclear energy security that is a model of how our two nations can work together.

Senator LUGAR. Ambassador Ricciardone, I have two parts of this.

First of all, Turkey remains central for the United States and European efforts, including the Nabucco pipeline project and other initiatives, to vie for greater European energy independence. I would like your views on what progress has been achieved recently, and where the Nabucco project might stand, as opposed to rival pipeline projects?

Second, Turkey has been in negotiation with the United States and NATO on Missile Defense Radar for several years with no agreement finalized, which as I understand is due to several outstanding Turkish concerns related to intelligence-sharing with Israel. How close are we to concluding that deal?

Can you make a comment on Nabucco, as well as the intelligence-sharing situation?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Senator, on the southern energy transit corridor, of which the Nabucco is one very good option, I can say that we are intensively engaged. Diplomats always say that, and

we always say we're optimistic and there is progress. I believe there actually is.

It is complicated. There are several governments involved. There are several companies involved. We are in touch with all of them at top levels.

I can tell you, without betraying any confidences, that Secretary Clinton raised this issue with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Turkey just 2 weeks ago. Ambassador Morningstar was along. She also raised it with President Gul.

We've been pushing. Prime Minister Erdogan went on to Azerbaijan since then. I have not had a readout of his discussions there, but I know he was intending to talk about this issue.

A key, of course, is getting gas from the Caspian to fill whatever pipeline is going to come down there. That is the next step.

We're hoping within the next month there will be an agreement by the companies concerned, to fill the pipeline, come to terms on transit fees, and all those technical issues. We're seized with it. We're working on it, and we're hoping.

On missile defense, Turkey did support, of course, the NATO statement at Lisbon. They support the NATO effort to have the phased adaptive approach radar system. We've moved well beyond that generality to have detailed technical discussions and legal discussions with the government of Turkey. Naturally, they want to understand what this will mean for Turkey in all its technical, political, legal, and certainly security aspects, how it will make Turkey more secure, as well as the rest of NATO.

And we believe we are addressing those questions in full and substantive detail. We hope that the Turkish Government will feel it has enough information to make a decision very soon. I will be racing back to Ankara to try to find out more in regard to that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Madam Chairlady.

Congratulations to both of you on your nominations.

Ambassador Ricciardone, I enjoyed the last conversation we had, and I want to pursue some items that have developed since we spoke. One of them is with reference to Cyprus.

As we know, the parties are engaged in pretty intense talks facilitated by the United Nations Secretary. I look at the developments, and what's happened with the military in Turkey, which has, in my view, been part of the challenge in getting to a solution in Cyprus. And I look at this new development and wonder how that affects the possibility of making real progress.

On the flip side, I look at Prime Minister Erdogan's recent statements, which is to forget about what we were negotiating in the past. This is now a two-state solution, which is different than a bizonal, bicomunal federation, and urging Turkish Cypriots to multiply in greater numbers or expect to have more settlers from Anatolia. That doesn't seem to be in line with moving toward a solution.

So can you give me an update on your perspective, since Turkey is a key player, as to whether or not we're going to be able to achieve a resolution to the division of Cyprus? Are those facts complicating opportunities? How do you see it?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Senator, I wish I could do the diplomatic thing and say I am optimistic and there is progress, but I don't want to mislead.

On the first part of your question, I don't believe the changes in the military leadership in Turkey will make any difference one way or the other in terms of the prospects for the solution we've been after for so long in Cyprus. I just don't think it is entirely germane. The military is not calling the shots on this policy of the government of Turkey.

As to the Prime Minister's statements, I would rather not parse his statements and say anything here that makes it any harder than it already is for the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative Downer. He has succeeded in getting President Christofias and the Turkish community leader, Eroglou, to commit to meeting with some frequency, I believe twice a week, from now into the fall to press, press, press, for the only shape of the solution that anyone has ever considered possible, certainly that we have, which is a bizonal, bicomunal federation. We continue to uphold that, support it.

Again, the Secretary of State and Assistant Secretary Gordon raised this when they were in Istanbul with the Turkish leadership just a couple of weeks ago.

Senator MENENDEZ. But you really do not believe that Eroglou could make his own decisions notwithstanding what the Turkish Government's views are? Do you believe that he could make independent decisions notwithstanding what the Turkish Government believes?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. I think what the Turkish Government wants and believes is extremely salient.

I would point out, though, and even since I have been back to Turkey this time, there have been some tensions in the relationship between the community in Northern Cyprus and Ankara that have come out; there have been protests, even, back and forth.

So they identify themselves as Cypriots, from my understanding, Turkish Cypriots to be sure, but Cypriots. And that is a distinct identity.

Beyond that, I wouldn't wish to comment or to hazard a guess as to how far Mr. Eroglou would go in making decisions that would be at variance from Ankara.

Senator MENENDEZ. Yes, I wasn't asking you so much about Eroglou as much as your assignment in Turkey, and its influence in this decisionmaking process.

I have been following this for almost 20 years now, and it is clear to me that Turkey has a very significant influence on whether or not this issue is resolved in a way that it is acceptable both to Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as well as to the international community.

And I just get a sense, based upon the Prime Minister's most recent statements, that it has become more, not less onerous, to try to achieve that goal.

Let me turn to another issue, which I'm sure you will want to be diplomatic about, and that is the question of Turkey's relationship with Armenia. From your view, has the United States ever denied the fact that there was an Armenian genocide?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. I stand behind President Obama's characterization of the Yedz Meghern, as the Armenians themselves call it, the tragic massacre, murder of a million and a half men, women, and children marched to their deaths in 1915.

I stand behind our characterization of that, and our efforts of what we're trying to do now.

Senator MENENDEZ. Would you disagree with President Obama's statements as Senator Obama?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. I would not disagree with my President and his characterization of this, of course not.

Senator MENENDEZ. Would you disagree with Vice President Biden's characterization as Senator Biden?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. They are both now my superiors, and I certainly would not disagree with their comments, with their—

Senator MENENDEZ. Would you disagree with the Secretary of State's characterization of the Armenian genocide as Senator Clinton?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. I certainly would not disagree with my Secretary of State.

Senator MENENDEZ. You are wise beyond your years. [Laughter.]

Each of these individuals, the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, and the Secretary of State, at the time they were Senators, acknowledged the fact of the Armenian genocide.

And I appreciate, Ambassador, your responses, but here we are again, playing an incredibly difficult set of circumstances, where we have nominees to Armenia going to Armenian genocide commemorations and never being able to use the word genocide. We have our Ambassador to Turkey, which is an important party in trying to get beyond this and moving toward the future, but if you can't recognize the historical facts, you can't move forward.

And we have our President, Vice President, and Secretary of State, all who very clearly as members of this body recognized that there was an Armenian genocide.

It is very difficult to understand how we move forward in that respect, and a very difficult situation we put our diplomats in in that respect. But I appreciate your answers.

And I have other questions, but I see Mr. Ford is coming back, I guess, at some point?

Senator SHAHEEN. He will be here for the second panel.

Senator MENENDEZ. All right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

And I want to thank both of the nominees for your public service and for your testimony here today. I know that the time is short, and we are limited in the topics we can cover, but I do want to start with Ambassador Ricciardone, as we are going to be talking later at some length about Syria and the massacre that is going on there.

It's been my sense, and I think it is a widely shared view, that over a number of years, if not for more than a generation, Turkey has been able to play significant role as a regional balancer of power. Turkey's influence in the region has been very constructive at times.

And this is one of those times when the world needs the help that Turkey can provide as it relates to Syria. These acts of violence against the people of Syria are unacceptable. The Syrian regime no longer has legitimacy because of those acts of violence.

I know that Prime Minister Erdogan has been pretty clear, and I think pretty strong, in his statements regarding what has been happening in Syria. But I would ask you to reflect upon and give us your sense of what Turkey's perspective is on this violence, what Turkey can do in the near term to put pressure on the Syrian regime, and how Turkey can be a constructive force within the region on this central question.

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Senator, thank you for that question.

In fact, we have been engaged with Prime Minister Erdogan directly. I personally have taken a message to him from President Obama. The President has spoken with him personally. The Secretary did just a couple of weeks ago.

He, President Gul, and the Foreign Minister have all had Syria very high on their scope, because, as they point out, as important as Egypt and Tunisia and Libya all are in their transitions, Turkey shares an 850-kilometer border with Syria.

There are family relationships. There is an important trading relationship. Any instability in Syria could have direct security and economic repercussions on Turkey's vital national interests.

As you pointed out, Senator, the Prime Minister back in June had spoken out against what he called the barbarity of the Fourth Brigade action against Jisr al-Shughour in northern Syria.

Just yesterday, President Gul spoke, I think for all Turks, responding to the images on Turkish televisions of what was going on in Hama by saying that he was horrified and shocked. And he even noted that, if necessary, sanctions may be on the table.

This was moving very forward. It's one thing when Western countries express our outrage and talk about these things, but when a neighbor as powerful as Turkey says these things, I have to hope that the Syrian Government will pay attention.

I don't think I'd be betraying a confidence: I think the Prime Minister has made very clear in public a conversation with a Senate delegation just about a month ago where, among other times, we pressed to find out what the Turks were thinking, the Prime Minister.

He made clear that he was very upset, worried, and concerned, but he believed that Turkey had to exhaust every other avenue to induce change and reform in Syria and get them to stop the violence against their own people, to listen to their people. He admitted that they had been trying hard, and they had not been very successful.

The United States, we find ourselves in the same position. We've tried everything to encourage, press, pressure for reform. My colleague will speak to those efforts in a few minutes. And we heard President Gul yesterday expressing Turkey's sense that perhaps they had reached something like the end of that patience. We'll have to see.

Senator CASEY. I know there's more we could talk about with regard to Syria, but I wanted to move to the question of Iran. We know that the Iranian regime has been the subject of a broad array

of sanctions during the past year, and that this has been a very positive step in the right direction.

There's a lot of unanimity in the region, and well beyond the region, about sanctions against the Iranian regime. How do you think the Government of Turkey can become a constructive force in urging Turkish companies and other businesses in the region to comply with those Iranian sanctions?

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Thank you, Senator.

The Turkish leadership at all levels, whenever we speak about Iran, are emphatic that they oppose any Iranian effort to acquire weapons of mass destruction. They point out that they'd be the first victims not only of such a special weapon but of a race for such weapons in the region, which they do not want to see Iran unleash.

They assert that they are firmly enforcing United Nations Security Council sanctions, including under 1929, for which they didn't vote.

Beyond that, we have asked for specific help. They say that the United States laws, specific U.S. sanctions, the CISADA, in particular, does not apply to Turkey. But they acknowledge that Turkish firms can be affected. And Turkish firms will have to make a choice under our law, as to whether to deal with America and American companies or Iranian ones.

We've asked them to go beyond that and help publicize what that means in technical detail, and if banks or other companies want to do business with Iran, help them understand. We're putting out this information. We at the U.S. Embassy are glad to spread that information. And we asked Turkish regulators and government entities to point out and remind their companies the choices they're going to have to face, and make the information further available in Turkish to their companies. We're working with them.

Senator CASEY. Let me just say in conclusion, with regard to Cyprus, I'd associate myself with Senator Menendez's comments about that subject.

And I know, Ambassador Eisen, we don't have time to ask you a question, but we'll submit something in writing. I think you are aware of the high regard I have for you as well. And we have a lot of mutual friends in Pennsylvania. Thank you.

Ambassador EISEN. Thank you, Senator Casey.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I want to thank Ambassadors Ricciardone, Eisen, and Ford for your service over the past year. I clarify that, in my view, you all three have served with distinction and advocate for your confirmation, so you can continue in the strong leadership roles.

I won't stay for the second panel, so I wanted to particularly commend Ambassador Ford for demonstrating real leadership and resolve in the face of very difficult circumstances in Syria by both personally going to and meeting with demonstrators and protesters in some very difficult circumstances, and in advocating for our values and our interests as a nation.

I hope it is clear that many in this body share Secretary Clinton's statement that President Assad has lost legitimacy to lead and very grave concern about the path forward in Syria.

And as it relates to Turkey, I'm very concerned about recent events about what this weekend's resignation of military leadership really means, about the tension between the secular military traditions and foundations in the modern Turkish state, and the increasingly Islamist tendencies of some in the current administration. And I'm very concerned about Turkey's relationship with Israel.

To Ambassador Ricciardone, you've chosen a particularly interesting post to return to, as the questions from other members of the panel suggested, whether it's the relations with Cyprus, with Greece, the ongoing challenges in Iran, in Syria, the relationship with Israel.

There's plenty we could dedicate our time to, and I mean no disrespect to Ambassador Eisen, who serves with one of our closest and best allies, but Turkey presents a rich menu of potential questions to pursue.

Your last comment there about the choice that Turkish companies must make between facing sanctions under CISADA is something I strongly support, and I appreciate Senator Casey, raising the issue.

I think it is very critical that we engage Turkish business. So I'm grateful for your leadership in the U.S.-Turkey Business Council in promoting entrepreneurship and opening United States markets. But I would also urge your aggressive engagement to the extent appropriate in clarifying our very strong concerns as a nation about Iran and its development.

I was pleased to hear in response to previous questions your view that Prime Minister Erdogan is being engaged and effective in advocating for I think what is a very broadly shared multinational concern over the tragic events in Syria and over the, I would view it, as crimes against humanity by the Assad regime in murdering their own people.

I also want to associate myself with Senator Menendez's questions about Cyprus and ask you two questions, if I could, briefly.

The first would be, what have you been able to do in order to promote religious freedom? You referenced to meeting with His Holiness Bartholomew. What path forward do you think there might be for restoring the property and the Halki Theological Seminary? And what could we be doing to be a more effective partner with you in advocating for religious tolerance and openness in Turkish society?

And then second, what's your assessment of the state of Turkish-Israeli relations? Turkey, for a very long time, was a vital ally of Israel, and it's my hope that the recent changes in military leadership may open a window for improved relations.

I recognize this is a very difficult moment and getting past the difficulties of last year's flotilla incident are quite difficult.

So given the limitations of your role as a diplomatic representative of the United States, I would welcome any insights you'd had for us in how we strengthen business ties and recognize that they are a wonderful ally in a conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, and have stood by us in NATO and in many contexts, while pressing forward religious freedom and the importance of our strategic relationship with Israel.

Ambassador RICCIARDONE. Senator, thank you for all those questions.

Let me start with religious freedom first and then go on to Israel, and if you wish to pursue Cyprus and CISADA, we can do that as well.

On religious freedom, I have raised this question with all the leaders I've been privileged to see, and I made it a point to call on the community leaders as well.

I wanted the community leaders' perspective, not only on the property issues. And it's not only with the Greek Orthodox of course, the senior patriarchate, but also the Armenian community, the Syrians, have their own parallel sorts of issues, and I've gone into some detail with them.

