

## NOMINATIONS

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021—a.m.

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:36 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Van Hollen, Risch, Young, and Cruz.

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

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We appreciate the patience of both members and the nominees of conferring with the ranking member on the question of nomination.

We are here today to consider nominations for four very important positions: Ambassador Julieta Valls Noyes to be Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Ambassador Barbara Leaf to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Ms. Julianne Smith to be Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, and Ambassador Denise Bauer to be the Ambassador to France and Monaco.

Congratulations on all your nominations. The four of you have a distinguished history of public service. We appreciate your willingness to continue to serve our country.

We also appreciate your families because it is a sacrifice to families as well who are engaged in the service by their support and sometimes travel abroad. We thank them.

Before I continue, I understand that the distinguished Senator from Virginia is privileged to make three introductions. I do not get three introductions from New Jersey and I am the chairman.

In any event, Senator Kaine we'll recognize you now.

### STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member Risch, for scheduling this hearing for such wonderfully qualified nominees.

It is my pleasure to introduce three of the nominees, two from Virginia, one from California, who is a very close friend: Denise

Campbell Bauer, to be ambassador to France and Monaco, Julieta Noyes to be Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, and Barbara Leaf to be Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

I previously introduced Ambassador Bauer to this committee in 2013 when she was nominated to be ambassador to Belgium. I have had a chance to know Denise and her family now for about 15 years.

She had a distinguished career in journalism, nonprofits, and domestic and international politics. But in particular, in her service in Belgium, she served at a most challenging time.

In March of 2016, Belgium was subject to coordinated terrorist attacks at the same time as France also underwent those attacks. And at that point, Ambassador Bauer, she will describe, worked very hard to keep Americans safe, to work with our ally, Belgium, and even coordinate some activities between Belgium and France.

As Ambassador to Belgium, she was unanimously confirmed by the Senate. She worked very, very hard on that transatlantic relationship and to advance U.S. policy goals in Europe.

And as you know, the U.S. presence in Belgium also includes the NATO and EU missions, and so the Belgian Ambassador has a lot of important work in those multilateral efforts.

Her on-the-ground experience in the region leading the implementation of U.S. foreign policy at a challenging time has demonstrated her ability and would make her very, very fit to serve as our Ambassador in France and Monaco.

Ambassador Noyes exemplifies the dedication of career Foreign Service officers and their families, many of whom call Virginia home when they are not serving overseas.

I have had a chance to see Ambassador Noyes' work up close and personal. I met her in several occasions when she was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Europe from 2013 to 2015 and, again, in Spain when I had the honor, as did the chair of this committee, to serve as honorary chair of the U.S. Spain Council.

Ambassador Noyes has served the country with great skill while raising three children together with her husband, who is also a Foreign Service alum, now a retired officer with 29 years of service.

Two of her children, wisely, attended Virginia universities, University of Virginia and Christopher Newport University.

And I would note in particular, Mr. Chair, that in this position, working on important issues of population, refugees, and migration, Julieta has a powerful family experience. She is the daughter of Cuban refugees and would bring that personal passion to the important work of State in this area.

Finally, I want to introduce Ambassador Barbara Leaf, another Virginian. I noticed that she is a proud alumni of William and Mary and the University of Virginia, but she is wearing only a William and Mary brooch today and not the UVA brooch. She probably had hoped I would not point that out.

But she is a very well qualified nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. She comes to the committee with a deep background in Near Eastern Middle East politics.

She was a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and previously served as our ambassador to the UAE and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Arabian Peninsula in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

This struck me. All of these State Department career folks are wonderful in foreign language proficiencies but listen to this.

Ambassador Leaf speaks Arabic, French, Italian, and Serbo-Croatian. She will lead the bureau with integrity and enthusiasm, and I am proud to introduce this great Virginian to the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Kaine, for that introduction of all of our distinguished nominees.

I know that Senator Shaheen is very happy to see four incredibly talented women before the committee. Let me continue now.

Briefly, I had a conversation with the ranking member, and I appreciate his attention to the seriousness of the situation we have on nominees in the committee.

We have over 70 nominees pending before the committee and we have over 50 completed files. I look forward to working with the ranking member so that we can continue to expedite those nominees in the days ahead.

Okay. I am now being told that Senator Shaheen has also got an introduction to make.

Senator Shaheen?

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Risch.

I am very honored to be able to join Senator Kaine in doing introductions this morning, particularly to be able to introduce Julie Smith, President Biden's nominee to be Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

As chair of the Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation and co-chair of the Senate NATO Observer Group, like other members of this committee, I understand very clearly the importance of Ms. Smith's experience and expertise in what she will bring to this role.

Julie's resume and background is a testament to her commitment to the transatlantic alliance. Her career has spanned 25 years crossing the Pond to work on transatlantic security issues both in and out of government.

She has worked at both the Pentagon and the White House and has worked at some of America's most esteemed think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the German Marshall Fund, and the Center for a New American Security.

And Julie, of course, is no stranger to this committee. She testified in 2017 here on the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship, and her expertise drawn from many years researching transatlantic relations has benefited those in and out of government.

She has spent the last three years researching and writing on Europe's evolving attitudes and vulnerabilities as they relate to China, a subject that we all know very well on this committee.

Julie has also worked to bring foreign policy to audiences outside the Beltway, most recently launching a program called “Across the Pond, In the Field” to bring Europeans to 12 U.S. cities to talk to Americans about foreign policy.

Her accolades and accomplishments alone make her worthy of confirmation, but I also want to highlight Julie’s leadership as a mentor to women in the national security space.

And yes, Mr. Chairman, I was very excited to see four women on the dais this morning who have been nominated to be ambassadors, and Julie has been involved for a long time in mentoring women.

She co-founded the Leadership Council for Women in National Security to provide a support network for women in a predominantly male space. And because of her leadership, there are a number of women in Washington who proudly call themselves mentees of Julie.

And I am also pleased to recognize Julie’s husband, David, who is here with her this morning and I think it is her older son, Liam, who is also here.

As a mother, her family has kept her on her toes, and I can appreciate that because I know that as a working mom you have to juggle a lot of things, which is really important to the world of diplomacy.

For all of these reasons, I am very happy to have Julie’s nomination before this committee. I am sure that my colleagues will appreciate her responses and I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we do have an agreement to move forward these nominees.

It is critical to ensure that American foreign policy can continue. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Let me just briefly reference the positions that these nominees are being nominated for.

Ambassador Valls Noyes, congratulations on your nomination. You bring a distinguished record of diplomatic and management experience to the role, including your most recent assignments leading the Foreign Service Institute and serving as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia.

As you know, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration is responsible for addressing some of the most pressing global challenges we have today.

According to the United Nations, at the beginning of the year there will be more than 82 million forcibly-displaced people in the world, of whom 26.4 million are refugees. No doubt that number has only grown and will continue to grow.

From the global forced migration crisis to the humanitarian emergencies in Venezuela, Ethiopia, Syria, and Afghanistan, the United States must lead in addressing the acute needs that exist today and the long-term drivers of these crises.

The task before you is immense, and I recommend if you are confirmed that you develop strong consultative relationships with the many refugee and resettlement organizations that have deep expertise in this area, and I am confident they would welcome your engagement.

Let me say a few words specifically about Afghanistan and the dire humanitarian crisis there. Nearly half of the entire population, more than 18 million people, need humanitarian assistance right now.

More than 4 million Afghans are internally displaced and the outgoing instability and violence may very well produce large flows of refugees into neighboring countries in the coming months, which would create a great deal of instability.

The PRM bureau will be at the helm of the U.S. response to this crisis and your leadership will be essential to ensuring that our response meets the moment.

Ambassador Leaf, welcome back to the committee. I am pleased that you stopped by our office to get a little bit of a tour of the region. I am hopeful that we can get you quickly in place so the bureau and the whole department can benefit from your decades of experience.

Despite repeated efforts from multiple administrations to pivot to great power competition, the Middle East and North Africa remain central focal points of challenges and, I believe, some opportunities for the United States.

As you know, Iran has continued to advance its nuclear program, and I believe the United States must pursue all options to find a negotiated deal that addresses not just Iran's nuclear program but also its support for terrorism and its ballistic missile activity.

Lebanon is on the brink of collapse. Tunisia, once a bastion of hope for people all over the region, is experiencing a troubling back slide on the democratic reforms, and I have yet to understand exactly what the administration's plan is with Syria.

As Iraq heads towards elections, we have an opportunity to engage with leadership and Iraqis who want a brighter future, and I am hopeful that more countries across the region will build on the historic diplomatic relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain in the Abraham Accords.