We've learned the legal questions. They all have legal cases at one level or another in the Turkish courts, which they're prepared to take on to international courts.

I don't want to betray any of their confidences in these legal things, but they are encouraged by the first-ever contacts they're having with high leaders of the state, both substantive ones regarding their issues, and in things that really matter in that part of the world in particular, and that is honor and dignity and respect.

The religious community leaders have had the first-ever visits by high officials of the state to them—not by themselves to the offices of the Prime Minister and the Governor, but Governors and the Prime Minister coming to them. That has not happened before, or in anyone's memory at least, in the modern history of the republic.

When I've raised these with high officials of the state, they say, why should you be surprised? We are not afraid of religion.

And very interestingly, they follow our debates about personal freedom and religious freedom. And they say, "here's how you can understand this, American Ambassador. In your country, you have in recent years made a distinction between freedom of religion and the concept of freedom from religion. And for too long in our modern republic, we focused on preventing the intrusion of religion in our national life and political life. We're quite comfortable to be observant Muslims. Please don't call us Islamists, by the way," they tell us. "But to the extent, someone is praying as a Christian or a Jew, it really doesn't bother us at all. Why should it? It's no threat to the state. On the contrary, we're rather proud of our diversity, and we're happy to have them do it."

"As to the property issues, let us take a fresh look at this and make sure that they get justice."

I'm very hopeful. Again, I don't want to betray any confidences. I don't want to overpromise. But I dare be hopeful that Halki Seminary in particular will be resolved. It's His All Holiness's anniversary of ordination this year, his 40th year as a priest, and I know he would very much like to see that resolved this year. We would, too.

On Israel, I can't speak for Israel—I've spent time there. I have Israeli friends. I don't claim expertise. But I feel very certain, having discussed this at length with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, certainly the military leadership, that all these Turks, whatever their feelings, misgivings, and irritation over the terrible flotilla incident of last year and, over events in Gaza, they

understand that to influence events in the region, to be part of a more peaceful and prosperous region, which is in their vital national interest, they need to have a normal, fruitful, respectful, and full diplomatic dialogue with Israel. And they want to get back to that.

We've worked very much with both sides. We've reminded each side of the stake they have in the relationship with the other. And neither side really needs any reminding; they know the importance of it.

The Secretary of State, again, has been working on this personally through her recent visit and otherwise.

I dare to hope that Turkey and Israel will figure this out, and I certainly hope to see a Turkish Ambassador back in Tel Aviv very, very soon.

Let me end there, if I may.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much for your hard work, Mr. Ambassador. It's a vital strategic relationship, and I'm grateful for your advocacy on behalf of the people of the United States with the Republic of Turkey.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Coons.

I have to go to preside over the Senate in just a few minutes, but I did want to raise one more question for Ambassador Eisen before I go.

Critics of the Obama administration's reset policy with Russia have suggested that engagement with Russia would come at the expense of our allies in Central and Eastern Europe. I wonder if you could speak to the Czech Republic's view of the administration's reset efforts with Russia.

Ambassador EISEN. I think that the Czech Republic has come to understand and appreciate the spirit of the reset with Russia and the benefits that that confers, not just for the United States-Russian relationship but in the region.

Of course, the President has made Prague a centerpiece of these issues, going to Prague twice, including—I had the privilege to accompany him last year for the signing of the START Treaty with President Medvedev.

I was very pleased. I think it is a token of the—and indeed, more than a token, a recognition of the importance of these issues that my Czech government colleagues affirmatively embrace the so-called Prague Agenda, and took the bull by the horns and scheduled a conference, an international conference, on the Prague Agenda not long after I arrived in the Czech Republic, to commemorate the 1-year anniversary and the 2-year anniversary of the President's speeches there.

We had representatives from Russia, from the United States, and from around the world come, including Dr. Gary Samore from the White House, one of the principal advisers to the President on these matters, to think about what the long-term benefits can be for the region and for the world.

So I think we've made good progress. I could give other examples, but I think we've made good progress on these grounds. It is important to have an Ambassador there to help convey communica-

tions in both directions on this subject and I am very pleased with where we are on the reset now.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Senator Casey or Senator Coons, do either of you have any other questions for this panel?

I have a few other questions that we will present in writing for each of you and the record will stay open until close of business on Friday for any further questions from members of the committee.

So hearing no further questions, I will thank you both again for your service and your willingness to continue to do this, and hope we can get swift action from the Senate and close this hearing, and turn the gavel over to Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY [presiding]. We will start our second panel.

And, Mr. Ford, I know that you gave an opening statement before I arrived here. I will present an opening statement, and then we can then go right to questions. Am I correct in saying that you did present?

Ambassador FORD. Yes, Senator, that is correct.

Senator CASEY. I want to make sure. Thank you very much.

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

Well, thank you, everyone, for being here. I know we're moving to our second panel on a very busy day, but I want to get right into these critically important issues.

Over the past few days, scores have been killed in Hama, the same location of a devastating attack by government forces in 1982 which killed an estimated 10,000 Syrian civilians.

Despite the sustained assault by government forces, Syrian activists continue to demonstrate in very large numbers, a testament to their courage, their cause, and their desire for the most basic elements of human rights and human dignity.

The horror taking place in Syria today has led me, and I know many others in this body, the United States Senate, to be very clear about the conclusion that we've reached: This is a regime that is not capable of real reform. It has lost all legitimacy.

We must be direct and, I believe, unequivocal in our message to the dictator of Damascus. Bashar al-Assad must step down. The Syrian people should not have to bear the brutality of this regime any longer.

Let's not forget how these demonstrations in fact started. These demonstrations started with children.

On March 6 of this year, the Syrian authorities arrested 15 school children in the city of Dara for spray painting antigovernment slogans. These children were reportedly tortured while they were in custody.

Their parents and members of the community demonstrated and called for their release. The police used force on the parents and community leaders and, within a week, had killed 55 people.

Today, after months of courageous demonstrations—and, of course, that's a dramatic understatement, there is no other way to adequately convey the courage and the valor of these people.

After all of the demonstrations, some estimates indicate that the death toll has reached as high as 2,000, and is at least more than

1,600. Some say, of course, that even 2,000 would be too low an estimate. We don't know for sure. But it is unacceptable for us to stand by any longer and just watch this.

The terrible reach of this regime has directly affected constituents in my home State of Pennsylvania. Dr. Hazem Hallak is a naturalized American citizen from Syria and a respected oncology researcher who lives in Merion Park, PA, just outside of Philadelphia.

In May, his brother Sakher, who was also a doctor, visited the United States to attend a medical conference. Upon his return to Syria, Sakher went missing. His wife contacted the authorities, who confirmed that he was in their custody but would be released shortly.

The next day, Sakher's wife and daughter were interviewed by the authorities who again confirmed that he would be released. Two days later, his body was discovered in a village 20 miles south of Aleppo.

The authorities then denied that he was ever in their custody and claimed that they found his body in a ditch by the side of the road. Sakher's body was subjected to brutal torture. His bones were broken and his body was mutilated in unspeakable ways.

Sakher was not a political activist. He was not involved in the demonstrations. His sole offense appears to have been his trip to the medical conference and his visit with his brother in the United States of America.

We honor Sakher's memory, and the memories of hundreds of others, by calling for democratic change in Syria.

We know that our allies across the Arab League and in Turkey, as I raised during the first panel, have a unique and critical role to play here in pressure the Assad regime.

These countries have economic and diplomatic ties with Syria that the United States does not have. I support their efforts to leverage these relationships for a comprehensive regional approach to this crisis, and I applaud our allies who have already rejected the Assad regime.

In addition to strong messages from Washington and a concerted diplomatic push, more can be done to pressure Syria at international bodies. We need to maintain pressure on Syria at the United Nations Human Rights Council. We should also continue to pursue a resolution at the U.N. Security Council, condemning the Syrian Government's behavior.

On Monday of this week, Germany called for a Security Council meeting on Syria, which I hope will result in a strong resolution. Though some Security Council members remain resistant, especially in the wake of recent violence, it is unacceptable for the United Nations to continue ignoring the courage of the Syrian people and the carnage brought about by the Syrian regime.

We must also continue to pursue efforts to constrict the ability of this regime to conduct business abroad.

I welcome the new European Union sanctions on Syria announced this week, which imposed asset freezes and travel bans on five more military and government officials. We must also be willing to examine expanded sanctions on the banking and energy sectors.

I also want to applaud the courageous work done by our diplomats in Damascus, led by Robert Ford, who is with us today.

Ambassador Ford's recent trip to Hama was a testament to his commitment to representing the interests and the values of the United States. Due to the draconian measures imposed on the media by the Assad regime, Ambassador Ford has been one of the few people who has traveled within Syria and borne witness to the truth of the terrible crimes taking place across that country.

President Obama was right to send Ambassador Ford to Syria last year. I look forward to supporting his confirmation when it comes before the full Senate.

Mr. Ford has shown that an American Ambassador is not a gift to host countries, but a representative who will actively pursue American interests and American values. The most basic American value, the right to democratic representation, is at stake in Syria.

And I know that Ambassador Ford has been a stalwart advocate for this principle of democratic representation while he has served in Damascus.

Ambassador Ford, welcome back to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I know this is your second welcome today, but I thank you for your decades of service and the remarkable efforts that you and your team have undertaken in Damascus. And I look forward to the answers you'll provide to our questions.

I wanted to open up by asking for your assessment of the violence, and anything you can tell us about the opposition. I would also like to hear your opinion of how the United States Congress can be most effective and most helpful.

Ambassador FORD. Thank you very much, Senator. It's nice to see you again.

Senator Casey. Thank you.

Ambassador Ford. First if I may, I am very fortunate to work with a small but very dedicated team at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, both Americans and Syrians, and one of my team is here. She actually interrupted her vacation to help me during these few days of meetings I have in Washington. So I'd like to introduce Joanne Cummings, who is wearing red.

Joanne works on economic and political issues in Damascus. She lives in Damascus without her husband, who was evacuated because of the deteriorating security situation. All of our American staff there live without their families, and it's a really super team, and it is a team effort.

Senator CASEY. Thank you as well on our behalf.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, with respect to the violence, it's getting worse. The Syrian Government's constant brutality, its refusal to allow peaceful marches, its insistence on widespread arrest campaigns, and its atrocious torture—the reports you read about the detention conditions are just ghastly. They are, in turn, fostering more violence.

We saw that in the third-largest city of the country, Homs, 2 weeks ago. We're seeing at this weekend too, I think.

But I want to be clear, I visited Jisr al-Shughour on a government-sponsored trip in June. I heard what they said, and I wandered away from the crowd and talked to some other people. And it's very clear what happened up there.

There was a peaceful protest on a Friday. Syrian security forces shot some of the protesters. At the funeral on Saturday, the next day, the people got quite emotional because they had lost loved ones, and they then attacked and killed a lot of Syrian security people.

That paradigm, that cycle, is repeated over and over again. The cycle starts with Syrian Government violence against peaceful protest.

We need to be very clear. The Syrian Government was saying there are armed groups up in Hama. I went there. I didn't see a single gun. The most dangerous weapon I saw was a slingshot.

We need to be clear about what the nature of the violence is and where it comes from. The responsibility lies with President Assad and his government.

And let me again reiterate the call by the President on July 31, the Secretary yesterday, the Syrian Government needs to stop that slaughter.

Would you like me to discuss briefly, Senator, the opposition?

Senator CASEY. Yes, thank you.

Ambassador FORD. I spent a fair amount of my time getting to know them inside Syria. The Secretary today met a group of Syrian opposition members that are living outside Syria, and I was able to join that meeting as well.

A couple of things I would say about them. It's a diverse group. They're not very well-organized. That is not surprising.

The Syrian Government for decades would not allow any opposition party to exist, much less meet and much less organize. They are trying to do that now. Very frankly, they have a long way to go.

It is important for the Syrian opposition to develop their ideas, Syrian ideas, about how the democratic transition in Syria, which we think is underway. I mean, the street protests, as I said in my opening statement, are growing.

The democratic transition is underway. The Syrian opposition needs to identify how that transition should proceed. That should not be an American responsibility. This is a Syrian issue that Syrians should decide.

How about if I hold there, Senator?

Senator Casey. Thank you very much.

I know that Americans are outraged by this violence but when you open up the newspaper day after day, you see instability and change in a lot of places in the Middle East. In this context, the level of outrage toward the Syrian regime might be more muted.

The Middle East is always a volatile region. You know better than I, but lately it's been that much more difficult. So I think it's difficult sometimes for many Americans to sustain their focus.

But it's my opinion that not only should Mr. Assad step down, but he should stop trying to deliberately mislead the world. His forces engage in acts of violence which are always followed by fraudulent promises of reform, and then this cycle is repeated.

I know that part of the impediment here is developing a broad enough coalition of nations and governments to support us, and I know that we're trying to get an even broader coalition. And one of the challenges we have is engaging Russia and China. And they

are two of the most vocal opponents. I don't know why. I can't understand it. I don't agree with it, but we have to acknowledge it. They're two of the most vocal opponents against any kind of resolution in the Security Council.

What can you tell us about efforts to engage there, and what the latest is?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, there have been intense discussions today up in New York, again, about some kind of U.N. Security Council action. My understanding from colleagues up in New York a couple of hours ago was that the most recent Syrian Government repressive measures in places like d'Azur out in the east and in Hama in the West have had an impact, and that the members of the Security Council who had opposed Security Council action are potentially now more open to some kind of action.

Discussions are underway. My understanding is, even as we speak here, we think it is important, I want to underline this, we think it is important that the United Nations Security Council take action. We think it is important that the international community recognize the courage and the efforts of the Syrian people to effect change, to push for freedom and dignity, and that the international community should support them.

Senator CASEY. I mentioned that sometimes it's hard for Americans to sustain a focus on violence, even violence at this level of brutality, because of the confluence of several events that interfere or prevent our focus from being intensified. One of the challenges we face with Syria is a lack of information because of the Syrian Government's ability to censor or limit information.

I spoke earlier of the estimates of the number killed, which we're never sure is accurate. You obviously have concerns about this but let me ask you, are there ways that we can circumvent the censors that are in place now, or limit the ability of the Syrian Government to prevent the free flow of information?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, one of the big topics that I've had in my discussions with officials of the Syrian Government over the last several months is the importance of allowing in international media. I do not know how many times I have raised that with the Foreign Minister, with the Vice Foreign Minister, with close advisers to President Assad himself.

The Syrians have a refrain, which I hear all the time, which is media coverage is unfair, to which I have told them, well, then you need to have the media come in and look at it and let them draw their own judgment.

I will say that after my last conversations about that, CNN was invited in. National Public Radio, Deb Amos, was invited in. And we got a couple of British news agencies in.

They were still kind of tracked and monitored in the country. They didn't have nearly the kind of freedom that I would have liked to see, that we would have liked to have seen. And I think NPR just got back in again.

But you're right that the censorship is a huge problem. And one of the reasons that I have moved around the country is to get a sense myself of what's going on.

It's terribly frustrating to not really understand. I mean, you can watch YouTube videos, but there is a certain utility to having your own eyes to see things.

I have been encouraging my colleague Ambassadors in Damascus to get out of Damascus and to visit parts of the country. Some are quite active, the French Ambassador, for example.

And I think we then also need to help the Syrian people themselves, the activists, learn how to make the best use of technologies, so that they too can use the Internet to get the word out. And I have to say they're quite ingenious doing this.

In fact, colleagues of mine at the Embassy tell me that the Syrians understand a lot of the Internet G-chat and such things better than some of us do. So there's a lot of ingenuity there, Senator.

But the fundamental problem is that the Syrian Government will not allow the free flow of information, and that should stop.

Senator CASEY. Well, that's one of the ways I would make a determination about the regime's legitimacy. That's one of the measurements. If you're not allowing the free flow of information, I think that, at a minimum, questions arise about the implications of that.

I wanted to return to our earlier discussion about the opposition. I know this is difficult to do, especially considering that you're in the vortex of this, much more so than I am or people here in Washington.

But to the extent that you can step back a little bit and provide a perspective based upon recent events, one of the most significant factors in how the transition took place in Egypt, in my opinion, was the fact that the military showed some measure of forbearance.

And there were a number of people in the ruling elite who also showed some forbearance, or at least were measured in the way they responded. And that allowed a kind of transition which, compared to some other places, we might now be hoping would replicate itself.

In Syria, is there any element within the government at a high level or within senior leadership of the military, where you see some even unrealized potential for forbearance? Someone at the top, in essence, saying, this has gone too far, we've got to at least stop and pause, and recognize a certain boundary? I'm not expecting anyone at the highest levels to agree with me about Mr. Assad's stepping down.

But is there any potential for someone to, at the highest level of civilian or military leadership, to show that kind of forbearance in the near term?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, I'm going to be very frank. I have heard from a number of officials in Damascus messages of good intent.

I have to tell you that what matters is change on the ground, an end to the shooting of peaceful protesters, an end to these sweeps where hundreds of young people are rounded up without any kind of judicial process and held for months, often in barbaric conditions, the release of political prisoners. There are still political prisoners not been released. Change on the ground.

And I have listened to these messages of good intent, and when I come back to them and say, what about changing this and changing this today or tomorrow, I don't get much back.

A few things here and there, Senator, but not very much. And our conclusion is that this regime is unwilling or unable to lead the democratic transition that the Syrian people are demanding now.

And in a sense, unwilling or unable doesn't really matter, because what we are interested in, what the Syrian people are interested in, what the international community is interested in, is that change on the ground, the positive change on the ground.

And the incidents just over the past few days, leading up to Ramadan and then since the start of the month, show that there is no positive change on the ground.

Senator CASEY. I was afraid your answer would be very much the way you just articulated. And I think if anything, that testimony should be "exhibit A" as to why we've got to maintain pressure and think of other ways to impose even greater pressure on the Syrian regime by developing and strengthening alliances through engagement and through efforts in the way of sanctions or other pressure.

Because my sense, and I think you just confirmed it, is that this not a regime that's going to get tired of doing this, unless there is a countervailing force that is pushing for change.

I want to explore some of those other pressure points. There are some commentators, some with a significant degree of experience, who think that we should be turning up more pressure and imposing more economic pressure by way of the energy sector.

I wanted to get your thoughts on that as another possible approach here.

Ambassador FORD. Senator, it's an excellent question.

On the energy sector, we have for years had sanctions against American companies doing business there. And so unilaterally, additional American measures, unilaterally, probably are not going to have that big of an impact.

The big companies that are working in the Syrian energy, petroleum oil and gas sector in Syria right now, are mostly European and Canadian. And so we would look to find ways to work with our partners to enhance those sanctions. And frankly, we have had discussions about that and that's underway.

European and Canadians, too, are watching what's going on in Syria, and I think the Syrian Government's latest actions will help trigger action, frankly speaking.

Senator CASEY. Often a lot of what drives fervor for change is rooted as much in economics as it is in anything else. How would you assess the Syrian economy prior the beginning of this year versus the way it looks now in terms of its significance as an issue in this conflict?

Ambassador FORD. The violence and the unrest in Syria, the lack of stability, is really hurting the Syrian economy. It started off slow, but it is snowballing.

Let me give you just a couple of examples. Tourism represented a growing part of the economy. The tourism sector is completely dead. The hotels in places like Aleppo and Damascus, which nor-

mally would have occupancy rates of 80 to 90 percent, are down to 0 to 10 percent right now. Hotels are laying off staff.

The country is draining slowly but steadily its foreign exchange reserves. Business throughout the economy has slowed dramatically, whether it be production of pharmaceuticals or textiles, whatever it is.

The demand among Syrian consumers has dropped off the table. People, in a sense, are afraid to buy because the times are so unsettled.

And so companies are really hurting. Banks are also hurting. Joanne just did a very good assessment of the financial sector in the way it is suffering because of the current situation.

One of the things that we're trying to do, Senator, and this is I think quite important—Joanne and I both worked in Iraq. We do not want our sanctions to devastate the broader Syrian economy, because in the period after Assad, it will be important for Syria to be a strong country, and a strong economy will be part of that. So we have really worked in the United States Government and with our partners abroad to target sanctions against specific companies and against specific individuals that are involved in the repression, without targeting the broader Syrian economy and making the people of Syria suffer.

It is a different kind of sanction regime from what we have in Iraq, say. It's much more specifically targeted with the goal of sparing the Syrian people themselves great suffering.

Senator CASEY. And I know that's always the challenge, to make such sanctions targeted enough and impactful enough on the regime.

As often happens in these situations, we've seen an out-migration, in this case, most of it or the majority of folks fleeing northwestern Syria into Turkey.

Can you give us any report on that? And a related question, obviously, maybe the bigger question is, how do you assess the role played by the Turkish Government? What role can the Turkish Government play in creating more pressure and more impact on the Syrian regime?

Ambassador FORD. First, Senator, may I just follow up on a little part on that, the economic sanctions you mentioned—

Senator CASEY. Sure.

Ambassador FORD [continuing]. And the challenge of getting targeting that works and has an impact?

We really do spend a lot of time on this, and let me just give you a couple of success stories that may not have made the news here.

One of President Assad's cousins is named Rami Makhlouf. He is very well known in Syria. He is probably the richest man in Syria. He's a very, shall I say, unscrupulous businessman.

And we have targeted him very specifically as well as his companies because we know he helps finance the regime.

He applied for citizenship to Cyprus. He didn't get it, because working with the E.U., we made sure that he couldn't get to Cyprus and he couldn't get Cyprian citizenship.

That's strike one against him. Strike two, one of his biggest companies is called Cham Holding, so we targeted that specifically. It

had a board of directors. We went after a couple of them specifically.

Their board members' term expired at the end of April, and they were too afraid to have another board meeting. So they finally, the government insisted that businessmen come together and have a board meeting in July, and all they were able to do was come up with half of a board and one vice chairman. No one would agree to even be the chairman of Cham Holding.

So the sanctions do bite, maybe not in ways that are always on the headlines. But what we do see is more and more business people, and especially Sunni business people, which is an important pillar of the regime's support, we do see them slowly but surely shifting sides, and that's important.

So I do think our sanctions are having an impact.

With respect then, Senator, to your question about refugees going into Turkey and the Turkish role more generally, a couple of things I would say.

First, we appreciate that the Turks did offer refuge to people fleeing the Government of Syria campaigns in northwestern Syria. People fled in the thousands—we estimate somewhere around 12,000—fled mainly because they were terrified of army and Syrian intelligence service retaliation against them. The army and especially—especially—the intelligence service have a fearsome reputation, and we have seen plenty of videos on Arabic satellite TV of how they beat and torture people, and some of them quite gruesome.

So people fled in real fear. That's what happened in Jisr al-Shughour, the town I visited up in the north in June.

So we appreciate the role that the Turks have played. My understanding now is that some refugees who went to Turkey are beginning to trickle back into Syria. They think that they will be safe.

The Syrian Red Crescent has extended promises that they will watch over people coming back, that there's not mistreatment. I think most of the refugees are still in Turkey; somewhere around 8,000 are still there. So plenty of people are still afraid and don't trust their own government in Syria.

But the Turkish role in this has been, I think, very good, and we appreciate it.

With respect, Senator, to your question more broadly about what can Turkey do, I think Turkey has a very, very important role. And I'm often in touch with my colleague Ambassador Ricciardone up in Ankara.

The Turks have a very deep commercial relationship that they have been building up for years. They had personal relations between the Turkish leadership and the Syrian leadership that they had consciously fostered. They wanted to build influence.

I think it is fair to say that the Turks—even yesterday, President Gul was very critical of the latest Syrian measures.

The Turks have perhaps a unique capability, both to talk to the Syrians on several levels, because over the years they've built those contacts, and also were they to adopt sanctions, for example, I think those, too, would bite.

Senator CASEY. Well, that's something I hope we can continue to foster, because that kind of help in the region could be very significant.

I was in the region last in July of 2010, and our second to last stop was in Beirut in Lebanon. And I could sense, almost feel, the heavy presence of Hezbollah in Lebanon. And I wanted to get your sense about the implications of the unrest and the violence in Syria for Lebanon. How has Hezbollah responded to that?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, when I appeared before the Foreign Relations Committee in March 2010, we spoke a long time about Hezbollah in that hearing, I recall.

We have a real opportunity with change in Syria to see both Iranian influence and Hezbollah influence in the region diminish. That would be a real gain for us.

It would also be a real gain for the Syrian people, since the Iranians are helping right now with the repression in Syria.

With respect to Hezbollah specifically, the Syrian support to Hezbollah has continued. It has not stopped. At the same time, I think the leadership of Hezbollah at first was very outspoken in its support of the Syrian Government. More recently, they have been quiet. And my sense is that they have seen enough Hezbollah flags burned in Syrian protests, especially in places like d'Azur and Hama and Daraa, that they realized that their support for the Syrian Government is not garnering them any long-term friendship with the Syrian people.

Senator CASEY. And can you explain that? Just walk through that in terms of the—

Ambassador FORD. The protesters, and I think Syrians more generally, understand that Iran and Hezbollah are supporting Syrian Government repression against them.

Senator CASEY. And I know that when you were getting out of Damascus, and I think with a lot of valor and a lot of commitment, to bear witness to the truth it had to be in some ways harrowing.

But what did you draw from it mostly? I mean, I know you saw a lot, and you had a better sense of what was happening, as you said, on the ground. But what did you draw from it, other than what has to be the remarkable inspiration provided by these brave people? What else can you tell us about that journey you took?

Ambassador FORD. It was a fascinating experience, Senator. I've had a lot of interesting trips during my time in the Peace Corps, and then in the Foreign Service. But that one would rank up near the top.

I came away with a couple of conclusions, which I shared with the Department of State and also with the media.

First of all, the protesters there are peaceful. As I think I mentioned, the one weapon I saw was a slingshot. These are not gunmen.

When we came up to the first checkpoint, very frankly, the local's checkpoint, not a government checkpoint, we weren't sure they were going to be armed or not, and we were a little nervous.

But the second point I came with was, they are not against foreigners. We told them we were American diplomats. They said, oh, America, great, go ahead, please pass, you know, whatever.

We got kind of lost in Hama. We should have had a map, but we didn't. So we had to stop and ask for directions, and they actually got in the car and took us to where we wanted to go. They were very nice, invited us to lunch, et cetera.

They're not anti-American at all. In fact, I think they appreciated the attention that the United States showed to their cause, and that they were peaceful.

When they asked who I was, and I said I'm the American Ambassador, several of them said, oh, come on, who are you really?

So they didn't believe me until I gave them some business cards.

And the third thing I came away with, Senator, is their incredible commitment. And I get that whenever I meet opposition people in any city in Syria. The commitment they have to change and to freedom and to dignity, they are not going to stop. They underline that over and over, and we have seen that.

We were talking about Egypt a little while ago. Roughly 900 Egyptians died in the first phase of that Egyptian revolution out of a country of 80 million people. Syria has only 23 million people, and nearly 2,000 have died. So the scale of killing in Syria is way beyond what it was in Egypt.

But the people in Hama and elsewhere are quite committed to change. And I don't think they're going to stop.

And so I think we owe it to them to remain supportive and to try to build that support wisely, carefully, but to build that support.

Senator CASEY. And I know we have to wrap up, and we've covered a good bit, not nearly enough.

And I'm sure I'll have questions for the record. We'll try not to overload you with too many written questions. You've got work to do, and we don't want to burden you with that. But I'll leave the record open until Friday for other members to submit questions or for witnesses to amplify their testimony or their responses.

I'll ask in conclusion one broad question, but I think an important one. I think I know what your message to the American people is about solidarity and about focus on this horror that we're seeing. But what specifically would you or the administration hope that the Congress would do by way of action—legislative or otherwise—that would be constructive in helping, not just show solidarity, but to continue the focus that should be brought to bear on what these brave citizens of Syria are trying to accomplish?

Ambassador FORD. Senator, I've been working in the Middle East since 1980, when I went out as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and I really liked the President's speech on the Arab spring, the speech that he gave on May 19th, because I think he laid out for the American people why change in the Arab world matters for us and what it means for our own national security.

And the point that the President stressed that I really appreciated was that the democratic transitions underway from Morocco to the Persian Gulf do matter to us. We have big interest in that part of the world. And it can be positive change, and we should be supporting democratic transitions throughout the region.

And there may be times when our assistance is needed directly and our assistance is only needed indirectly, but we should look to be supportive.

What I would hope from the Congress is that it works with the administration to make sure that resources are available when we need them to support those transitions.

I'm going to be very frank again, Senator, if you don't mind. I was in Algeria during the civil war there in the mid 1990s. There was a very brave Algerian opposition at the time, and we had nothing really that we could offer them. There was no access to the Democratic Institute and the kinds of programs they do, or the Republican Institute.

Those kinds of programs actually do matter a lot, and we work with civil society and we work with political parties. Those programs do help, and we have clawed and scratched for gains in places like Iraq, and the resources that we commit help.

It's still up to the local people, whether it be in Iraq, or Syria, or Egypt, or whatever, but we can help. And I hope we, the American people, will understand the value to our national security of supporting those democratic transitions.

Senator CASEY. We want to thank you for your testimony, and express our gratitude and commendation on a much larger scale for your commitment on the ground, which is a noteworthy and very significant act of public service.

We appreciate that, and we'll work with you. And I know that's a bipartisan sentiment in a town bipartisanship is all too rare.