Overall, I believe we need to reinvigorate our diplomatic presence and outreach in the region in which our policy has slowly become more and more militarized, and I trust that you are up to that task.

Ms. Smith, we welcome your nomination. Glad that the president selected you for this critical post. During his administration, President Trump repeatedly attacked NATO and our allies. This, unfortunately, drew criticism from both sides of the aisle in the Senate, evidence that bipartisan support for the Alliance is strong.

President Biden's visit to NATO earlier this year helped to repair ties. But work remains to be done to ensure that our allies understand that the United States is steadfast in its support for the Alliance.

You have an exemplary background, experience, intellect, and judgment to represent the United States at NATO, and I hope that we can get you out there as soon as possible.

There are many important conversations happening in Brussels right now about the future of NATO, what its mission will be in the new world in which we live, and we need an ambassador there as soon as possible.

Ambassador Bauer, I am pleased to see you again before the committee. I appreciated your leadership of the embassy team in Belgium, especially during the 2016 Brussels terrorist attack in which Americans were killed and injured.

It is critical that the United States has an experienced ambassador in Paris where we have so many issues to advance with their government, from counterterrorism in the Sahel to support for allied democracies in the eastern Mediterranean.

France is also critical to our policy objectives in Iran and Russia, and I have appreciated the French foreign minister and ambassadors engaging with the Senate on these issues. We look forward to hearing your goals of how we can deepen our oldest diplomatic relationship even further.

Let me close with saying that the four of you have immense challenges ahead. I am confident that your experience can serve our country well as you take on new responsibilities, if confirmed, and we look forward to each of your testimonies.

Let me turn to the distinguished ranking member, Senator Risch, for his opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, regarding the nominees, I appreciate the conversation. We will continue that. I committed to you and I continue to commit to you that I will work in good faith to get these people in place.

I was a governor. I understand that you cannot operate unless you have your team in place. You and I have worked hard to get them to the floor and, as we both know, that that is a special problem that neither you nor I have control over. I get a lot of complaints that you and I cannot deal with because it is a floor problem.

But I will continue to work in good faith and see if we cannot move these forward.

I thank all of you for taking the opportunity and undertaking the privilege of serving the United States in these important positions, and your families. As the chairman mentioned, this is a sacrifice that is borne equally by the families.

I want to talk briefly about each of these.

First of all, for the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near Eastern Affairs, the Middle East region remains shaped by seemingly intractable problems, including Arab-Israeli tensions, continued export of Iranian terrorism, the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Yemen, and growing Chinese and Russian encroachment.

I am concerned that the current administration's approach to these dilemmas appears to not strike the appropriate balance and runs the risk of ceding the region to other malevolent powers, and I think everyone knows of what I speak there.

The administration's precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan has been a strategic unforced error, as both the chairman and I focused on yesterday.

Additionally, its diplomatic embrace of the Iranian regime is hard to understand. The lack of focus on the Abraham Accords is befuddling, to say the least.

Increased barriers to conventional arms transfers and the chilling of relations with our traditional Middle Eastern partners will send a message of American disengagement, which I do not believe that we want to do.

The Abraham Accords especially need to be embraced. They need to be enhanced. They need to be further moved forward.

And I know that as I watch the administration, I think there is a lot of reluctance simply because it was an action by the previous administration. But that was a tremendous success and we should celebrate it and exploit it as best we can.

Like the chairman, I do not understand what Syria policy is today. We need to understand that. I hear rumors and they are, hopefully, not true about the administration's thoughts regarding Assad and his rehabilitation or remaining in place. That is a wrongheaded approach. But in any event, we do need an approach that everyone understands.

Now is the time for the United States to reinforce that we stand with our partners and are up to the challenge. I expect to hear how you plan to improve our engagement in the region and address the serious risks ahead of us.

Next, we have the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration. The administration's botched evacuation from Afghanistan has resulted in thousands of refugees and internally-displaced people inside the country.

Taken with the ongoing refugee crisis endured by Syrians, Venezuelans, and the Rohingya, we now face the world's largest refugee and migration numbers ever.

Through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the U.S. government provides significant assistance to humanitarian partners, including the United Nations.

It is crucial that we ensure all of this assistance meets U.S. national security needs and receives proper oversight.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these issues. I also remain deeply concerned with the Biden administration's decision to restart funding to UNRWA. This organization has a history of using textbooks which incite violence against Israelis as well as has employees with ties to Hamas. We should secure true reforms before giving another dime to this organization.

Moving on to the nominee for U.S. ambassador to NATO, NATO is the world's most successful political and military alliance in the history of the planet. But it is 72 years old and must be flexible to meet new challenges.

NATO will need to continue to deal with Russia and aggression on its southern border. It must also be aware of China's growing direct threat of alliance. The balance of power in the world today is incredibly different than it was 72 years ago.

Last year's NATO 2030 report attempted to address some of these emerging issues and recommended that NATO's Strategic Concept be updated to address China-related issues as well as ways that allies can improve political coordination. I hope to see these recommendations followed.

NATO is also a nuclear alliance. Membership in the Nuclear Ban Treaty is incompatible with being a U.S. ally and NATO member. We must push back strongly on any efforts by NATO members to lend credibility to that treaty or to weaken our nuclear-sharing arrangements.

Lastly, I am worried by the disregard we showed our NATO allies in our hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan. This administration has repeatedly emphasized the importance of our allies. Yet, the way we went about this evacuation has sent our partners the exact opposite message.

Our allies deserve better, especially after invoking Article 5 following the 9/11 attacks and fighting alongside our troops for more than 20 years. They are livid. I think everyone in this room knows that and it will be our job, your job, to fix that.

Finally, we have a nominee for ambassador to France and Monaco. The United States has long enjoyed close relations with France and it remains one of our closest allies.

In Africa, I look forward to continued engagement with our French partners on important challenges, including in the Sahel, Cameroon, the DRC, and the Central African Republic to ensure we pursue mutually beneficial approaches.

France's ambassador here in the United States is an excellent friend and ally, and I have seen and experienced France's desire for a stronger alliance firsthand.

Now is a critical time for us to make real progress in the relationship. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this.

With that, thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

We will turn to our nominees now. I ask that you summarize your statement in about five minutes or so because the committee will want to ask you questions. Your full statements will be included in the record, without objection.

And if you have family members who could be with you today, please do not hesitate to introduce them.

And with that, we will start with Ambassador Noyes and then work our way down the aisle.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION)**

Ambassador NOYES. Thank you, Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch. It is an honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee as Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration. I am grateful to him and to Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I am the first person ever nominated for this position from a refugee background. My parents and members of my extended family entered the United States as refugees from Cuba 61 years ago and later became proud American citizens.

Our family is profoundly aware of the debt we owe to this great nation and, indeed, I joined the State Department in part to repay that debt.



When given an opportunity, refugees and vulnerable migrants can become valued contributors to the countries that receive them. My hard-working family members happily give back to this country as taxpayers and engaged citizens.

I am honored to introduce you to one of them today, my mother, Julieta Valls. In addition to raising a family, my mom worked in international development for years, presenting the best of America to people in other nations.

And, Senators, I want to thank you for scheduling this hearing today so I can wish her a happy birthday on the Congressional Record.

I am also joined by my wonderful husband, Nick, a retired Foreign Service officer whose mother also immigrated to America. Our children, Alexandra, Nicholas, and Matthew, are watching online. My family support has enabled me to serve our country I love, and I thank them.

In over 35 years as an American diplomat, I have worked to advance human rights, refugee, and migration issues in multiple positions outside of PRM.

As ambassador to Croatia, I presided over the final stages of a U.S.-funded refugee resettlement program and hosted a regional conference on refugees.

My mission also ran regional training programs for police, prosecutors, and justice officials on topics that included supporting the rights of migrants.

As a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau, I managed relations with 11 Western European countries and the European Union, some of our key partners, in supporting at-risk populations around the world.

As Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy to the Vatican, I worked with church leaders, religious communities, and Catholic aid organizations on issues like combating human trafficking.

While director for multilateral and global affairs in the Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau, I oversaw international negotiations on human rights resolutions at the United Nations and conducted human rights consultations with multiple partners.

I was a member of the high-level delegations that reported to the U.N. on U.S. compliance with two major international treaties, the Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Earlier in my career, I worked on democracy, human rights, and foreign aid issues in the Western Hemisphere. I would bring these experiences to bear as PRM assistant secretary and, if confirmed, would seek to strengthen America's leadership on global, humanitarian, and migration issues.

One of my most urgent priorities would be to help the vulnerable people of Afghanistan wherever they may be. Sadly, there are also millions of other vulnerable populations worldwide.

Working with partners like USAID, I would prioritize life-saving humanitarian assistance and protections for people from Syria, Burma, South Sudan, Venezuela, and beyond.

I also would advance support for maternal health in humanitarian crises and respond to gender-based violence, upholding the administration's commitment to women's health.

If confirmed, I would ramp up engagement with other countries to pursue durable solutions to the problems that lead people to flee their countries, including in our own hemisphere.

Another key PRM priority is to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program as directed by the president. If confirmed, I would collaborate with the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, and work with Congress to ensure the program's success.

It is a testament to the generosity of Americans that the United States is the largest humanitarian aid donor in the world, but we cannot meet all global needs alone. If confirmed, I would carefully manage the U.S. taxpayer funds that enable PRM's work and urge other nations to share this responsibility more equitably.

I am eager to work with PRM's exceptional partners in international and nongovernmental organizations, Senate willing, to carry out PRM's mission, and if confirmed, it would above all be a privilege to learn from and lead the hard-working passionate employees of PRM. Their dedication is inspirational.

Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, members of this committee, my nomination as PRM Assistant Secretary is the greatest professional honor of my life.

If confirmed, I would give my all to lead PRM in supporting persecuted and vulnerable people around the world in keeping with our nation's centuries-long history of compassion and generosity.

As the daughter of refugees, I understand that history and that responsibility acutely. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Noyes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES

Thank you, Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch. It is an honor to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration. I am grateful to him and to Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I am the first person ever nominated for this position from a refugee background. My parents and members of my extended family entered the United States as refugees from Cuba sixty years ago and later became proud American citizens. Our family is profoundly aware of the debt we owe this great nation. Indeed, I decided to join the State Department to help repay that debt.

When given an opportunity, refugees and vulnerable migrants can become valued contributors to the countries that receive them. My hardworking family members happily give back to this country as taxpayers and engaged citizens. I'm honored to introduce you to one of them today, my mother Julieta Valls. In addition to raising a family, my mom worked in international development for years, presenting the best of America to people in other nations. I am proud to be her daughter. I am also joined by my husband Nick, a retired Foreign Service Officer whose mother also emigrated to America. Our children, Alexandra, Nicholas, and Matthew are watching online. My family's support has enabled me to serve our country; I love and thank them.

In over 35 years as an American diplomat, I have worked to advance human rights, refugee, and migration issues in multiple positions outside of PRM. As Ambassador to Croatia, I presided over the final stages of a U.S.-funded refugee resettlement program and hosted a regional conference on refugees. My mission also ran regional training programs for police, prosecutors, and justice officials, on topics that included supporting the human rights of migrants.

As a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau, I managed relations with eleven Western European countries and the European Union, some of our key partners in supporting at-risk populations around the world. As Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy to the Vatican, I worked with Church leaders, religious communities, and Catholic aid organizations on issues like combating human trafficking.

While Director for Multilateral and Global Affairs in the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau, I oversaw international negotiations on human rights resolutions at the United Nations and conducted human rights consultations with many partners. I was a member of the high-level delegations that reported to the United Nations on U.S. compliance with two international human rights treaties: the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Earlier in my career, I worked on democracy, human rights, and foreign aid issues in the Western Hemisphere.

I would bring these experiences to bear as PRM Assistant Secretary, and if confirmed, would seek to restore America's leadership on global humanitarian and migration issues.

One of my most urgent priorities would be to help the vulnerable and displaced people of Afghanistan—wherever they may be. Sadly, there are also millions of other vulnerable populations worldwide. Working with partners like USAID, I would prioritize life-saving U.S. humanitarian assistance and protections for people from Syria, Burma, South Sudan, and beyond. I also would advance programs that support maternal health in humanitarian crises and respond to gender-based violence, upholding the administration's commitment to women's health.

If confirmed I would ramp up engagement with other countries to pursue durable solutions to the problems that lead people to flee their homes, including in our own hemisphere.

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I am eager to work closely with PRM's exceptional partners in international and non-governmental organizations, Senate willing, to carry out PRM's mission.

If confirmed, it would above all be a privilege to learn from and lead the hard-working, passionate employees of PRM. Their dedication is inspirational.

Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, members of this committee, my nomination to serve as PRM Assistant Secretary is the greatest professional honor of my life. If confirmed, I would give my all to lead PRM in supporting persecuted and vulnerable people around the world, in keeping with our nation's centuries-long history of compassion and generosity. As the daughter of refugees, I understand that history and responsibility acutely.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador.  
[Speaks in Spanish.]

The CHAIRMAN. I would sing my famous birthday song but it would take too long for the committee's consideration.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. So maybe after the fact.  
Ambassador Bauer?

**STATEMENT OF HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PRINCIPALITY OF MONACO**

Ambassador BAUER. Thank you, Senator Kaine, for that very kind introduction.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

It is my great honor to be President Biden's nominee to be United States Ambassador to France and Monaco. I am deeply

grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me, and, of course, I am thankful for my husband of nearly 30 years, Steven, our wonderful daughters, Katherine and Natalie, my extended family, and everyone who has supported me over the years.

If confirmed, I will work closely with this committee and the Congress as I dedicate myself to protecting and advancing U.S. interests in Monaco and France.

I would be proud to join the talented dedicated State Department and interagency teams hard at work pursuing those goals. I saw firsthand the superb commitment our embassy teams provide U.S. citizens and businesses when I served as U.S. ambassador to Belgium from 2013 to 2017.

On March 22nd of 2016, my daughter, Natalie, was already on the bus on her way to school when Brussels was attacked by terrorists. I raced into the office as our team rallied to coordinate with and support our Belgian colleagues, to help victims, and guard against follow-on attacks.

This challenging time left no doubt why American embassies matter. Our team worked hand in glove with the Belgians, and they were there for our fellow Americans so that they were not alone far from home during perhaps the worst time in their lives.

It would be my great honor to again serve the American people, now as ambassador to France. I would like to highlight a few of the pillars of our partnership that I would bolster as ambassador.

France, as you have noted, is among our most capable and reliable military allies. As NATO allies, France and the United States have built and sustained the post-war global order, promoting freedom and prosperity.

France is the second largest global footprint after the United States and is the second largest troop contributor to the D-ISIS coalition. France has reached its NATO goal of 2 percent of GDP on defense spending and contributes to NATO missions and exercises.

The United States and France exchange information and share best practices on countering violent extremist threats, and France leads on countering terrorism in the Sahel where it has eliminated leaders of ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their affiliates.

If confirmed, I will not only ensure our cooperation continues but will look for ways to strengthen that important partnership.

France welcomes the United States return to the Paris Agreement and is eager to engage in close cooperation and strategic alignment on climate issues, particularly climate finance, clean energy, green recovery, and using trade and financial flows to further Paris Agreement objectives.

The United States and France share a deep economic relationship. France and the United States traded \$99 billion of goods and services in 2020, making France one of our largest trading partners in the EU.

France works on coordination with the United States and other partners to hold Russia and China accountable for their destabilizing activities, human rights abuses, and violations of international norms.

France has played a significant role in shaping EU policy towards the PRC and supports the U.S.-EU dialogue on China where we seek a values-driven approach.

If confirmed, I will advocate strongly with the French government that we must hold Russia accountable for its actions and maintain pressure on the Kremlin to adhere to its international commitments and obligations, including the Minsk agreements.

And finally, the United States shares many of the same goals with France when it comes to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. On all the challenges facing those countries, France seeks deeper cooperation with the United States.

If confirmed, I also look forward to fostering our relationship with the Principality of Monaco and working together with his Serene Highness, Prince Albert II, and his government to further our joint goals.

Of course, if confirmed, I will consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the embassy community and all Americans in France and Monaco.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Bauer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER

Thank you, Senator Kaine, for that very kind introduction.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify today. It is my great honor to be President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to France and Monaco. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

And of course, I am thankful for my husband of nearly 30 years, Steven; our wonderful daughters, Katherine and Natalie; my extended family; and everyone who has supported me through the years.

If confirmed, I will work closely with this committee and the Congress as I dedicate myself to protecting and advancing U.S. interests in France and Monaco. I would be proud to join the talented, dedicated State Department and interagency teams hard at work pursuing those goals.

I saw firsthand the superb commitment our embassy teams provide U.S. citizens and businesses when I served as U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium from 2013 to 2017.

On March 22, 2016, my daughter Natalie was already on the bus on her way to school when Brussels was attacked by terrorists. I raced into the office as our team rallied to coordinate with and support our Belgian colleagues to help victims and guard against follow-on attacks.

This challenging time left no doubt why American embassies matter. Our team worked hand in glove with the Belgians. And we were there for our fellow Americans—so that they weren't alone, far from home, during perhaps the worst time in their lives.