Ambassador, thank you very much for your testimony, and we're adjourned.

Ambassador FORD. Thank you, Senator.

[Whereupon, at 4:41 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FORD TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING SENATORS

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY

Question. What is the practical impact of the U.N. Security Council decision to condemn "widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities?" The Security Council also called on the Syrian authorities to allow aid agencies, which have been prevented from entering the country, "unhindered access" for humanitarian relief. How should the United States respond if the Syrian Government ignores this edict?

Answer. We assess that any U.N. Security Council action condemning the Syrian authorities' widespread and gross violations of human rights would have a practical impact with the regime as well as the opposition in Syria. We cannot overstate the importance of international solidarity to isolate the Assad regime and signal global support for the Syrian people. Human rights activists and oppositionists often tell us that many Syrians are looking for a unified international response. While the UNSC Presidential Statement was helpful, we believe a U.N. Security Council resolution will go further to increase domestic and international pressure on the regime to cease its security crackdown and take steps such as allowing humanitarian aid agencies into Syria. I believe the United States should continue to pressure the regime in various and creative ways to impact the regime's inner coterie and undermine the regime's remaining pillars of support inside Syria. Of course, we must be careful to do this in such a way so that our actions have minimal effects on the Syrian public—we are targeting the Assad regime, not the Syrian people.

Question. What steps can the international community take to put further pressure on the Assad regime to refrain from using violence against its own population? What role do you see for the United States and specifically the U.S. mission in Syria in such an initiative?

Answer. We believe that action taken by the United Nations Security Council may be an important factor that can impact the regime's calculus on using violence. The United States continues to lead the international community and work multilaterally to highlight the regime's brutality and unremitting human rights violations in order to force the Assad regime to step aside. We also will look for ways to increase bilateral pressure through our bilateral sanctions.

In this regard, regional outreach is critical. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key nations, either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches. It is also important for the U.S. Government to work in concert with our allies in order for targeted sanctions to have greater effect. I do much of this coordination in Damascus. Given that most Syrian officials have far more assets in the EU, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf than they do in the United States, working with our allies is critical for sanctions' success. If confirmed, I will continue to work with our EU allies and partners in the region to do everything possible to bring an immediate end to the brutal violence the Assad regime is perpetrating against peaceful protesters.

Furthermore, the staff members of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus continue to meet with activists, observers, and oppositionists in support of a peaceful transition to a pluralistic and inclusive democracy. We will also speak out publicly, whether directly to the Arabic media or through the Embassy Facebook site.

Question. How effective have the intensification of sanctions been in the course of the last few months, particularly those that target individuals within the al-Assad regime? What, if anything, can be done to render them more effective?

Answer. The effects of our sanctions will become more apparent as time goes on. We have begun to see prominent business figures and regime supporters express concern over sanctions. We believe the targeted nature of the sanctions will allow many regime supporters to rethink their support of the ongoing brutality. We will continue to reach out to all possible partners and work with our allies on targeted sanctions and diplomatic measures at the U.N. to increase pressure on the Assad regime and press for the space for a Syrian-led democratic transition. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key states either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches. The more countries implementing such targeted sanctions, the more effective the sanctions will be. If confirmed I will make the sanctions as effective as possible.

Question. Which international actors do you see as having the most leverage over the Assad regime? How can the United States work with them to try to broker an end to the violence? How is the ongoing violence affecting Syria's relationships with other governments in the region?

Answer. The Assad regime has shown its willingness to turn on its allies in the face of criticism; the most obvious example is that of Turkey. However, we still assess that the Turkish Government does have leverage over the Assad regime and is greatly respected by the Syrian street as well. Unfortunately, the regime has not listened thus far to calls by the Turkish leadership for the Assad regime to stop its brutal crackdown. The Arab League and Saudi Arabia in particular should also be able to leverage their regional and cultural ties to help pressure the Assad regime, especially by influence regime supporters over whom they yield influence. We are in consistent contact with the Arab League, EU nations, and the rest of the international community, and at the ambassadorial level we often meet to discuss how to better coordinate our efforts. I believe that the ongoing violence is alienating Syria's relationship with other governments. With the exception of Iran, we are seeing many more in the international community voice increasing frustration with the regime's brutality.

Question. In October, 2010, Issa Al-Aweel was arrested in Syria. A Christian born in Latakia, Al Aweel is a U.S. Green Card holder with Syrian citizenship and a Massachusetts resident. It is my understanding that, since his arrest, Mr. Al Aweel has been held in prolonged detention without a hearing.

- Please update the committee on Mr. Al Aweel's status and whereabouts. What steps are being taken to secure his release and safe passage home to Boston?

Answer. Because Mr. Al Aweel is not a U.S. citizen, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations does not require the Government of Syria to provide notification to the United States of his arrest nor provide access to him while he is detained. The Embassy's understanding, based upon discussions with the family, is that Mr. Al Aweel may have been detained shortly after his arrival in Syria in relation to the Syrian requirement that male Syrian citizens over the age of 18 complete compulsory military service. The U.S. Embassy provided Mr. Al Aweel's family with a

list of private attorneys who might be able to provide legal assistance to Mr. Al Aweel. The Embassy also advised the family that they may wish to contact the Syrian Embassy in Washington, DC, directly, since Mr. Al Aweel is a Syrian citizen. The U.S. Embassy offered to maintain contact with whichever attorney they selected. The U.S. Embassy has not heard yet from the family concerning any additional steps they may have taken concerning Mr. Al Aweel, and stands ready to provide whatever limited assistance is possible.

Question. How has the United States reached out to countries hosting refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria? How has the United States ensured that refugees and asylees are well-treated and what humanitarian aid has been provided?

Answer. The brutal actions of the Syrian Government produced an international crisis which has resulted in significant refugee flows and threatened regional stability. This crisis requires a unified response from the international community condemning the atrocities taking place and calling for an end to the violence. We stand ready to provide assistance to nations hosting Syrian refugees, as required. Embassy Damascus is in constant contact with UNHCR and UNRWA, and our Embassies in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey are in touch with the respective governments hosting refugees. We have offered our assistance to the Turkish Government to provide humanitarian aid to the thousands of Syrian refugees in Turkey. To date, the Turkish Government has informed us that they are able to handle the situation themselves, but they are aware that we stand ready to help. Furthermore, we have encouraged the Government of Lebanon to protect Syrian refugees that have fled into Lebanon and avoid taking positions that would align themselves with the Assad's regime and its ongoing crackdown.

Question. I am a strong supporter of your candidacy to be Ambassador to Syria. I believe that your visit on July 7 to Hama was an important demonstration of United States support for the Syrian people and likely saved Syrian lives. I invite you to explain why it is important for the United States to have an ambassador in a country in which a government is cracking down on its people so brutally. How do you respond to those who say we should recall our Ambassador?

Answer. It is a privilege for me and my team to serve in Syria. I see it as an integral part of my mission to give the Syrian people an ear and a voice. My presence is one of the most effective tools of pressure we have on the Syrian Government. I convey our tough messages to the Assad regime and am also in constant contact with the Syrian opposition. If confirmed, I would continue to fulfill these roles for as long as necessary.

By maintaining a high-level presence we are able to support the demands of the Syrian people and promote respect for their basic human dignity. As I mentioned in my prepared statement, my presence helps draw attention to the legitimate grievances of the peaceful protestors so that the international community and, more importantly, the Syrian regime pays attention. The Syrian people want to be heard. My visit to Hama showed that a high-ranking U.S. official can help them be heard.

Regional outreach is critical. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key nations, either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches. It is also important for the U.S. Government to work in concert with our allies in order for targeted sanctions to have greater effect. I do much of this coordination in Damascus. Given that most Syrian officials have far more assets in the EU, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf than they do in the United States, working with our allies is critical for the sanctions' success. I personally recommended a series of diplomatic initiatives with partner countries, as well as specific steps we and partners could take inside of Syria to weaken the Assad government and compel it to change its repressive policies. Some of this has involved my convincing other countries' ambassadors to make particular recommendations to their own capitals. For example, the Turks can play an extremely important role, and I regularly exchange ideas with the Turkish Ambassador in Damascus who has direct access to the senior Turkish leadership. It is important that the Turks and we first agree in our assessments of what is happening on the ground, and then decide how best to press the Syrian Government.

I have also been able to encourage and work with the Syrian opposition. Syrians have been denied the opportunity to participate in politics for 40 years, and the Syrian Government still refuses to allow them the space and security to openly organize. In such a short period of time, however, they have made much progress. We support calls by the Syrian opposition to unite around the principle of a representative, inclusive, and pluralistic government that respects the rights of all of Syria's citizens. Furthermore, by supporting a pluralistic and inclusive opposition we aim to prevent sectarian violence. More Syrians are joining the opposition despite the

risk of government retaliation. Indeed, the opposition's ranks now include Alawi, Druze, and Christian Syrians, as well as businessmen, merchants, and even military servicemen.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR

Question. What are you seeing in Damascus about how this regime is functioning and perhaps more importantly, how are different elements of Syrian society reacting? How close is President Assad to actions of his regime?

Answer. In Damascus itself, the regime is functioning more or less normally, although there are more security elements deployed in restive neighborhoods, such as Medan and Rukn ad-Din. If a demonstration erupts in Damascus—and there are now usually one or two in the evenings—these security elements intervene immediately, beating and arresting protesters. In central Damascus, life is normal although shops and restaurants do less business than they did at the start of the year. The merchant class is very unhappy about the economic situation and scared about the future. Many Damascenes tell us that the mood of Ramadan this year is much less festive than in years past.

Many in the Damascus Christian community fear that an Islamic fundamentalist government would follow if the current regime falls. They, along with many in the Damascus Allawi community, remain generally supportive of the regime, afraid that the next government will persecute minorities and thus they hold fast to the Assad regime. The regime's shocking brutality over the past 5 months and opposition figures' outreach to these communities is eroding that support, especially as the regime has not followed up on promises, like ending the emergency law, and thus there has been no real improvement on the ground. What the Secretary has said still holds true—Syrian Government actions, not words, are what matter.

Ultimately, President Assad is the head of state and he is responsible for the actions of those beneath him. We do not know if there were times when elements of the security forces stepped outside the boundaries of their orders. However, we do know that, at the end of the day, Assad is responsible. President Assad is the one who has created an environment in which violence, repression, and human rights violations can occur without anyone being held to account.

Question. How do you see this playing out? Particularly if it draws out for another 6 months?

Answer. The breadth and endurance of the street protests shows that a transition is underway in Syria, and I strongly doubt that the Syrian people will go back to where they were before all of this started. Assad's reputation and legitimacy are permanently destroyed for most Syrians, even among many who fear Islamic fundamentalists. Who or what will replace Bashar Assad is unclear, although the Syrian internal opposition is working to develop a transition plan. With regard to a timetable for Syria's transition to democracy, I cannot say for sure. Day after day for months now, the Syrian people have taken to the streets peacefully demanding an end to the violence and a change of government. They have organized themselves, they have acted as journalists to ensure the entire world is able to witness what is taking place there, and they have refused to be intimidated. They have shown intense resolve and so I am confident that with the continued support and pressure of the international community, they will see this transition through. The regime's use of Allawi-dominated security units in residential areas has boosted sectarian tensions and at times sparked incidents of sectarian violence. If the struggle on the streets continues for a long time, the risk of broad sectarian violence will rise. For this reason, the United States is boosting unilateral pressure on the Assad regime to stop its repression, and we are working closely with foreign partners to boost international pressure on the regime as well.

Question. How do you balance support for the opposition (would you call it a unified movement yet?) with our longstanding concerns about terrorism, proliferation, and regional security?

Answer. The Assad regime, not the Syrian people demonstrating for democracy, is responsible for fomenting regional instability, supporting terrorist organizations, and attempting to develop nuclear bombs. The Assad regime has denied the people of Syria the opportunity to participate in politics for 40 years, and it continues to deny them the space and security to openly organize or work politically. Frequent government harassment slows development of a coordinated and strong opposition. My Embassy team and I have encouraged the Syrian opposition to unite around the principle of a representative, inclusive, and pluralistic government that respects the

rights of all of Syria's citizens equally. We have underlined consistently to the opposition that we oppose political violence and they have in response stressed to us their goal of keeping the opposition to the Assad regime peaceful. Meanwhile, we also are pressing the Syrian Government to allow the opposition to meet and organize. We have had some success, such as the June 27 opposition conference held in Damascus. Our support has to be done carefully, however, as the Syrian Government propaganda machine frequently blames American intervention for the country's problems, and this point plays well with those still support the Assad regime. That being said, there is absolutely nothing being done in support of the Syrian opposition that goes against the administration's concerns and policies with regard to terrorism, proliferation, and regional security.

Question. Describe the dynamics in neighboring countries as this violent repression goes on; with the recently unveiled Hariri indictments, the Turkish Military Staff resignations as we discussed with Ambassador Ricciardone, et cetera? How has Hezbollah responded? Hamas? Our Israeli friends?

Answer. We are closely monitoring developments in Lebanon, which, thus far, remains stable despite the unrest in Syria. We have encouraged the Government of Lebanon to protect Syrian refugees that have fled into Lebanon and avoid taking positions that would align themselves with Assad's regime and its ongoing crackdown. Lebanon retains a complex and unbalanced relationship with Syria, which now tests Lebanon's ability to maintain its independence and good standing in the international community. We have received reports of Syrian protestors burning Hezbollah (and Iranian) flags. Frankly, we are not surprised that demonstrators are angered by Hezbollah's apparent support for the Assad regime's brutal use of force and violence against its own citizens. And we have also seen demonstrations by the Lebanese people in support of the Syrian protestors.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has said that Israel will not intervene in the unrest in Syria and that the Syrian people "deserve a better future." Clearly Turkey is concerned about what is taking place in Syria—they are neighbors and have spoken out forcefully against the violence. With regard to the recent military resignations in Turkey, our military ties to Turkey are longstanding and robust. Turkey remains a strong U.S. ally. A change in personnel will not affect our longstanding ties and deep tradition of military cooperation. Turkey has a long border and many ties to Syria; they have significant interests in Syria. While the Turkish Government wants to pursue its own foreign policy as a sovereign state, it also understands the utility of coordinating with the United States and the EU.

Question. Some have suggested that EU oil sanctions on Syria, and Sytrol in particular, would have a significant impact. An op-ed in the Huffington Post yesterday stated: "An EU ban on commercial activity by a handful of Syrian oil companies could deprive the Assad regime of the foreign exchange they critically need to fund the repression of protests. If the regime ran out of money to pay its security forces and there was a run on the Syrian pound, loss of business confidence in the Assads would accelerate. Brussels, unusually, is in a position to make a major unilateral contribution and be on the right side of history in the Arab Spring."

- (a) What is your assessment of the effects of such an action?
- (b) Are there further unilateral efforts that might have teeth?
- (c) What more can be done to broaden the list of participants in multilateral sanctioning efforts?

Answer (a). EU sanctions on the Syrian oil sector, or on the exclusive marketer of Syrian crude oil, Sytrol, would have an impact on the Assad regime. According to the Energy Information Administration, Syria currently exports 117,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil. The majority of these exports are purchased by refineries in EU countries pursuant to long-term contracts. EU sanctions would make it difficult for Sytrol to market this oil to other refineries and would likely result in revenue losses as the company sought out new purchasers in countries not participating in an EU sanctions regime. Sanctions would constrict demand for Syrian crude oil and would likely further reduce what Sytrol is able to charge. The impact on government revenues would be substantial, and this at a time already of significant economic stress. We can expect that the Syrian Government would claim that Western pressure is ruining Syria's economy and hurting the Syrian population, and we will need to craft and target our own public messaging carefully. We also will need to encourage prominent Syrians to explain the utility of energy sector sanctions to a largely uncomprehending Syrian public.

Answer (b). The oil sector is Syria's largest export sector and a significant source of Syrian Government revenues. There are few other export categories that would have as significant of an impact.

Answer (c). We will continue to reach out to all possible partners and work with our allies on targeted sanctions and diplomatic measures at the U.N. to increase pressure on the Assad regime and press for the space for a Syrian-led democratic transition. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key states either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches.

What is taking place in Syria is an international crisis which has resulted in significant refugee flows and threatened regional stability. This crisis requires a unified response from the international community condemning the atrocities taking place and calling for an end to the violence.

Question. You indicated that these protestors are aware that Iran and Hezbollah are backing the government in their repressive tactics, and that Hezbollah flags are being burned. What is the impact within Lebanon of the activity?

Answer. We are aware of these reports. It is not surprising that demonstrators are angered by Hezbollah's apparent support for the Assad regime's brutal use of force against its own citizens. We are closely monitoring developments in Lebanon, which, thus far, remains stable despite the unrest in Syria. We have encouraged the Government of Lebanon to protect Syrian refugees that have fled into Lebanon and avoid taking positions that would align themselves with Assad's regime and its ongoing crackdown. Lebanon's unbalanced relationship with Syria is testing Lebanon's ability to maintain its independence and good standing in the international community. For example, Lebanon agreed to the U.N. Security Council Presidential Statement condemning the Syrian regime's use of violence against demonstrators but later disassociated itself from the statement. We will continue to encourage Lebanon to meet its international obligations and work toward a politically independent Lebanon.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FORD TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
BY THE FOLLOWING SENATORS

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. There is growing consensus among experts that Assad's downfall depends on losing support from the military. What actions can the United States take to siphon support from the military? At the same time, what actions are you taking to persuade Assad and other senior government officials to embrace reform? What steps have you recommended to the State Department and White House? Is the United States working with the EU to formulate additional sanctions, such as a ban on the purchase of Syrian oil? What role are other countries and leaders playing in this dialogue, such as Prime Minister Erdogan in Turkey?

Answer. It is very important for the Syrian people to be the leaders and the drivers of the transition currently underway in Syria. The United States has taken numerous steps to help move this process forward, including coordinating international support for action at the United Nations and coordinating with partners to target regime finances through sanctioning individuals who help the Assad circle as well as government entities and private companies involved in the repression or the financing of this repression. These designations have included commanders—but not the rank and file soldiers—of elements of the Syrian military and intelligence services. We are in conversations with our allies to explore additional targeted economic sanctions, including in the energy and financial sectors, to deny the regime resources to continue its brutality against the Syrian people.

The United States also led an international effort that resulted in a unanimous United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement condemning the abuses of the Syrian Government. The United Nations Human Rights Council also issued a statement condemning the regime atrocities. We are working multilaterally to put pressure on the Assad regime by isolating it and depriving it of resources to continue its brutal repression.

I personally recommended a series of diplomatic initiatives with partner countries, as well as specific steps we and partners could take inside Syria to weaken the Assad government and compel it to change its repressive policies. Some of this has involved my convincing other states' ambassadors to make particular recommendations to their own capitals. The Turks could play an extremely important role, and I regularly exchange ideas with the Turkish Ambassador in Damascus who has direct access to the senior Turkish leadership. It was important that the Turks and we first agree in our assessments of what is happening on the ground, and then decide how best to press the Syrian Government.

Question. Assad continues to retain some support from minority groups that are concerned about sectarian violence post-Assad. These groups are concerned that their situation will degenerate in the turmoil of a transition. How are you working (unilaterally or multilaterally) to reassure minorities fearful of a transition?

Answer. The U.S. Government is reaching out to the Syrian opposition and encouraging it to ensure that the freedoms and dignities of all ethnic and religious groups in Syria are respected and to underscore the opposition's commitment to this end. My team and I have encouraged the opposition to reach out to Syrian minority leaders to reassure them that a democratic Syria would not retaliate against minorities, and we have had positive reactions from elements of those minorities.

We also are working to support the free flow of information, both inside of Syria so that Syrian citizens can obtain a true picture of what is taking place, and outside of Syria so that the world can bear witness to the Assad regime's atrocities, especially the fact that it is the Assad regime itself that is stoking many sectarian fears. Last, Syria has a long history of peaceful coexistence among its various ethnic and religious groups, and the United States is confident this tradition will outlive the Assad regime.

Question. What can you tell us about your meetings with civil society and opposition figures? Have you been able to identify credible leadership structures, and what are the defined goals and strategies for consolidating a democratic state should Assad fall? What is the capacity and readiness of the opposition to guide a democratic transition in post-Assad Syria, and how are you working to build this capacity in the interim? Is there a need or a role for enhanced U.S. democracy assistance?

Answer. Syrians have been denied the opportunity to participate in politics for 40 years, and the Syrian Government continues to deny them the space and security to openly organize. The Syrian opposition has made some progress, but it has far to go. Frequent government harassment slows development of a coordinated and strong opposition. We continue to encourage all members of the Syrian opposition to unite around the principle of a representative, inclusive, and pluralistic government that respects the rights of all of Syria's citizens. We also are pressing the Syrian Government to allow the opposition to meet, and we have had some success, such as the June 27 opposition conference held in Damascus. Our support has to be done carefully, however, as the Syrian Government propaganda machine frequently blames American intervention for the country's problems, and this point plays well with those who still support the Assad regime.

The United States is encouraging the development of a robust civil society in Syria. We are listening to a range of Syrian voices both inside and outside the country. It is important that the Syrian people decide for themselves what will happen inside Syria. The opposition is slowly developing into a substantive and credible force. Additional information can be provided through briefings.

Question. Over the weekend, as many as 121 people were killed in Syria as a result of the military crackdown on protesters, the majority in Hama. These events are eerily reminiscent of the 1982 crackdown on Hama, during which tens of thousands of Syrians were killed by President Assad's father to retain control and repress dissent. What is the United States doing to prevent a repeat of the 1982 massacre and subsequent stamping out of democratic aspirations in Syria? How can the United States reassure protesters of its support, and prevent Assad from committing mass atrocities to retain control?

Answer. I traveled to Hama in order to relay to the people of Hama and to the Syrian people that the United States supports the Syrian people and demands that the regime immediately stop its violent repression of peaceful protesters. My travel to Hama helped draw international attention to the efforts of the Syrian people to effect peaceful change in their own country. They have a right to hold peaceful demonstrations and to demand that their fundamental rights be respected. There is no going back to the status quo. Assad's regime cannot continue to use torture and killing to break the will of the Syrian people. Try as he might, Assad can't stop change from coming to Syria. I have spoken out vigorously to the Arabic and Western media about the recent brutal government actions in Hama and elsewhere. I have helped design a set of new sanctions that the administration is readying. Even as the regime's security forces killed dozens of people in Hama, the protests continued throughout Syria. The people of Syria have shown that they are no longer afraid and will not be cowed by the regime's brutality.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. In your opening statement, you mention that the Syrian opposition "is slowly becoming an effective, broad-based opposition." What is the U.S. Embassy doing to support and engage the opposition to help them become a more effective political entity?

Answer. Syrians have been denied the opportunity to participate in politics for 40 years, and the Syrian Government is still not allowing them the space and security to openly organize. In such a short period of time, however, they have made some progress. We are encouraging all of the various players in the Syrian opposition to unite around the principle of a representative, inclusive, and pluralistic government that respects the rights of all of Syria's citizens. We also are pressing the Syrian Government to allow the opposition to meet, and we have had some success, such as the June 27 opposition conference held in Damascus. The regime's reflex, however, is to repress and arrest. Our support has to be done carefully, as the Syrian Government propaganda machine frequently blames American intervention for the country's problems, and this government line plays well with those still supporting the Assad regime.

The United States is encouraging the development of a robust civil society in Syria, as we do in all countries. The United States is also listening to a range of Syrian voices both inside and outside the country. It is important that the Syrian people decide what will happen inside of Syria.

Question. In your opening statement, you say, "It is time for us to start thinking about the day after Assad." In your opinion, what more should the United States be doing to prepare for the "day after Assad?" What plans are in place to prepare for this outcome?

Answer. The best way we can help now and in the future is by supporting the Syrian people's right to freedom and dignity and to work with the international community to press the Syrian Government to allow space inside of Syria for the opposition to work. The United States remains committed to seeing violence end. The Syrian people will decide what a democratic transition will look like.

Question. How much influence might countries like Turkey, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have on the situation in Syria? What steps is the U.S. Government taking to engage these countries on Syria?

Answer. Syria's neighbors and major trading partners can have a significant impact on changing the behavior of the Assad regime. We will continue to reach out to all possible partners and work with our allies on targeted sanctions and diplomatic measures at the U.N. in order to increase pressure on the Assad regime and press for the space for a Syrian-led democratic transition. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key states either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches.

What is taking place in Syria is an international crisis which has resulted in significant refugee flows and threatened regional stability. This crisis requires a unified response from the international community condemning the atrocities taking place and calling for an end to the violence.

It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the greatest influence on Syria is the influence that the Syrian people have on their own country.

Question. What is the regional impact of the ongoing crackdowns in Syria? In particular, what is the impact on stability with regard to Lebanon, as well as Turkey, Jordan, and Israel?

Answer. The regime's violence against its own people has resulted in over 12,000 refugees fleeing Syria to other neighboring countries and over 30,000 Syrians internally displaced by the violence. The continuing abuses by the Syrian Government will inevitably lead to greater instability in the region. We do believe that Assad's regime could try to foment instability in the region in an effort to retain power and distract the international community. This has already taken place. For example, on June 5, 2011, pro-Palestinian protestors supported by Assad's regime attempted to enter parts of the Golan Heights, which led to at least 23 deaths. It is important for us to work with Syria's neighbors and act together to stop the instability outside of Syria and to help the Syrian people gain the dignity and freedom they deserve.

Question. Have you found that your presence in Damascus has had a greater impact than the U.S. Government could have with a lower-ranking official leading Embassy operations?

Answer. I have been able to help secure the release of U.S. citizens and Syrian political prisoners. We have been able press the Syrian Government to allow some

limited access to international media, such as CNN and NPR. I have also been able to encourage and work with the Syrian opposition.

I have been trying to draw the attention of the Syrian regime and the attention of the international community to the legitimate grievances the Syrian people have with their government. The Syrian people want to be heard, and a high ranking U.S. official can help them be heard. I believe that it is in our best interest as well as the Syrian's people's best interest to keep a high-ranking U.S. official inside of Syria so that we can have the strongest possible impact on change in Syria. If confirmed, I hope to be able to continue this work.

Question. What is your assessment of international sanctions on Syria? Are they having an effect on Syria's Government and its key leaders?

Answer. The sanctions against Assad's regime are causing economic impacts and damaging parts of regime, especially the regime's source of funding. Let me share some success stories. One of President Assad's cousins, Rami Makhoul, is very well known in Syria and is probably the richest man in the country. He is a very unscrupulous businessman and a financial supporter of the regime. We have targeted him very specifically, as well as his companies, because we know he helps finance the regime. By working with the EU, we made sure that he could not get to Cyprus and he could not get Cypriot citizenship.

Furthermore, Cham Holding is one of Makhoul's biggest companies, so we targeted it specifically. We targeted certain individuals on its board of directors. When the board members' terms expired at the end of April, they were too afraid of being individually designated by our sanctions and they refused to hold another board meeting. The government finally insisted that businessmen come together and have a board meeting in July. At the conclusion of the meeting, they were only able to come up with half of a board and one vice-chairman, but no one agreed to be the chairman of Cham Holding.

U.S. sanctions do bite, but it is important that it is not just our bite. We are coordinating sanctions and encouraging other countries to use targeted sanctions against Assad's regime. If the violence continues, we will expand our use of targeted sanctions on banks, companies, and individuals who support Assad's regime. The United States will continue to seek ways to increase pressure on Assad and his regime while simultaneously attempting to shield the Syrian people from economic harm.

Question. In your opinion, should the situation in Syria be referred to the International Criminal Court? Should President Assad be indicted on charges of committing crimes against humanity?

Answer. The killing and torture of peaceful demonstrators is unacceptable and must be stopped. The U.S. Government has expressed our disgust with the ongoing violence and has called for a democratic transition in Syria that will bring freedom and dignity to the Syrian people. We are exploring options with respect to the International Criminal Court.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. While Secretary Clinton has recently declared that Assad has no legitimacy to rule, the administration still has not called for his departure. While the administration called for President Mubarak's departure in Egypt, it has not called for Assad's departure. When can we anticipate the administration call for Assad's departure?

Answer. The administration believes that it is up to the Syrian people to decide what happens inside of Syria. We have for many years vigorously condemned Syrian human rights abuses and, since the intensification of the government's repression in late March, we have spoken out forcefully and condemned the Assad regime's shootings of peaceful demonstrators and the mass arrest campaigns. As the Syrian protest movement grew stronger, we declared publicly that Assad had lost his legitimacy. Each country is different, and therefore our policy toward Syria cannot be a replica of our policy toward Egypt, Libya, or anywhere else. We have had a long-standing partnership with Egypt, while we have long been adversaries of Syria. As we have less unilateral leverage in Syria, we have worked closely with other partners to boost not just American pressure but also international pressure on the Assad regime.

We have made clear our view that Assad cannot lead a democratic transition, that we have no American interest in the continuation of his government, and that his government will be left in the past as the democratic transition moves forward. We

have also stressed that the Syrian people, not foreign states, will decide what will happen in Syria and we will be there to support them.

President Assad must stop the killings now, remove his security forces from residential streets, release political prisoners and detainees, and permit access to the U.N. Human Rights Council's fact-finding mission. The international community has the responsibility to speak out against violence toward peaceful protestors and threats to international peace and security. We have done so and will continue to do so.