It would be my great honor to again serve the American people as Ambassador to France. I'd like to highlight just a few of the pillars of our partnership that I would bolster as Ambassador.

France is among our most capable and reliable military Allies. As NATO Allies, France and the United States have built and sustained the post-war global order, promoting freedom and prosperity. France has the second-largest global troop footprint after the United States and is the second-largest troop contributor to the D-ISIS Coalition. France has reached the NATO goal of 2 percent of GDP on defense spending and contributes to NATO missions and exercises.

The United States and France exchange information and share best practices on countering violent extremist threats, and France leads on countering terrorism in the Sahel, where it has eliminated leaders of ISIS, Al-Qa'ida, and their affiliates.

If confirmed, I will not only ensure our cooperation continues, but will look for ways to strengthen that partnership.

France welcomed the United States' return to the Paris Agreement and is eager to engage in closer cooperation and strategic alignment on climate issues, particularly climate finance, clean energy, green recovery, and using trade and financial flows to further Paris Agreement objectives.

The United States and France share a deep economic relationship. France and the United States traded \$99 billion of goods and services in 2020, making France the United States' third-largest trading partner in Europe.

France works in coordination with the United States and other partners to hold Russia and China accountable for their destabilizing activities, human rights abuses, and violations of international norms. France has played a significant role in shaping the EU's policy towards the PRC, and supports the U.S.-E.U. Dialogue on China, where we seek a values-driven approach. If confirmed, I will advocate strongly with the French government that we must hold Russia accountable for its actions, and maintain pressure on the Kremlin to adhere to its international commitments and obligations, including the Minsk agreements.

And finally, the United States shares many of the same goals with France when it comes to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. On all the challenges facing these countries, France seeks deeper collaboration with the United States.

If confirmed, I also look forward to fostering our relationship with the Principality of Monaco and working together with His Serene Highness Prince Albert II and his government to further our joint goals.

Of course, if confirmed, I will consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Embassy community and all Americans in France and Monaco.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.  
Ms. Smith?

**STATEMENT OF JULIANNE SMITH OF MICHIGAN, TO BE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY**

Ms. SMITH. Good morning, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated to be the Permanent Representative of the United States to NATO.

I want to extend my thanks to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their trust in me for this critical position.

If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the president's pledge to revitalize and strengthen America's alliances. I also want to thank Senator Shaheen for her kind words and leadership in the NATO Observers Group.

Let me start today by thanking my family, my husband, David, and our two sons, Liam and Dylan, for their love and support. David and Liam are with us here today. My son, Dylan, is tucked away in second grade at school.

I am proud to be a woman working in the field of national security. But my greatest joy comes from my family.

I also want to thank my parents, who are watching in my home state of Michigan, and my sister for their guidance and encouragement.

I have worked on a wide range of national security challenges over the years but Europe has always been my passion. Ever since I received a scholarship to spend a year at the Sorbonne as an un-

dergraduate, I have been fascinated by America's long-standing relationship with our closest allies across the Atlantic.

From my first job at a small think tank here in Washington, D.C., to my positions in the Pentagon, at the White House, and now the State Department, I have worked to strengthen our relationship with Europe, navigate our differences, and identify innovative ways to address our shared challenges.

No institution has played a bigger role in the history of the transatlantic relationship than the NATO Alliance. Since its creation in 1949, it has served as the bedrock of transatlantic security, protecting our shared values, and safeguarding each of its members against outside aggression.

NATO's story is a remarkable one of unity and solidarity. After the end of the Cold War, NATO's story became one of adaptation. Over the last 30 years, NATO has added 14 new members, developed new partnerships in the Middle East and Asia, agreed to operate a new warfighting domain such as cyber, and acquired new capabilities to respond to an array of emerging challenges, from terrorism to disruptive technologies to climate change.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Alliance has bolstered its deterrence and defense posture, including through the deployment of multinational battle groups on its eastern flank.

Despite the fact that it makes decisions by consensus, NATO has repeatedly showcased its ability to take action quickly when it counts. It swiftly invoked Article 5 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, for which the United States will always remain deeply grateful.

While NATO is rightly heralded as the most successful military alliance in history, the Alliance, now almost 75 years old, does have its share of challenges. Some allies are still struggling to meet their commitments to increase defense spending.

Decision-making remains slow, and the weakening of democratic values in some member states is tearing at Alliance cohesion. Allies are also making slow progress in the hard work of improving their military capabilities, especially in new domains like cyber and space.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with our NATO allies and partners to address such shortfalls and prepare the Alliance to face future challenges.

I will also look forward to working with allies on the important task of drafting a new Strategic Concept, which was last updated 10 long years ago.

That document must reflect the changing security environment of today, especially Russian aggression, threats we face in cyberspace, and the People's Republic of China's malign activities across the Euro-Atlantic region.

I will work to ensure that none of those new challenges detract from the Alliance's core task of ensuring a strong deterrence and defense for all its members.

I believe that part of NATO's success rests with the strong bipartisan support one finds both here in Congress and among the American public.

I was heartened to see the enthusiastic welcome that the Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, received when he addressed Congress in 2019.

If confirmed, I will ensure that bipartisan support continues and would look forward to welcoming congressional delegations to Brussels. It would be my great honor to represent the United States at NATO.

I believe in this alliance, I believe in the important role it plays in America's own defense, and I believe in our critical leadership role inside it.

I look forward to your questions and thank you for your consideration.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JULIANNE SMITH

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated to be the Permanent Representative of the United States to NATO. I want to extend my thanks to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for placing their trust in me for this critical position. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the President's pledge to revitalize and strengthen America's alliances.

I would like to start by thanking my family—my husband David and our two sons, Liam and Dylan—for their never-ending love and support. I am proud to be a woman working in the field of national security but my greatest joy comes from my family. I also want to thank my parents (who are watching from my home state of Michigan) and my sister for their guidance and encouragement.

I have worked on a wide range of national security challenges throughout my career but Europe has always been my passion. Ever since I received a scholarship to spend a year at the Sorbonne as an undergraduate, I have been fascinated by America's longstanding relationship with its closest Allies across the Atlantic. From my first job at a small think tank in Washington to my positions in the Pentagon and at the White House, I have worked to strengthen our relationship with Europe, navigate our differences, and identify innovative ways to address our shared challenges.

No institution has played a bigger role in the history of the Transatlantic relationship than the NATO Alliance. Since its creation in 1949, it has served as the bedrock of Transatlantic security, protecting our shared values and safeguarding each of its members against outside aggression. NATO's story is a remarkable one of solidarity and unity.

After the end of the Cold War, NATO's story became one of adaptation to a changing world. Over the last 30 years, NATO added 14 new members, developed new partnerships in the Middle East and Asia, agreed to operate in new warfighting domains such as cyber, and acquired new capabilities to respond to an array of emerging challenges, ranging from terrorism to emerging and disruptive technologies to climate change. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Alliance has bolstered its deterrence and defense posture, including through the deployment of multinational battle groups on its eastern flank.

Despite the fact that it makes decisions by consensus, NATO has repeatedly showcased its ability to take action quickly when it counts. It swiftly invoked Article 5—the collective defense clause of the Washington Treaty—in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, for which the United States will always remain deeply grateful.

While NATO is rightly heralded as the most successful military alliance in history, the Alliance, now almost 75 years old, does have its share of challenges. Some Allies are still struggling to meet their commitments to increase defense spending, which they made after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014. Decision making remains too slow, and the weakening of democratic values in some member states is tearing at Alliance cohesion, causing some members to question whether all Allies share the same values. Allies also are making slow progress in the hard and expensive work of improving their military capabilities, especially in new domains like cyber, space, and other emerging technologies.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with our NATO Allies and partners to address such shortfalls and prepare the Alliance to face future challenges. I will also look forward to working with Allies on the important task of drafting a new Strategic Concept, the roadmap that lays out NATO's future direction, which was last updated ten long years ago. That document must reflect the changing security environment of today, especially Russian aggression, threats we face in cyberspace, and the People's Republic of China's malign activities across the Euro-Atlantic region.



I will work to ensure that none of those new challenges detract from the Alliance's core task of ensuring a strong deterrence and defense for all its members.

I believe that part of NATO's success rests with the strong bipartisan support one finds both here in Congress and among the American public. I was heartened to see the enthusiastic welcome Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg received when he addressed Congress in April of 2019. If confirmed, I will ensure that bipartisan support continues and would look forward to welcoming congressional delegations to NATO Headquarters.

It would be my great honor to represent the United States at NATO. I believe in this Alliance, the important role it plays in America's own defense, and in our critical leadership role in NATO.

I look forward to your questions and thank you for your consideration.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.  
Ambassador Leaf?

**STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA A. LEAF OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS)**

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of this committee. It is an honor to be here as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

If confirmed, this would be the culmination of a lifetime of work on behalf of the U.S. in the Middle East and North Africa.

My story is like that of many Americans called to public service, inspired by multiple generations of family members who served. My family has had someone serving in the U.S. military continuously for almost 80 years.

Much of my wider family were also called upon to support those who served, making their own sacrifices. My mother managed to raise six children on a tobacco farm in southern Maryland during the years my father, an Air Force pilot, served in far-off places.

I remember on an early assignment in the Foreign Service I met up with my oldest brother, Tim Leaf, here behind me who is representing the whole Leaf clan. I met up with him as a deployed Marine officer in the streets of newly-liberated Kuwait. My youngest brother deployed repeatedly to Iraq and Afghanistan, with great costs borne by his young family.

My younger sister is a Foreign Service officer, now serving in southern Africa, far from family and friends.

My husband, Chris Querin, had a distinguished career in the Marine Corps, taking him to Jerusalem, where we met early in my career. He and our two daughters, Maro and Asja, provided the unstinting loving support that enabled me to shoulder what was asked of me, even when that meant being apart from them when I served a year in Iraq.

Service is a theme in my family and service has more relevance today for Americans than ever before. In the Middle East, President Biden's strategic vision provides a roadmap and a set of principles for our engagements based on rebuilding long-term relationships in the region.

If confirmed, I will work to reinforce those partnerships around an affirmative agenda, focused on building shared prosperity but also confronting shared problems: fighting COVID-19, developing an international health infrastructure to prevent future pandemics, building a new energy economy around renewables to arrest the

drivers of climate change, addressing desertification and growing water shortages, combating transnational repression while promoting respect for fundamental freedoms and open societies, and sustaining the core institutions of the international order that have provided security and stability for over 70 years.

If confirmed, I pledge to represent the best of American values and will make it clear that relationships with the U.S. are stronger when human rights principles are respected.

The region has been convulsed by conflict and instability for over the past two decades, but many of our partners have turned towards deescalation and to working with the U.S. to quell the region's conflicts.

Iran, of course, has been the outlier to this trend. Tehran continues to pursue destabilizing policies, including through its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, its support for violent groups, and its abhorrent human rights record and long-standing practice of using wrongfully detained U.S. citizens as political tools. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would pose an even greater threat.

As part of the administration's renewed multilateral engagement, if confirmed, I will work in tandem with regional partners and allies to advance U.N. peace processes in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

The president's vision for a collaborative relationship with the countries of the Middle East comes in the wider context of a growing global challenge to our values of open societies and open economies.

This challenge comes primarily from the People's Republic of China and Russia. Both pursue influence in the region in a zero-sum fashion. If confirmed, I expect to have frank conversations with our partners about the challenges posed by certain Russian and Chinese actions.

And if confirmed, I will not be able to accomplish this ambitious agenda without the outstanding Foreign Service officers, civil servants, contractors, and family members employed here and in the region.

I am committed to promoting the safety and security of our people overseas as a paramount priority, supporting the professional development of our employees and the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the bureau and our posts around the region.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you as we reshape, rebuild, and reenergize the U.S. government's engagement with the Middle East, building a better future for the American people and the people of the region.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Leaf follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR BARBARA A. LEAF

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of this committee. It is an honor to be here as President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. If confirmed, this would be the culmination of a lifetime of work on behalf of the United States in the Middle East and North Africa. I cannot express how much this opportunity to serve my country and the American people means to me.

My story is like that of many Americans called to public service, inspired by multiple generations of family members who served in one capacity or another. My family has had someone serving in the military, continuously, for the past 80 years. So much of my wider family were also called upon to support those who served, making their own sacrifices along the way. My ever-entrepreneurial mother managed to raise six children on a tobacco farm during years my father, an air force pilot, served in far-off places. On an early assignment in the Foreign Service, I met up with my oldest brother, a deployed Marine officer, in the streets of newly-liberated Kuwait. My little brother deployed repeatedly during America's two longest wars, to Iraq and Afghanistan, with great costs borne by his young family. My younger sister is a Foreign Service officer, now serving in southern Africa, far from family and friends. My husband had a distinguished career in the Marine Corps, taking him to Jerusalem, where we met early in my career. He, like our two daughters, provided the unstinting loving support that helped me shoulder what was asked of me, even when that meant being apart for a year while I served in Iraq.

Service is a theme in my family, and it has more relevance today for Americans than ever before, given the multiplying challenges abroad and at home that require re-investment in ourselves, re-commitment to partnerships, and U.S. leadership globally.

In the Middle East, President Biden's strategic vision provides a roadmap and a set of principles for our engagement, based on re-building long-term relationships in the region to meet the manifold, emerging new challenges. But the President's vision demands the evolution of our partnerships beyond the conventional security realm that has defined our approach to the region for well over 30 years. If confirmed, I would work to reinforce those partnerships around an affirmative agenda focused on building shared prosperity and confronting shared problems: fighting COVID-19 and developing an international health infrastructure to prevent future pandemics; building a new energy economy around renewables to arrest the drivers of climate change; addressing desertification and growing water shortages; combatting transnational repression, while promoting respect for fundamental freedoms and open societies; and sustaining the core institutions of the international order that have provided security and stability for over 70 years.

If confirmed, I pledge to represent the best of American values, and will make it clear that relationships with the United States are stronger when human rights principles are respected.

The region has been convulsed by conflict and instability for the past two decades, but many of our partners have turned in recent months towards de-escalation and to working with the United States to quell the region's conflicts. Iran, of course, has been the outlier to this trend. Tehran continues to pursue destabilizing policies, including through its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, its subversive support for violent groups, and its abhorrent human rights record and long-standing practice of using wrongfully detained U.S. citizens as political tools. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would pose an even greater threat.

As part of the administration's renewed multilateral engagement, if confirmed I will work in tandem with partners and allies to advance U.N. peace processes in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

The President's vision for a collaborative partnership with the countries of the Middle East comes in the wider context of a growing global challenge to our values of open societies and open economies, values that have underpinned the institutions of the international order. This challenge comes primarily from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia; both pursue influence in the region in a zero-sum fashion. If confirmed, I expect to have frank conversations with our partners about the challenges posed by certain Russian and PRC actions.

If confirmed, I will not be able to accomplish this ambitious agenda without the outstanding Foreign Service Officers, Civil Servants, Contractors, and family members employed here and in the region. I am committed to promoting the safety and security of our people overseas, the professional development of our employees, and the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Bureau and our posts around the region.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you as we reshape, rebuild, and reenergize the U.S. Government's engagement with the Middle East, building a better future for the American people and the people of the region. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all very much.

Before I start my questions, let me start a series of questions that we ask every nominee that comes before the committee, and

they are on behalf of the full committee and I just simply ask you for a verbal yes or no answer.

These are questions that speak to the importance that the committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the executive branch and we expect and would be seeking from you.

I will ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer to the following.

Do you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. Did I get four yeses there?

Ambassador LEAF. Yes.

Ms. SMITH. Yes.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Do you commit to engaging in a meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. And do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Thank you all for that. For the record, all four nominees answered yes to all the questions.

Let me start a series of five-minute rounds.

Ambassador Noyes, how can the department and the PRM in particular help ensure that thousands of Afghans allies who were left behind when the last U.S. military plane departed on August 30th have equal access to evacuations?

This will be one of the most critical immediate challenges that you will have. Give me a sense of how you envision your department's participation in that.

Ambassador NOYES. Senator, thank you for the question.

I think I speak for all of my colleagues at the State Department to say how proud we were to see how many people we were able to get out of Afghanistan and how heartbroken we were to see that we could not get out everyone that we wanted to.

The president, the Secretary, have made clear their intention to uphold the commitment that we had to the people who worked for us, to the people who qualify for Special Immigrant Visas, and we will continue to work to process their cases and get them out.

We have also made available consideration for referral under refugee programs, the P-2 refugee referrals, and other ways of getting access to resettlement in the United States.

We also would commit to working with international organizations like the High Commissioner for Refugees to seek resettlement for people at risk in other countries, not just in the United States.

Our commitment to uphold the human rights and to protect the vulnerable people of Afghanistan through resettlement, if that is what is needed, is a firm one, and if confirmed as Assistant Sec-

retary, I would work with colleagues throughout the department and other agencies to uphold that commitment.

The CHAIRMAN. Today is the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, and many of us held a call with national leadership, and one of the questions that came up is that it seems that we treat refugees from the southern border below differently than we treat refugees from other people in the world.

Seems to me that a refugee, if they meet the definition under the law, is a refugee, regardless of where they come from. Do you share that view?