Question. What message do you believe is sent to the Syrian people by not calling for his departure? Do you believe there should be a role for any member of the Assad family in Syria's future?

Answer. The message we are sending to the Syrian people is that this movement is a Syrian movement, and that the United States and the international community stand behind them in their aspiration for freedom, democracy, and peace. We are working hard to get this message out through our Embassy outreach and programming, public statements, and work at the various multilateral organizations. The Syrian public's reactions to my visit to Hama in July demonstrated that it understands that we support immediate political change and an end to repression in Syria. As to whether or not there is any role for a member of the Assad family in Syria's future that is up to the Syrian people. We have stated publicly that we do not believe Assad will implement reforms, that his regime will soon be part of the past and that we have no interest in the regime's continuation. What we are advocating for is a peaceful transition to democracy where all Syrians are free to choose leaders who are responsive to their demands. Most Syrians are, however, suspicious of American intent in Syria because of our close ties to Israel, and therefore we also stress that Syrians alone must decide Syria's political future.

Question. Can you think of a symbolic action the United States might realistically take that would more clearly demonstrate our break with Assad and his clan, and would more clearly show that we want him out, besides recalling our Ambassador?

Answer. We have taken, and continue to take, concrete steps to demonstrate to the Assad regime the cost his government will pay for the atrocities being committed. For the first time ever, the Obama administration in May 2011 specifically sanctioned Bashar Assad and his brother Maher. The administration extended sanctions to other members of his family, members of the Syrian Government, private businessmen who have bankrolled the regime, and corrupt government institutions, among others. We have condemned Assad at the United Nations as well as at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We will continue taking steps to pressure Assad into ending the bloodshed and this is where I believe our focus should be—on concrete actions, not on symbolic measures. Visibly standing up to the Assad regime, as I did when I went to Hama, and mobilizing international support in an unprecedented fashion against the Assad regime, have shown the Syrian public that for us Assad's regime soon will be in the past. We have also kept the focus throughout on the Syrian people being in the lead in this transition so that the regime cannot justify its repression by saying it is standing up to an "American-Zionist conspiracy."

Question. In the wake of your visit to Hama, which was one of the most effective actions you have taken while in Syria, how much freedom of movement do you now have in Syria?

Answer. The Syrian Government has attempted to put in place travel restrictions on me and other diplomats. These travel restrictions were in place prior to my travel to Hama and are still in place today. Movement is not easy, frankly, and there are new security "issues" in the wake of my Hama visit. Regardless of these restrictions, I will continue to move around the country as necessary and meet with Syrians from all walks of life and to show our support for respect of the Syrian people's right to express themselves freely, march peacefully, and organize themselves politically.

Question. I assume your every movement is covered by the Syrian secret police and every visitor to the Embassy is noted by them, with this type of surveillance how effectively can you engage with the opposition? Has it become too dangerous for them to meet with you?

Answer. In spite of the various methods used by the Syrian Government to intimidate democracy advocates in Syria and members of our mission in Damascus, we regularly talk to and meet members of the opposition. We and they are careful obviously. That said, the reductions in our mission staff because of security considerations more than Syrian Government intelligence service actions have hindered our

contacts. Nonetheless, the mission is in touch with dozens of different Syrians weekly. The United States is listening to a range of Syrian voices both inside and outside the country. The Syrian people decide what will happen inside of Syria, but we seek to understand what government constraints are most noxious and then weigh in with the Syrian authorities, often in coordination with other countries' ambassadors, to extract space for the opposition and activists to work. If I am confirmed, I will be able to continue this important work.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

I commend your initiative in visiting Hama to demonstrate American support for the Syrian people's demands for an end of the Assad regime and a more democratic future, and the President's decision to extend U.S. sanctions against President Assad and other senior Syrian officials for their role in suppressing peaceful demonstrations in Syria.

Question. What else could we do to lead our friends in Europe, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf in adopting strict economic sanctions and visa restrictions against Syrian officials?

- How soon could the Syrian regime replace these relations with Chinese and Russian connections?

Answer. The United States has led the international community and forcefully spoken out against the abuses of the Assad regime from the start of this crisis. We believe that by working with our allies targeted sanctions will have the greatest impact. It is important for the U.S. Government keep up the coordination with our allies in order for targeted sanctions to have greater effect. I do some of this coordination in Damascus. Given that most Syrian officials have more assets in the EU, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf than in the United States, working with our allies is critical for sanctions regime success. To date the EU has sanctioned 35 Syrian entities and individuals, in addition to imposing travel bans on those individuals and embargos on sales of arms and equipment that can be used to suppress demonstrations. We continue to encourage Turkey and the Arab States to take all steps possible to bring an immediate end to the Assad regime's repression. For example, we are discussing with our partners sanctions in the oil and gas sector and additional sanctions on Syrian businesses and individuals involved in helping the government repress its people.

In addition, what is taking place in Syria is an international crisis which has resulted in massive refugee flows and threatened regional stability. Such a crisis requires a unified response from the international community condemning the atrocities taking place and calling for an end to the violence.

We will continue working with all nations, including Russia and China, in an effort to isolate the Assad regime and clearly articulate the international community's condemnation of its actions and decisions. Russia and China's decision to allow the U.N. Security Council to adopt a Presidential statement was a positive sign.

Question. How much freedom of movement is the Syrian Government granting you after your visit to Hama?

Answer. The Syrian Government has put in place travel restrictions on all diplomats serving in Damascus. These travel restrictions were in place prior to my travel to Hama and are still in place today. Regardless of these restrictions, I will continue to move around the country as necessary and meet with Syrians from all walks of life. Such movements could cause additional friction with the Syrian authorities.

Statement: The Assad regime's use of the army to murder hundreds of unarmed demonstrators proves that Bashar is no reformist but rather a continuation of his father's reign of terror.

Question. To what extent has the regime sought to play out ethnic and religious differences to suppress the demonstrations? Are there any indications that the regime has reinforced or accelerated efforts to fuel sectarian strife as protests have grown in organization and size?

Answer. Syria has a unique history of peaceful coexistence between religious communities that long predates the Assad regime and the Baath Party system. Syrians have a proud and strong national identity and the opposition has made clear its intention to preserve it. The Syrian regime, unfortunately, is cynically manipulating sectarian tensions in an effort to divide the Syrian people. Its use of predominantly

Alawi gangsters (called "shabeeha") to repress some demonstrations and make arrests has aggravated sectarian tensions in cities like Homs and Lattakia.

Despite the regime's actions, minority participation in the opposition is growing. As the regime's violence and oppression continues to create divisions and exacerbate economic conditions, more Syrians will eventually view the regime as the source of the problem, rather than a guarantor of stability.

Statement: The President justified the NATO military effort in Libya on Qadhafi's threats to slaughter thousands of innocent Libyans. In Syria, we are actually seeing such massacres, now at about 2,000 people and climbing very fast.

Question. How do you explain the administration's hesitation to clearly call for Assad's departure? When would the President clearly and unmistakably call for Assad to step down from power? What are you hearing from Syrians regarding our hesitation to definitely call for Assad to step down and for the Assad family to have zero role in Syria's future?

Answer. The administration believes that it is the right of the Syrian people to decide what happens inside of Syria. We have for many years vigorously condemned Syrian human rights abuses and since the intensification of the government's repression in late March we have spoken out forcefully against the shootings of peaceful demonstrators and the mass arrest campaigns. As the Syrian protest movement grew stronger, we then declared publicly that Assad has lost his legitimacy.

The President will decide if and when to call for Assad to step down. We already have publicly declared that he cannot lead a democratic transition, that we have no American interest in the continuation of his government, and that his government will be left in the past as the democratic transition moves forward. We also stress that the Syrian people, not foreign states, will decide what will happen in Syria and we will be there to support them.

Syrian opposition members have asked the U.S. Government to call on Assad to depart Syria, but at the same time they have clearly stated that they do not want foreign military intervention. President Assad must stop the slaughter now, remove his security forces from the streets, release political prisoners and detainees, and permit access to the U.N. Human Rights Council's fact finding mission. He must stop the massive campaign of arrest, torture, and intimidation. The international community has the responsibility to speak out against violence toward peaceful protestors and threats to international peace and security. We have done so and will continue to do so.

Question. Can you think of a symbolic action the United States might realistically take that would more clearly demonstrate our break with Assad and his clan, and would more clearly show that we want him out?

Answer. We have taken real actions, which are far more important than symbolic ones, in order to demonstrate our break with the Assad regime. This administration for the first time designated Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher under our sanctions regime, and we carefully coordinated this with international partners for maximum effect. American officials have been forceful in recent weeks stating that Assad has lost his legitimacy. In addition, the administration issues a new Executive order designating those complicit in violating the human rights of the Syrian people and sought and obtained a U.N. Security Council Presidential Statement condemning the actions of the regime, as well as the U.N. Human Rights Council's authorization of a fact-finding mission to Syria—all concrete steps to pressure the Assad regime. The Assad regime's time is limited—a democratic transition is underway and it cannot be stopped. It is time for the Syrian people to be free and live their lives with dignity.

Question. According to news reports in late April, an American diplomat was detained, hooded, and "roughed up" despite his diplomatic immunity. How did the United States respond to this?

Answer. It is true that one accredited Embassy personnel was detained and later released by Syrian authorities. He was briefly blindfolded but not physically abused. We protested this action with senior officials in Damascus and Washington. The Syrian Foreign Minister told me it would not happen again, and it has not. It is important that the Syrian Government allows the free flow of information so that the international community and the Syrian people can receive independent verification of events on the ground. Lifting the bar on visits by more foreign journalists would be welcome, and I am working hard to do just that.

Question. What can the United States do to prevent Assad from provoking sectarian violence?

Answer. We must remember that Syria has a long history of people from various ethnic and religious groups living and working side by side in peace. We are confident that this tradition will continue long after Assad is gone. Where we have seen attempts by the regime to incite religious and ethnic tensions, the Syrian people have quickly spoken out against such incitement and in favor of a united Syria. We have sought to highlight instances where the Syrian authorities have stirred sectarian fears, as we did publicly in Embassy press comments after the start of the latest Hama fighting and in my public testimony in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Furthermore, by supporting a pluralistic and inclusive opposition we can help prevent sectarian violence.

Question. What can we do to reassure Christians, Druze, Kurds, and Alawites that they will not be targeted if a Sunni-led government wins power, or persuade Sunni groups to offer many more and more persuasive reassurances?

Answer. Syria has a long history of being a secular society and it will continue to be one once Assad is no longer in power. By supporting a broad and inclusive opposition we can help assure that Syria will always be a country that respects religious rights and beliefs. My team and I have encouraged the opposition to reach out to Syrian minority leaders to reassure them that a democratic Syria would not retaliate against minorities, and we have had positive reactions from elements of those minorities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MIKE LEE

Question. Ambassador Ford, thank you for your willingness to serve in Syria, a nation that is in turmoil. In light of the recent violence and attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, do you feel it is safe and prudent to have a U.S. Ambassador stationed in Syria? Please share a few of the specific benefits you have observed of having a U.S. Ambassador present in Syria.

Answer. It is a privilege for me and my team to serve in Syria. While there are risks associated with my service in Syria, we assess the risk to be manageable. I travel with a security detail and strongly believe that the benefits to having an ambassador in Damascus far outweigh the mitigated risks. I see it as an integral part of my mission to give the Syrian people an ear and a voice. My presence is one of the most effective tools of pressure we have on the Syrian Government. The Syrian Government's unhappiness with much of my work, which we see reflected in angry government-controlled media coverage, shows that my work is getting their attention and resonating with segments of Syrian society. I convey our tough messages to the government, and am also in constant contact with the Syrian opposition. If confirmed, I would continue to fulfill these roles into the future.

By maintaining a high-level presence, we are able to support the demands of the Syrian people and promote respect for their basic human dignity. As I mentioned in my prepared statement, my presence helps draw attention to the legitimate grievances of the peaceful protestors so that the international community and, more importantly, the Syrian regime pays attention. The Syrian people want to be heard. My visit to Hama showed that a high-ranking U.S. official can help them be heard.

Regional outreach is critical. I meet regularly with the ambassadors from other key nations, either to influence their assessments and strategies or, if we are in agreement, to coordinate our approaches. It is important, for example, that the U.S. Government work in concert with our allies in order for targeted sanctions to have greater effect. I do much of this coordination in Damascus. Given that most Syrian officials have far more assets in the EU, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf than they do in the United States, working with our allies is critical for the sanctions' success. I personally recommended a series of diplomatic initiatives with partner countries, as well as specific steps we and partners could take inside of Syria to weaken the Assad government and compel it to change its repressive policies. Some of this has involved my coordinating with other countries' ambassadors on particular recommendations to their own capitals. For example, Turkey plays an extremely important role, and I regularly exchange ideas with the Turkish Ambassador in Damascus who has direct access to the senior Turkish leadership. It remains important for us to consult with the Turks on what is happening on the ground, and then decide how best to press the Syrian Government.

I have also been able to encourage and work with the Syrian opposition. Syrians have been denied the opportunity to participate in politics for 40 years, and the Syrian Government still refuses to allow them the space and security to openly organize. In such a short period of time, however, they have made some progress. We encourage all of the various players in the Syrian opposition to unite around the

principle of a representative, inclusive, and pluralistic government that respects the rights of all of Syria's citizens equally. Furthermore, by supporting a pluralistic and inclusive opposition we aim to prevent sectarian violence. More Syrians are joining the opposition despite the risk of government retaliation. Indeed, the opposition's ranks now include Alawi, Druze, and Christian Syrians, as well as businessmen, merchants, and even military servicemen.

Additionally, I have been able to help secure the release of U.S. citizens and Syrian political prisoners. We have been able to press the Syrian Government to allow some limited access to international media, including CNN and NPR.

Question. In light of recent events in Syria, would you classify the Obama administration's strategy of engaging the Assad regime a success or failure? Please explain.

Answer. Having an ambassador in Damascus has been a success even if we have not achieved all that we had hoped for. It is important that high-level members of the regime fully understand the position of the United States before they act. On some occasions, including the government's release of several detained Americans, and the government's allowing an opposition conference in late June, they have responded to our discussions. Obviously, we are entirely dissatisfied with the government's brutal handling of the protests which is why the President and the Secretary have urged that Assad step aside. In this time of upheaval, it is doubly important that we have the ability to coordinate our efforts throughout the region, and to provide Washington policymakers with a clear and detailed picture of what is happening in the country. This is particularly helpful given that the Assad regime has restricted international media and human rights monitors.

Question. Moving forward, how do we responsibly communicate with a Syrian Government that, as Secretary Clinton has stated, "has lost all legitimacy?"

Answer. What the United States supports is a Syria that is democratic, just, and inclusive. We will support this outcome by pressuring President Assad to get out of the way of this transition and by standing up for the universal rights of the Syrian people. We have two goals in communicating with the Syrian Government going forward. First, we will deliver one clear and consistent message: Assad's calls for dialogue and reform ring hollow, he refuses to lead a genuine democratic transition and he should step aside. We have another goal which is to bring more and more of the international community to join us in sending that message. We have had success with EU states, Canada, Japan and a few others. One of my efforts in Damascus is to explain our perception of events on the ground in Syria to other ambassadors and visiting journalists and help bring them to share our understanding of the way forward and how other countries can help communicate that to Syrians as well.

It is up to the Syrian people to choose their own leaders, not foreigners. Our role is to support them. After a growing chorus of condemnations from all corners of the region and globe, Assad can have no doubt that he faces great isolation both at home and abroad.

Question. Compare the regime of Bashar al-Assad to that of Syria's neighbors in the region. Do you feel that Assad's regime is a greater threat to security in the region than Qadafi's regime in Libya? Why or why not?

Answer. No two countries in the region are the same, and the violence in Syria and Libya has manifested itself in different ways. Without a doubt both Assad and Qadafi are brutal dictators that continue to threaten international peace and security. So, while the objectives of protecting civilians and supporting universal rights are similar in these two countries, we do not believe the same means employed in Libya would work at the current time in Syria. Therefore, we are actively pursuing a range of nonmilitary options to increase pressure on the Syrian regime.

The Assad regime's violence against its own people has resulted in over 2,000 deaths, 12,000 refugees fleeing Syria to neighboring countries, and over 30,000 Syrians internally displaced by the violence. The continuing abuses by the Syrian Government will inevitably lead to greater instability in the region. We do believe that Assad's regime could try to foment instability in the region in an effort to retain power and distract the international community. In fact, this has already taken place. For example, on June 5, 2011, pro-Syrian protestors supported by the Assad regime attempted to enter parts of the Golan Heights, which led to at least 23 deaths. It is important for us to work with Syria's neighbors and act together to stop the instability outside its borders and to help the Syrian people gain the dignity and freedom they deserve. Moreover, Syria's longstanding support to terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, harms stability in Lebanon and harms efforts to reach an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. In addition, Syrian sup-

port for extremist networks in Iraq over the past 7 years has led to the deaths of thousands of U.S. and Iraqi servicemen and Iraqi civilians. The Syrian Government is, therefore, a major source of instability in the region, and American interests, and those of the Syrian people, will be better served when Assad steps aside.

RESPONSES OF FRANCIS RICCIARDONE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
THE FOLLOWING SENATORS

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. Can you assure members of the Foreign Relations Committee that you will oppose any "historical commission" or similar group that studies, examines, researches, debates, or otherwise calls into question the fact of the Armenian Genocide?

Answer. The President has said that a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all our interests. In his April 23, 2011, statement, he noted that history teaches us that our nations are stronger and our cause is more just when we appropriately recognize painful pasts and work to rebuild bridges of understanding toward a better tomorrow. With this in mind, the administration strongly supports efforts by the Turkish and Armenian peoples to work through their painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. The U.S. Government supports the efforts of individuals in Armenia and Turkey to foster a dialogue that acknowledges their history, sponsoring programs that foster contacts between the Armenian and Turkish peoples. If confirmed, I will continue to abide by the policies of the administration.

Question. President Barack Obama has said repeatedly that he has "consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915." President Obama's personal views are clearly laid out in a number of public comments and statements including:

(1) "Nearly 2 million Armenians were deported during the Armenian Genocide, which was carried out by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, and approximately 1.5 million of those deported were killed." (Senator Obama, Question for the Record to Ambassador-designate Marie Yovanovitch, June 19, 2008.)

(2) "The occurrence of the Armenian genocide is a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming collection of historical evidence." (Senator Obama, statement commemorating the Armenian Genocide, April 28, 2008.)

(3) "[T]he Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence." (Barack Obama on the importance of U.S.-Armenia relations, January 19, 2008.)

- Do you dispute or disagree with any of the above statements? If so, which statements and why?

Answer. In his April 23 Armenian Remembrance Day statement, the President solemnly remembered as historical fact that 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths from 1915–1923. The President has also said that the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts of what occurred in 1915 is in all our interests. The President noted that the best way to advance that goal is for the Armenian and Turkish people to address the facts of the past as a part of their efforts to move forward. He strongly supports the efforts of Turkey and Armenia to normalize their bilateral relations.

My responsibility as an American diplomat is to represent the views of the U.S. Government, on this and all subjects. We strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian peoples to work through their painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. We continue to encourage Turkey to engage productively with Armenia on the normalization protocols and clear the way to open its shared border, reinstitute transportation, communication, and utility links between the two countries, and establish diplomatic relations.

Question. At a press breakfast on April 13, 2011, you quoted Secretary of State Clinton stating that, "the United States will stand with those who seek to advance the cause of democracy and human rights wherever they may live." If confirmed, will you take part in April 24 observances organized in Turkey by civil society groups that openly call for a truthful and just resolution of the Armenian Genocide?

Answer. The United States strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian peoples to work through their painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. We continue to encourage Turkey to engage productively with Armenia on the normalization protocols and clear the way to open its shared border, reinstitute

transportation, communication, and utility links between the two countries, and establish diplomatic relations. I would participate in any event whose spirit and intent was consistent with the views of the U.S. Government and supported the reconciliation of the Turkish and Armenian peoples.

Question. On June 20, 2011, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 43-1 to approve an amendment to the FY 2012 State Department Authorization bill expressing the Sense of Congress that the Secretary of State should urge Turkey to return Christian churches and other religious properties. How will you work to secure the Turkish Government's return of Christian churches and other religious properties to their rightful owners?

Answer. We continue to raise our concerns regarding the restoration of confiscated religious property to minority communities with Turkish authorities at the highest levels. The Government of Turkey's decision to return the Buyukada orphanage to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and, more recently, a church and cemetery to Kimisis Greek Orthodox Foundation on Bozcaada, are positive moves. I believe the Government of Turkey understands the importance of this issue and has determined that it must do more to protect the religious freedoms of all its citizens. There are some legal obstacles that must be overcome, but I am hopeful that as Turkey writes a new constitution, these issues will be addressed.

Question. As Ambassador to Turkey, what steps have you taken—in addition to meeting with religious leaders—to address the alarming finding in the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2011 that: "The Turkish Government continues to impose serious limitations on freedom of religion or belief, thereby threatening the continued vitality and survival of minority religious communities in Turkey"?

Answer. We continue to stress the importance of religious freedom in Turkey at the highest levels of the Turkish Government. We also continue to raise our concerns regarding the restoration of previously confiscated property to religious minority communities with Turkish authorities at the highest levels.

The Government of Turkey's recent decision to extend citizenship to 12 Orthodox metropolitans (one step below Patriarch in the Orthodox hierarchy with regional ecclesiastic responsibilities), which widens the pool of candidates eligible to serve as the next Ecumenical Patriarch was a positive development, as was the decision to return the Buyukada orphanage to the Patriarchate and more recently a church and cemetery to Kimisis Greek Orthodox Foundation on Bozcaada. It has also given permission for Christians to perform religious ceremonies in sites where previously this was prohibited, such as the Armenian church on Akdamar Island, and the Greek Orthodox monastery at Sumela in Trabzon. An Armenian church in Iskenderun will reopen soon. Given these and other positive steps, I believe the Government of Turkey appreciates our concerns on these issues and has itself determined that it must do more to protect the religious freedom of all its citizens. In some circumstances, legal obstacles must be overcome. Turkey's efforts to reform its constitution creates an opportunity to address the issue of legal protections of citizens' freedoms, including religious freedom.

Question. Will you commit to meeting with the Armenian American, Greek American, Assyrian American, and Kurdish American communities on a regular basis?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to warmly welcome to our Embassy and consulates in Turkey Americans of all origins who have an interest in the policies of the administration on Turkey. Likewise, I will be very pleased to meet with such fellow citizens on my visits back to the United States. In January 2011, following my recess appointment and before leaving the United States to assume my office, I met with a number of diaspora groups, including the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA). In April, I was privileged to host the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at my official residence in Ankara. I have met with leaders and members of the Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, and Kurdish communities in Turkey, and our officers from the Embassy in Ankara and our consulates in Istanbul and Adana have done likewise, responding to the concerns of their diasporas about their welfare.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Human Rights/Freedom of Expression.—There has been much concern over Prime Minister Erdogan's authoritarian tendencies, particularly in terms of freedom of expression and media freedom. On her recent trip to Istanbul, Secretary of State Clinton stated that backsliding in this area was "inconsistent with all the

other advances that Turkey has made.” This was also one of the first issues you raised when you first arrived in Turkey, prompting sharp rebukes from the Prime Minister and other Turkish officials. Moreover, in recent years the AKP has seemed to abandon its commitment to EU-inspired reforms. After the AKP’s resounding victory in the recent parliamentary elections, do you think that the Turkish leadership will return to its reformist agenda and help consolidate democracy in Turkey?

Answer. The June 12 parliamentary elections were an opportunity for the Turkish people to reaffirm their commitment to democratic processes and choose their leadership. The next major test for democracy in Turkey is whether and how to proceed with reform of their constitution. We will follow closely that process and urge that Turkish political leaders, courts, and civil society continue to work through issues tied to constitutional reform in a manner that reflects a commitment to universal values of democracy and the rule of law. The United States supports a transparent and inclusive constitutional reform process to strengthen Turkey’s democracy and its respect for universal rights, including freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms, human rights, and the protection of minorities.

Question. Religious Property.—The U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 43 to 1 on July 20, 2011 to call on Secretary Clinton to urge Turkey to return Christian churches and other religious properties. How will you work to secure the Turkish Government’s return of Christian churches and other religious properties to their rightful Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, Pontian, Syriac and other Christian church and lay owners?

Answer. We continue to raise our concerns regarding the restoration of confiscated religious property to minority communities with Turkish authorities at the highest levels. The Government of Turkey’s recent decision to extend citizenship to a dozen Orthodox metropolitans [one step below Patriarch in the Orthodox hierarchy with regional ecclesiastic responsibilities], which widens the pool of candidates eligible to serve as the next Ecumenical Patriarch, was a positive move, as were the decisions to return the Buyukada orphanage to the Patriarchate and more recently a church and cemetery to Kimisis Greek Orthodox Foundation on Bozcaada. I believe the Government of Turkey understands the importance of this issue and wants to see continued progress. There are some legal obstacles that must be overcome, and I am hopeful that as Turkey writes a new constitution, these issues will be addressed.

Question. To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many of the more than 2,000 Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 on the territory of present-day Turkey are still operating today as churches?

Answer. Most of the Christian churches functioning prior to 1915 are no longer operating as churches. Christian community contacts in Turkey report that a total of 200–250 churches that date to 1915 and before offer Christian worship services at least once a year. Many churches do not offer services every week due to insufficient clergy or local Christian populations. Some churches of significance operate as museums, others have been converted into mosques or put to other uses. Still others have fallen into disrepair or may have been totally destroyed.

Question. Cyprus.—With respect to Cyprus—the parties are currently engaged in intense talks, facilitated by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon—in a concerted effort to resolve the Cyprus question before Cyprus assumes the presidency of the EU. The Cyprus situation, however, remains intractable so long as Turkey refuses to remove its troops from Cypriot soil and to permit the parties to achieve a workable agreement. What is Prime Minister Erdogan’s position on Cyprus? What impact will the rift between the Erdogan government and the Turkish military have on current negotiations given the military’s well-known objection to withdrawal from the island?

Answer. The Government of Turkey and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan support the reunification of Cyprus in a bizonal, bicomunal federation. The United States has long encouraged the Government of Turkey to support the Cypriot-led negotiations under the auspices of the U.N. Good Offices Mission to reach a comprehensive settlement.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon convened Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot leaders on July 7 where the parties agreed to intensify their efforts to reach convergence on all core issues. The resolution of outstanding issues, including the removal of Turkish troops, is most likely to occur in the context of comprehensive settlement negotiations.

The recent resignation of senior military officials is an internal Turkish matter. We do not see this development as significantly impacting the negotiation process.

Question. Iran.—I am very concerned about Iran's continuing efforts to acquire nuclear capacity and with respect to Turkey I remain concerned with Iran's use of foreign bank branches to circumvent sanctions. Open source reporting has raised concerns about Turkish banks, specifically about Turkish branches of Iran's Bank Mellat. News sources also recently reported that Indian refiners will pay Iran for crude oil bought from the Persian Gulf nation through a Turkish bank. Are you concerned that Turkish banks and foreign bank branches in Turkey are being used as conduits for Iran to conduct international transactions? As Ambassador, what steps have you taken to educate, inform Turkish officials and banks about the U.S. sanctions laws on Iran and to secure their compliance?

Answer. The Turkish leadership has made very clear its opposition to a nuclear-armed Iran and has affirmed both publicly and privately its commitment to implement all UNSCR sanctions against Iran. We are engaging vigorously with both the Turkish Government and the Turkish private sector to ensure that CISADA sanctions are both understood and implemented. Turkey has been a strong partner on nonproliferation, and if confirmed, I will continue to work to maintain close cooperation on these issues and work with the Government of Turkey to share international best practices in implementation of the U.N. sanctions.

Question. Turkish Blockage of Armenia.—In March 2009, Assistant Secretary of State Phil Gordon, in response to a question I asked at his confirmation hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his hope that the Turkey-Armenia border would be opened by October 2009. Today, nearly 2 years later, Turkey has refused to end its blockade of landlocked Armenia. In the past year, what adjustments has the executive branch made to its approach and policies to accomplish our repeatedly stated interest in seeing Turkey open this border? What progress can you report on this issue?

- Do you consider the Turkish blockade of Armenia a violation of international law?
- Do you believe that Turkey's nearly 20 year strategy of blockading Armenia has been effective?

Answer. We strongly believe an open border between Turkey and Armenia is in the best interests of both countries. We continue to encourage Turkey to engage productively with Armenia on the normalization protocols and clear the way to open its shared border, reinstitute transportation, communication, and utility links between the two countries, and establish diplomatic relations.

Over the last decade, the United States has provided approximately \$3.5 million to support activities aimed at strengthening relations between the people of Armenia and Turkey. These include initiatives to increase people-to-people connections such as research projects, conferences, documentary production, and exchange and partnership programs, with the goal of increasing cross-border dialogue and cooperation. These programs are focused on bringing together Armenian and Turkish NGOs, think tank researchers, academics, and business leaders at the grassroots level by creating opportunities for them to work together on common projects that will benefit both countries. If I am confirmed, I will continue to promote not only government-to-government discussions, but also people-to-people cultural and economic contacts and partnerships, as well as other cross-border and regional initiatives.