Ambassador NOYES. Yes, Senator. Anyone who qualifies as a refugee should be given the same treatment and the same consideration.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Leaf, I could spend the whole hearing with you, but I will not because we had a good session yesterday. But I will put some questions for the record just so that we can have the record sustained. But I do want to broach one or two of them with you.

Over the weekend, Iran and the IAEA reached what seems to be a subpar last-minute agreement to prevent the IAEA from formally censuring Iran.

I remain deeply concerned about the details of this agreement, specifically because my understanding is that while the IAEA will have access to the information it needs, it will not be able to see that access. It will not be able to see the actual information in real time.

It will not be able to see the information that was taken out or that will be taken out from the storage chips of what was going on since Iran broke off inspections, and it will not be able to see the new information that will be placed in the new storage chips to do the video recording of what is going on.

Therefore, while there will be, quote/unquote, “monitoring” taking place, there will be no review of the monitoring. Therefore, we will have no information about the status of Iran’s program. If there is something called a Pyrrhic victory, that is the ultimate definition of it.

Secretary Blinken has responded to that report by warning that Iran is running out of time to reap any benefits of a compliance agreement with the JCPOA.

I, honestly, believe that returning to the JCPOA just as it was does not realize the tremendous change in circumstances we have today as well as the fact that Iran’s nefarious activities in ballistic missiles, destabilization of the region, arms trafficking, and a whole host of other things are equally or as important.

Let me ask you, how much time and diplomatic space do you think is left to get to a longer and stronger nuclear deal that also addresses these regional transgressions and attacks by proxies against not only U.S. partners and allies but also U.S. personnel and facilities in the region?

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Senator, for those questions and those comments.

I would not want to get into in a hypothetical answer to the question of how much time. Secretary Blinken laid down a warning marker with that remark and it is a valid one.

We have been waiting now, for two months to go back into a set of discussions, which are quite urgent, and as you said, the discussion on the JCPOA, a mutual compliance-for-compliance return to that agreement is only a starting point.

What I would say to your concerns about these other issues, including a supplemental agreement, longer, stronger, but also the ongoing nefarious activities, those are my concerns, too. The administration, in fact, does not view this as a sequential matter in terms of addressing those regional activities.

There are ongoing discussions with our most important ally in the region, Israel, as well as other concerned parties, and we work to synchronize and use a set of tools—economic sanctions, pressure, occasionally military and other diplomatic tools with them—to confront and constrain Iran in these activities.

The CHAIRMAN. Is it fair to say that we really do not know where Iran is at in its nuclear program right now?

Ambassador LEAF. I am not sure I would want to characterize it that way, Senator, and, obviously, there are intelligence estimates to that effect.

The CHAIRMAN. I get real concerned when I see Mr. Albright suggest that we are one month away. He is a pretty independent verifier. I get concerned when we are heralding the IAEA agreement that, basically, says, well, we will keep the monitoring but we cannot see anything that is happening and we do not know what has happened in between.

That is not creating a safeguard for anybody. We need to be a lot more robust with the IAEA. This committee will be seeking the IAEA's briefing, which it has not given to date, because we got to know what we are seeing and what we are not seeing and be honest with ourselves at the end of the day.

I have many other questions for some of the other nominees. But, in fairness, to our colleagues, Senator Risch?

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Obviously, I share a lot of those concerns also.

And Ambassador Leaf, I can tell you, I told Secretary Blinken this when we met, and you can take it for what it is worth, but having been through this thing with Iran for so long, this business of saying now that you are going to try to get back into the old JCPOA and then there will be add-on negotiations and agreements in the future, with all due respect, I think that thinking is just delusional.

There is no way that Iran is going to continue to negotiate and do an add-on agreement if, indeed, they are able to get the JCPOA back where it was and get our sanctions off.

That is my two cents' worth, and I understand we have a basic disagreement in that regard. But nonetheless, I will be shocked if you can get that done.

Secondly, you heard the discussion from both myself and from the chairman regarding a Syria policy, and we need that.

I am not expecting you to opine on that today because I think you have got your work ahead of you before you can get there. But we need something that we can articulate and move forward on, and we do not have that on Syria.

Ms. Noyes, I want to talk about UNRWA for just a minute. I introduced the UNRWA Accountability and Transparency Act with 11 of my Senate colleagues, and we share real concerns on UNRWA.

What are your thoughts on UNRWA?

Ambassador NOYES. Senator, I share the concerns that you expressed in that legislation about the efficiency, the effectiveness, and the neutrality of UNRWA. The administration agrees, with the premise behind the legislation.

That said, it is my understanding that UNRWA is a force for stability in the region by providing vital services to Palestinians in need—education for school children, health care for people, and the only viable alternative to UNRWA in those areas would be Hamas.

Therefore, while we, certainly, would agree with the intent of the legislation and the framework agreement that the PRM bureau entered into with UNRWA accounts for the need to make changes and to redouble efforts to ensure the efficiency, the effectiveness, and the neutrality of UNRWA.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate your thoughts. I do not think simply because there is an alternative that is worse we should take this—in my judgment, a very bad agency and try to make that work.

I think we should try to make that work. But I think that if it does not work, we should not say, well, the only other alternative is Hamas. I do not subscribe to that theory.

But in any event, I think most everyone who has dealt with UNRWA and seen, for instance, the textbooks they print for use in their schools is just disgusted that U.S. taxpayer money is going down the drain in that regard.

I hope you will focus on that. I hope you can get them in a better direction, and it is going to take a considerable change in direction for me to embrace what they are doing.

Thank you for your efforts in that regard.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

My understanding is Senator Cardin is with us virtually.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do want to thank all of our nominees for their willingness to serve our nation during these extremely challenging times. We thank you. We thank your families.

Ambassador Leaf, I want to follow up on some of the comments that have already been made. We see some positive developments in the Middle East with the Abraham Accords, and Congress has passed that and the Senate Finance Committee has passed S. 1601, which would build on that to have the United States active in trying to get more of the countries in the Middle East to sign on to the Abraham Accords.

On the other side of the ledger, we see activities in the United Nations General Assembly that is very much trying to compromise Israel's sovereignty.

Just share with me your strategies in dealing with the countries in the region to get more to move towards the Abraham Accord approach with Israel rather than trying to isolate Israel in the United Nations.

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Senator, for that set of questions and comments, and I could not agree more on both counts.

First, with respect to the Abraham Accords, it is a truly exciting set of developments in a region that for so long has really not had a lot of good news, and I, if confirmed, very much look forward to seizing the opportunities opened with those nascent relationships and deepening, expanding them while really expanding the circle beyond the four countries.

I think there is a lot of opportunity. I would say the UAE and Bahrain and Morocco probably represented the sort of most forward leaning of the countries in that regard.

But, nonetheless, and this has been a subject of discussion with the Israeli Government, there are other opportunities out there, and I think it self-evidently should be a priority for my work, if confirmed, and it would thread into the work of every U.S. ambassador in the region so that it was a very concerted and coordinated effort.

I also agree with you in terms of the anti-Israel bias that we see repeatedly come up, whether in the UNGA or in U.N. bodies, and, if confirmed, I would absolutely work in lockstep with other members of the administration, with our mission to the U.N., and others to push back on that vigorously.

Senator CARDIN. I would just point out I think the Abraham Accords is a positive incentive for countries to normalize their relationship with Israel. The actions in the United Nations and its bodies require us to make it clear that there is a price to pay when we see this type of activity take place that is very much against the sovereignty of our closest ally in the Middle East.

I would hope you would also be aggressive in activities to make it clear that the United States will act on behalf of Israel in regards to the United Nations.

Ambassador Noyes, I want to ask you a question on immigration. I agree with Chairman Menendez's point in regards to Afghanistan, and that is going to, certainly, be a major focus of all of our work in the next several months in order to relocate those at risk.

But I want to get closer to our own hemisphere, and Senator Menendez raised these issues. We show international leadership by our actions here in America. Yes, we will show it in regards to the Afghan refugees.

But in regards to refugees coming out of our own hemisphere, we, certainly, have a lot of individuals who have left Venezuela. We have the Central American migration that we know about.

Can you just share with me the strategy of exercising leadership in our own hemisphere to show that we have the right global policies in regards to migration that can help us not only in dealing with the challenges we have in the Western Hemisphere but also our leadership globally?

Ambassador NOYES. Thank you for that question, Senator Cardin.

Certainly, this hemisphere is not alone in having issues with refugees and migration. One of the administration's major efforts with regard to how to deal with these issues is for Central America. There is a root cause's strategy to get to the causes that lead people to leave their nations.



But insofar as PRM is concerned, the administration has also put forward a comprehensive migration management strategy, which is an effort, a whole of government effort, to work with U.S. Government agencies but also with the governments of the region in trying to address the issues that lead to migration and to come up with collaborative approaches for dealing with those issues, whether it is providing access to temporary work permits, providing protection, humanitarian assistance in countries where they are needed, dealing with issues of corruption, rule of law.

And that is a model, Senator, that I believe could be very useful and very effective in dealing with migration questions and refugee challenges elsewhere in the world.

If confirmed, I really would like to do more in the area of humanitarian diplomacy, working closely with our partners and with other governments around the world to address these issues before they become so severe that they lead people to leave their countries, and also to address issues that have led people to leave their countries such that they can find ways to return safely, humanely, and voluntarily to their home countries.

I think there is a lot to be done in the area of humanitarian diplomacy. I think the approach the United States is taking in Central America and in Mexico with this holistic whole of government and collaborative approach with regional governments is, again, a model for these issues around the world.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. We will be judged by our actions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

My understanding is that there are presently no Republican colleagues seeking recognition so I will move to Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Chair, thank you. And again, congratulations to the nominees.

Ambassador Bauer, one of the wonderful opportunities in the U.S. relationship with France is that France has significant equities all over the globe in areas where the U.S. shares interest, and we work in tandem in Southeast Asia. We work in tandem in the Sahel. I want to ask a question about one of the countries you mentioned, Lebanon.

The U.S.-Lebanese relationship, especially with the Lebanese military, has been a strong one. Lebanon is very strategically important.

But right now in Lebanon there has just been a set of catastrophes, one after the next, and the current political situation in Lebanon poses grave risk both to the health and satisfaction and quality of life of everyday Lebanese but also the surrounding communities.

The French Government under President Macron has been very involved in trying to promote a better chapter for Lebanon. Should you be confirmed, what might we be able to do, the United States and France together, to figure out ways to help Lebanon to a better place?

Ambassador BAUER. Thank you for the question, Senator Kaine.

Yes, indeed, it is a very challenging situation, and it is my understanding that we are working closely with the French and that

the French take it very seriously and will be good allies, going forward.

It is certainly something I would engage on right away should I be confirmed, and would also welcome the opportunity to consult with you and other members of this committee to develop a best plan for going forward.

Senator KAINE. Excellent. I almost asked that question as a proxy for Senator Murphy, who is the chair of the Subcommittee of Foreign Relations that oversees that relationship, and he just was in Lebanon with other members of the committee.

I think it is an increasingly destabilized Lebanon is a real problem for a lot of nations, including the United States, and we can work together with France on that.

Ambassador Leaf, I am concerned about a number of things in the relationship between the United States and Egypt. There are some positive developments. President el-Sisi met with Prime Minister Bennett in Sharm El Sheikh recently, which was the first meeting between leaders of Egypt and Israel in a decade. That is positive.

But I am really worried about human rights issues in Egypt and they affect a lot of Virginians. There was reporting in the last few months about the involvement of Egyptian intelligence in the murder of Virginia resident Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

I wrote a letter to the Secretary of State last month asking the Department of State to dig into these allegations and then render some judgment on the potential applicability of 7013(c) visa restrictions.

You are not yet at State. That letter had not come to you. But these are very serious allegations of the involvement of the Egypt secret police and intel officials in the murder of a Virginian, a journalist.

Now, I will say the Egyptian Government has denied these allegations. We spoke directly about it with the head of Egyptian intelligence on the committee. But there is an answer to the question of whether or not they are involved, and if they were there has got to be some consequences.

Should you be confirmed, will you take this kind of a request of the Department of State to make an assessment about what occurred and then whether there should be accountability? Will you take this matter with the utmost seriousness?

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Senator, for that question, and it is an extraordinarily serious issue that you have raised.

Within the context more broadly, and I will say straight up, of course, I will take my responsibilities absolutely seriously, if confirmed, under both U.S. law and U.S. policy on human rights.

I would just offer another couple of comments on this broader issue that you raised, how human rights feature in the relationship with Egypt, and you will have seen this week that Secretary Blinken decided on the issue of \$300 million of the \$1.3 billion of foreign military financing for Egypt.

It was a very methodical and carefully thought through set of decisions to signal, to reaffirm, really, that as with countries around

the world, human rights do feature at the center point of relations with Egypt.

Now, we have long-standing national security interests in that relationship. Egypt has been a strategic partner of enormous importance for the U.S. but also for the region and for Israel, in particular.

And as you said, this was a remarkable thing. For the first time in a decade you had the two leaders meet publicly. The fact that leaders have met before, but they could not do it publicly in front of their publics speaks to how unsteady that relationship was.

I will just pledge to you that, if confirmed, I will absolutely keep my focus on these human rights issues and the case that you cite, in particular.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Leaf, if confirmed, you are going to inherit a region that has been transformed in remarkable ways in recent years, most significantly by the Abraham Accords.

The Abraham Accords were historic peace agreements, the first in decades achieved in the region. They were achieved, I believe, because the prior administration abandoned the long-standing U.S. policy of deliberate ambiguity between Israel and the Palestinians and, rather, pursued a policy that America unequivocally stands with our friend and ally, the nation of Israel.

That clarity produced the Abraham Accords, I believe. That clarity was manifested in multiple ways, including moving our embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, including withdrawing from the disastrous Obama Iran nuclear deal.

The Biden administration seems bound and determined to unwind all of the positive progress made in the Middle East, to run away from the peace deal, to embrace the strategic ambiguity that for decades failed, and the Biden administration seems to want to go back to that failure.

When it comes to the Abraham Accords, the Biden administration, frankly, has been almost comical, going so far as quite literally putting out a guidance at the U.S. State Department not to utter the words Abraham Accords, in writing officials in the Biden State Department saying, "We do not use those words here." Instead, they are to be referred to as normalization agreements.

And I will say that was not simply a written guidance but, sadly, it is a guidance that seems to be followed. Just yesterday, the U.S. ambassador of the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, gave a speech on the anniversary of the Abraham Accords in which she refused to utter the words Abraham Accords. The entire thing seems like a Monty Python skit.

I understand that the Biden administration is not a fan of Donald Trump. But throwing away historic Middle East peace agreements because the administration does not like their predecessor is extraordinarily foolish, it is harmful to the United States, and it is harmful to our friends and allies.

Can you tell this committee, in your judgment, what is the importance of the Abraham Accords and should they be maintained and strengthened or should they be undermined and weakened?

Ambassador LEAF. Senator, I agree with you, those are historic Accords. The Abraham Accords changed and brought a new dynamic to a region that has really had very little in the way of good news in recent years.

There is no question in my mind that they have already contributed and will contribute still more to peaceful coexistence and to economic integration, and that last piece has been very much missing across this region.

I can assure you that, if confirmed, I will make it a top priority not just to help foster the deepening of the roots of those relationships, and each of them has different dynamics according to their own societies and cultures, but I will work with those governments and with the Israeli Government to strengthen and deepen those Accords and then widen the circle, absolutely.

There are more opportunities out there. They are not quite as in a state of readiness, perhaps, as the UAE was. But there are prospects there.

They start with some very significant moves on people-to-people contacts and that is one of the things that really, I think, was most striking in the case of the UAE and Bahrain.

Those governments had begun a very subtle process of beginning to warm their public up to the idea, and that is the sort of thing that, frankly, the U.S. has to push on with other governments and I am ready to do it.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Ms. Smith, as you know, I am deeply concerned about the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. I think that President Biden made an enormous and, indeed, a generational geopolitical mistake by effectively giving that pipeline to Vladimir Putin.

In your judgment, what will be the national security harms, the economic harms, to Europe and to the United States if and when that pipeline goes online and is operational?

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

I agree with the president. I agree with you that the pipeline is a bad deal. It is a geopolitical project, as you yourself have noted many times.

It is a project that undermines the safety and security of our friends in Europe, particularly in Ukraine. I do not feel that this deal, this pipeline, in particular, will be something that will bring added security to Europe. Quite the contrary.

I look forward, though, if confirmed, to working with our allies, our partners, on the repercussions of this pipeline as I get to Brussels.

Senator CRUZ. I feel obliged to note the president does not believe that, because the only reason the pipeline is being completed is because Joe Biden waived the sanctions that were passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Congress.

We had stopped the pipeline for over a year, and the Biden administration decided, because they wanted to make nice with Germany, they would give Putin a generational multi-billion-dollar gift

and they turned an incredible foreign policy victory into a foreign policy failure.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the senator has expired.

I would just note for the record an hour ago the State Department spokesman, Ned Price, was heralding the Abraham Accords and called it as such, and the United Arab Emirates promoted it as part of their Foreign Service movement.