Question. United State Record on the Armenian Genocide.—Former Senators Barack Obama, Joseph Biden, and Hillary Clinton each acknowledged the fact of the Armenian Genocide during their tenure as Senator. The history of the Armenian Genocide is also well documented by our own diplomats. Yet, this administration and prior administrations continue this inarticulate word dance. Do you agree with the administration's wordsmithing policy?

What do you think would happen if you articulated the historical truth and referred to the genocide of the Armenian people as genocide? What, in your estimation, would be the Turkish Government's most likely reaction to an open and honest recognition by the United States of the Armenian Genocide?

Answer. In his April 23 Armenian Remembrance Day statement, the President solemnly remembered as historical fact that 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths from 1915–1923, and has also said that the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts of what occurred in 1915 is in all our interests. The President also noted that the best way to advance that goal is for the Armenian and Turkish people to address the facts of the past as a part of their efforts to move forward. He strongly supports the efforts of Turkey and Armenia to normalize their bilateral relations.

My responsibility as an American diplomat is to represent the views of the U.S. Government, on this and all subjects. The horrific events of 1915 were atrocities that we and the world must never forget, so that they are never repeated. We strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian peoples to work through their painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. We continue to encourage Turkey to engage productively with Armenia on the normalization protocols and clear the way to open its shared border, reinstitute transportation, communication, and utility links between the two countries, and establish diplomatic relations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BEN CARDIN

Question. Turkey maintains effective control over occupied northern Cyprus, maintaining tens of thousands of Turkish troops on Cypriot soil in violation of that country's sovereignty and numerous principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. What is the United States doing to press Ankara to withdraw its troops from Cyprus consistent with numerous U.N. resolutions adopted since the 1974 invasion?

Answer. Talks between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities to reunify the island as a bizonal, bicomunal federation have been ongoing for nearly 3 years. The United States has long encouraged the Government of Turkey to support the reunification of Cyprus in a bizonal, bicomunal federation. The administration believes such an outcome is in the interest not only of Cyprus, but of Turkey, Greece, and the region.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon convened Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot leaders on July 7 where the parties agreed to intensify their efforts to reach convergence on all core issues. The resolution of outstanding issues, including the removal of Turkish troops, is most likely to occur in the context of comprehensive settlement negotiations.

If confirmed, I will continue to engage Turkey on this vital issue.

Question. Today, indigenous Turkish Cypriots are outnumbered by settlers from Turkey. Please address this matter and relevant policies of the Government of Turkey that permit and promote this movement.

Answer. Issues of citizenship and residency are being addressed through the U.N.-facilitated reunification talks—the best format to address these and all other issues related to a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem.

Turkey at present has no official policy on resettlement. Following the events of 1974, some Turkish nationals migrated to Cyprus. Many have since been granted citizenship by the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.”

There is a shortage of commonly agreed statistics on how many people are living in the Turkish Cypriot community. The 2006 census undertaken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities put the number of “TRNC citizens” at more than half of the total population in the north, but some observers, on both sides of the “Green Line”, question these statistics. The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities are each currently undertaking a census expected to be completed by the end of the year within the framework of the reunification talks. It is hoped that this work will help clarify these issues as part of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. I have serious concerns about Turkey's commitment to religious freedom, including limitations on the rights of Christians to practice their faith freely and the destruction of Christian religious heritage sites and churches. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has placed Turkey on its “watch list” for the last 3 years. Moreover, Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Christian Orthodox Patriarch, has reported that Turkey's Christians are treated as second-class citizens.

- What steps is the United States taking to address these serious concerns over the rights of religious minorities in Turkey, including Orthodox Christians?

Answer. We continue to stress the importance of religious freedom in Turkey at the highest levels of the Turkish Government. We also continue to raise our concerns regarding the restoration of previously confiscated property to religious minority communities with Turkish authorities at the highest levels. I understand that the current Government of Turkey has not engaged in the destruction or confiscation of religious sites. The Government of Turkey's recent decision to extend citizenship to 12 Orthodox metropolitans [one step below Patriarch in the Orthodox hierarchy with regional ecclesiastic responsibilities], which widens the pool of can-

didates eligible to serve as the next Ecumenical Patriarch was a positive development, as was the decision to return the Buyukada orphanage to the Patriarchate and more recently a church and cemetery to Kimisis Greek Orthodox Foundation on Bozcaada. It has also given permission for Christians to perform religious ceremonies in sites where previously this was prohibited, such as the Armenian church on Akdamar Island, and the Greek Orthodox monastery at Sumela in Trabzon. An Armenian church in Iskenderun will reopen soon. Given these and other positive steps, I believe the Government of Turkey understands our concerns on these issues and has itself determined that it must do more to protect the religious freedoms of all its citizens. In some circumstances, legal obstacles must be overcome. Turkey's efforts to reform its constitution creates an opportunity to address the issue of legal protections of citizens' freedoms, including religious freedom.

Question. Cyprus's strategic location and shared tradition of democratic values makes it an important U.S. ally in the region. While it is important for the United States to take a balanced approach toward the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in the ongoing settlement negotiations, more can be done to help Turkey understand that its ongoing troop presence in northern Cyprus is a hindrance to any final unification agreement.

- How is the United States engaging with Turkey to urge an end to the Turkish troop presence in northern Cyprus in order to help promote a fair and lasting peace settlement in Cyprus?

Answer. Talks between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities to reunify the island as a bizonal, bicomunal federation have been ongoing for nearly 3 years. The United States has long encouraged the Government of Turkey to support the reunification of Cyprus on this basis. The administration believes such an outcome is in the interest not only of Cyprus, but of Turkey, Greece, and the region. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon convened Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot leaders on July 7 where the parties agreed to intensify their efforts to reach convergence on all core issues. The resolution of outstanding issues, including the removal of Turkish troops, is most likely to occur in the context of comprehensive settlement negotiations.

If confirmed, I will continue to engage Turkey on this vital issue.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Cyprus.—Prior to and during his recent visit to Cyprus, Prime Minister Erdogan stated that returning territories would not be part of reunification talks, nor would removal of 40,000 Turkish troops. Additionally, he stated his support for freezing relations with the European Union if Cyprus assumes the EU presidency.

- Do you believe the Turkish Government is willing to productively engage in talks based on a bizonal, bicomunal Cyprus?
- What steps have you taken to promote U.S. policy toward Cyprus, and to push the Turkish Government toward satisfactory talks?

Answer. The administration strongly supports the Cypriot-led negotiations under the auspices of the U.N. Good Offices Mission to reach a comprehensive settlement reunifying the island as a bizonal, bicomunal federation. We believe that direct talks between the two sides is the best way to reach a just and lasting settlement. We are prepared to be helpful in any way that both parties desire, but the negotiations must be Cypriot-led to achieve an outcome satisfactory to both sides.

We would like to see a settlement reached sooner rather than later, but we recognize just how difficult the process is. We are encouraged that the personal intervention of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in June compelled both sides to intensify talks and we remain hopeful that a solution may be reached.

We continue to urge both parties on Cyprus to make the tough compromises necessary for a solution. We also regularly underscore with our Greek and Turkish interlocutors the importance of the reunification negotiations and emphasize that everybody benefits from a settlement: Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus.

Question. Iran.—What role do you see for Turkey with regard to Iran's nuclear program? Noting prior differences with Turkey on sanctions and enrichment plans, how should we move forward with Turkey to ensure that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon?

Answer. Turkey shares our goal of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran. While Turkey has a long history of cultural, political, and economic ties to Iran, as well as a long common border and shared populations, Turkey strongly supports the efforts of the international community to encourage Iran to engage with the P5+1 toward

a diplomatic resolution of concerns about Iran's nuclear program. The Turkish Government and private sector have been cooperative in addressing specific concerns on various export control and sanctions issues. We will continue to encourage Turkey, as we encourage all states, to impress upon Iran the importance of complying with its international nuclear obligations as part of the necessary path to resolving all concerns with Iran's nuclear program.

Question. Has Turkey, in your view, adequately enforced Iranian sanctions? If not, what steps do you intend to take to push for increased enforcement?

Answer. The Turkish leadership has made very clear its opposition to a nuclear-armed Iran and has stated both publicly and privately that it will fully implement all UNSCR sanctions against Iran. We are also engaging vigorously with both the Turkish Government and the Turkish private sector to ensure that CISADA sanctions are both understood and implemented. Turkey has been a strong partner on nonproliferation and if confirmed, I will continue to work to maintain close cooperation on these issues and work with the Government of Turkey to share international best practices in implementation of the U.N. sanctions.

Question. European Union.—Do you believe Turkey can still find a path forward for eventual EU membership? What do you believe are the most important unresolved issues in Turkey and in Europe for Turkey in the European Union?

Answer. The United States believes that Turkey's full accession into the European Union would benefit both the EU and Turkey, and we have made this clear to the EU, its members, and Turkey. As the President has said, "the most important thing we can do with Turkey is to continue to engage, continue to hold out the advantages for them of integration with the West, while still respecting their own unique qualities."

Ultimately, the decision rests with both the EU and with Turkey to move forward with the accession process, which entails progress on the remaining 20 chapters in the Acquis Comunitaire process.

To advance this process forward, the administration continues to encourage and support the Turkish Government and civil society as they strive to implement reforms, particularly involving democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Turks themselves want to see a more democratic Turkey and the Turkish Government continues to pledge its commitment to the EU accession process.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. According to the 2011 State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, Turkey is a Tier 2 source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. The report notes that human trafficking in Turkey affects women and children from Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union States, but also Turkish women who are subject to trafficking within their own country. At the same time, Turkey has taken positive measures, such as providing grants for the operation of its national IOM antitrafficking hotline.

- If confirmed, what would be your strategy to encourage the Turkish Government to aggressively combat trafficking within Turkey, including trafficking affecting its own citizens?
- How will you encourage the justice system in Turkey to use their antitrafficking laws properly and provide proper punishment of traffickers?

Answer. We recognize that trafficking cases are inherently difficult to prosecute and we all must improve efforts to uncover victims of forced labor and sex trafficking. No country has established a truly comprehensive response to the crime of human trafficking, and the United States and Turkey share common challenges in addressing and making progress in combating TIP.

We were pleased to note in the Department's 2011 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report that the government improved its recognition of forced labor and domestic trafficking and provided grants for the operation of its national IOM antitrafficking hotline. The Turkish Penal Code prohibits both sex trafficking and forced labor under which 28 offenders were convicted and received sentences ranging from 2 to 24 years' imprisonment. While Turkey demonstrated some progress in protecting trafficking victims, it did not address critically needed improvements to achieve a more victim-centered approach to TIP.

If confirmed, I am committed to continued partnership with the Government of Turkey to address this important issue. When it comes to the prosecution of TIP, I will continue to urge the government, if confirmed, to finalize draft legislation that prohibits internal trafficking in Turkey and improve witness protection measures

that give witnesses greater incentive to cooperate with law enforcement officials. If confirmed, I will also stress with the government the importance the U.S. attaches to providing NGOs with sustainable funding for NGO shelters that in turn extend critical comprehensive care to victims as well as stepping up its efforts to proactively identify victims of this inherently hidden crime.

Question. Good relations between Armenia and Turkey are particularly important to stability in the Caucasus and our Nation's interests. In June, the Turkish people democratically elected Prime Minister Erdogan's Justice and Development Party to a third consecutive term as the majority in the Turkish Parliament.

- In your view, what are the prospects of Turkish ratification of the 2009 Zurich Protocols to normalize relations with Armenia, given the results of the June parliamentary elections?

Answer. We commend the Governments of Armenia and Turkey on their signing of the historic protocols on normalization of relations on October 10, 2009, in Zurich. Officials from the Government of Turkey continue to state their commitment to the protocols. Normalization between Turkey and Armenia remains a feature of our dialogue with both countries. Secretary Clinton and other senior officials continue to raise ratification of the protocols with Turkish leaders. Facilitating regional integration is a particular priority for the United States. We believe that rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey will foster increased stability and prosperity in the entire Caucasus region. We are encouraged that both sides remain committed to the process, and we will continue to actively urge all parties to take steps to move the process forward.

Question. Turkey has been an invaluable NATO ally, and the hope is that their economic success and democratic consolidation will strengthen that role.

- Is Turkey still considering hosting the radar in southeastern Europe as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense, and, if so, when is a decision expected?

Answer. On September 19, 2009, President Obama announced the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense, which will provide for the defense of U.S. deployed forces and our allies in Europe sooner and more comprehensively than the previous plan. This approach is based on a new assessment of the missile threat, and a commitment to deploy technology that is proven, cost-effective, and adaptable to an evolving security environment. At the Lisbon NATO Summit in November 2010, allies agreed to develop a territorial missile defense capability for the full coverage and protection of all NATO European territory, populations, and forces against the increasing threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Allies also welcomed the EPAA as the U.S. national contribution to this essential NATO task. We welcomed Turkey's support as well as the support of all allies for the success of this important mission.

The administration has made substantial progress in implementation of the EPAA. We are in discussions for the deployment of an AN/TPY-2 radar to southern Europe. A forward-based radar will provide additional sensor coverage to enhance the existing U.S. homeland missile defense architecture. While no decision has been made, we expect to meet our goals for deployment beginning in 2011.

The administration has held regular discussions with all NATO allies about the EPAA and NATO Missile Defense, including Turkey. We look forward to continuing such discussions with Turkey and other allies.

RESPONSE OF NORMAN EISEN TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. According to the 2011 State Department Traffic in Persons Report, the Czech Republic is a Tier 2 source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking. Despite meaningful antisex trafficking measures, the Czech Republic is struggling to address labor trafficking cases, especially trafficking through their private labor recruitment agencies.

- If confirmed, what would be your strategy to work with the Czech Government to reinforce their antitrafficking laws to more effectively combat this scourge?

Answer. As you point out, the Czech Republic has a strong program for preventing and combating sex trafficking and protecting its victims. Government engagement is backed by an energetic nongovernmental sector that ensures that victims' rights remain on the public agenda. However, the Embassy identified significant shortcomings in preventing labor trafficking last year, which I took up with senior government officials. The concerns we identified resulted in the Czech Republic being downgraded to Tier 2 in the 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report.

I and my staff are actively engaged with our Czech counterparts in government and NGOs on improving the labor trafficking situation and we have a strong relationship with the antitrafficking interlocutors in the country. The Czech Government has dedicated an interministerial committee to coordinate the government's response to trafficking in persons, and the Embassy has participated in this body's discussions. We have submitted an action plan to the Czech Government on addressing the concerns you raise, and the government is already actively working with us to achieve results. For example, the Czech Government has introduced legislation to fund the hiring of more labor inspectors and a law enacted in January makes disreputable labor agencies more difficult to establish and maintain. The action plan, developed with experts at the Department of State, is specifically aimed at improving regulation of labor agencies; prosecution of labor traffickers; and education of law enforcement officials to better identify victims.