The administration has used and I am sure will continue to use the term Abraham Accords.

Senator Coons?

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch.

And, Chairman Menendez, thank you for setting the record straight about both the bipartisan support for the Abraham Accords here and the ways in which the State Department continues to advocate for their full implementation.

To the nominees before us, thank you for your willingness to serve. Let me thank your families and those who have helped support you in your careers and service so far and will support you should you be confirmed.

Let me just ask a few quick questions. I have less than five minutes but I am delighted to have a chance to ask each of you a question or two.

Ms. Bauer, if I might, what lessons did you learn from your time as Ambassador to Belgium about working with the Foreign Service? And you have said to me when we had a chance to talk before this hearing that one of the most important jobs an ambassador faces is protecting State Department employees and other American citizens abroad.

How do you intend to help contribute to that sacred challenge, that obligation, that opportunity, that our diplomats have abroad?

Ambassador BAUER. Thank you, Senator Coons.

Indeed, working with the team at the State Department and the interagency team in Brussels was an incredible privilege. It is a skilled and dedicated group of people and it is part of what made me so excited about the opportunity to potentially serve again was to think of working with the same extraordinary team.

On the security front, I think it is a matter of having really close communication, no silos, working as a team, making sure everyone trusts each other and we are having really regular communications not only within the team in France, should I be confirmed, but throughout Europe and, of course, consulting with the Senate and other important partners.

Senator COONS. Thank you. I did not mean to skip over Ms. Noyes.

If I might, your role is going to be absolutely critical, and as the daughter of Cuban refugees, I think you bring an important and unique perspective to this vital role.

If you would just share with me, briefly, what lessons from your service as ambassador to Croatia would you bring to PRM, and how should the State Department address the visa backlog and how will you work to increase international cooperation on difficult and urgent issues like resettlement of refugees and humanitarian assistance?

Ambassador NOYES. Senator, thank you for that question.

I think I have learned lessons from throughout my career in a variety of different positions, not just as ambassador but even as the Acting Director of FSI, lessons about management, about teamwork, about how I would pick up part of Denise's answer about working with the team and making sure that everyone makes a contribution.

One of my biggest priorities, if confirmed, would be to help rebuild the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, which is badly understaffed at this point at a time when it is really being stretched to carry out a lot of functions.

A big priority would be rebuilding that bureau, and in rebuilding that bureau working to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which is critical for America's humanitarian leadership around the world, and working with partners in the State Department and in the interagency on helping to resettle the Afghan refugees.

In so far as the visa backlog question, Senator, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration does not play a specific role on that issue. But I know that my colleagues at the Department of State are working very, very hard to process the remaining Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans and to do whatever is possible to help people at risk in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

Senator COONS. I think that is urgent work and I look forward to working with the chairman to ensure that the resources for that are available.

Might I ask two more quick questions or are we—

The CHAIRMAN. Since the senator is the chairman of the Foreign Ops Subcommittee and Appropriations, definitely go ahead.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

If I might, Ms. Smith, NATO has just concluded one of its most important longest missions and it is now, I think, facing a different range of threats, challenges, and adversaries.

China has expanded its influence not just in the Indo-Pacific but in Europe, investing in infrastructure, heightening its emphasis on the Arctic, targeting countries in Eastern, Central, and Western Europe with disinformation campaigns.

And in June, the NATO heads of state issued a statement that Beijing presents systemic challenges. What risk do you think China currently poses to the NATO Alliance and European stability, and how would you, if confirmed, work with NATO to counter China's malign influence?

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

I do worry about the dangers posed by China in the Euro-Atlantic area. I think about the investments that China is making in critical infrastructure across the continent.

I think about their own investments in disruptive technology, the lessons they are learning from Russia on utilizing disinformation, their evolving maritime presence, what they are doing in the Arctic. I really could go on.

The good news, as you noted yourself, Senator, is that the Alliance now has conducted its first China review in 2019. The Alli-

ance just recently stated at its summit this past June that it is a systemic challenge to the liberal world order.

Going forward, if confirmed, I would look forward to working with the allies as we draft the next Strategic Concept to make sure that the challenges posed by China to the wider Euro-Atlantic region are featured prominently in the Strategic Concept.

I would also look forward to working with them on acquiring better tools to counter some of the malign activities that China is pursuing.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Thank you to all of you. And thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murphy?

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

Thank you all for being here today. This is an important hearing. I hope that you move quickly to the floor.

But then you are destined to sit in limbo because we have two members of the Senate, a list that is growing, that have decided to hold up all national security nominees.

This is a growing danger to the national security of this country and I would hope that my Republican colleagues on this committee would help us address this very quickly, because every single day that we do not have ambassadors, every single day that we do not have assistant secretaries, is a day that America is not representing its interests around the world.

A few questions for the panel, and thank you all for your tremendous service to the country. We are so grateful for your willingness to continue it.

Ambassador Leaf, I admit to getting a little confused when I hear the administration talk about the strategy, moving forward, on the JCPOA. Obviously, Senator Menendez and I have slightly different views on this issue.

But what I understand to be the administration's policy is that while we absolutely believe that at the same time we can work on addressing Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorist groups and its other malevolent behaviors in the region, our belief continues to be that a compliance-for-compliance deal on the JCPOA is meritorious on its own and that if we can get back into the JCPOA then that makes it a lot easier to confront many of their other behaviors around the region.

I just want to confirm that that continues to be the position of the administration, that understanding how difficult it is to figure out how to get back into the agreement that we still believe that it is a priority to get back into the agreement and we are not conditioning the restart of the JCPOA on an additional set of agreements on a whole host of nonnuclear behaviors by the Iranian regime.

Ambassador LEAF. Senator, the only word I would disagree with in that set of statements and that question was whether it would be easier following reentry into JCPOA to deal with all those other problems.

But no, to be serious, the administration is committed to a methodical diplomatic effort to rejoin the JCPOA based on mutual compliance. That is an overriding national security imperative because, at this point, Iran's nuclear program is untrammelled.

The priority is getting it back into a box. But notwithstanding those diplomatic efforts in Vienna, the administration continues in parallel, in tandem, to, on a constant basis, address the regional dimension of Iran's destabilizing behavior.

There is an objective on the part of the administration to then build upon in nuclear terms a longer stronger deal. But the ongoing work is ongoing. It will continue apart.

Senator MURPHY. I am going to submit a question to the record on Lebanon. I will not ask a question to you now.

But Hezbollah is spinning up a very effective narrative there right now about the United States blockade of energy resources into the country and they are offering ships of their own through Iran.

We have got to solve for this very quickly. The narrative is pervasive, and there are ways in which we can creatively try to address the fuel shortage, the crisis in Lebanon right now. But we have to do it very, very quickly.

And so I will submit a question to the record because I wanted to ask one final question here to you, Ms. Smith. I think one of the biggest scams going is the way that we assess NATO contributions to the Alliance.

Despite the fact that the adversaries to the United States and our NATO partners are using all sorts of means other than conventional military pressure to try to undermine the democracies of NATO, we continue to assess whether or not you are a full member in good standing by the amount of your defense spending, even though Russia is delighting in asymmetric warfare that is defended in ways other than aircraft carriers and ships and brigades.

Is there a better way, moving forward, that we can assess whether members of the NATO Alliance are in good standing other than the simple amount of their GDP that they are spending on hard traditional conventional defense spending?

Ms. SMITH. Senator, thank you for that question.

Traditionally, NATO's deterrence and defense posture has been based on three legs of a stool, so conventional capabilities, nuclear capabilities, and missile defense capabilities. And so we always measured allies' contributions in a very conventional framing.

But in recent years, as you noted, increasingly, the NATO Alliance is defining its posture, deterrence, and defense posture in other ways. It is looking at cybersecurity, increasingly working that into operational planning. It is looking at those gray zone threats, the hybrid threats: disinformation, coercion, and other forms of gray zone tactics.

And so, going forward, on this question of burden sharing, there is a lot to do. First and foremost, we have to keep a laser like focus on 2 percent. Allies all made that commitment to get to 2 percent in 2014. Many have gotten there or will get there by 2024. But we have to continue to apply pressure on those that will not yet meet that target by 2024.

Increasingly, I think we have to have conversations with our allies about other aspects: readiness, force generation, capability gaps, broadly defined.



And so, if confirmed, I would look forward to working with our allies on this broader definition of NATO's deterrence and defense posture and the question of burden sharing.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I understand Senator Van Hollen is with us virtually.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join my colleagues in congratulating all of you on your nominations, and I am impressed with the great depth and breadth of foreign policy experience represented on this panel.

I also want to associate myself with the comments of both the chairman and Senator Murphy that the ever longer line of nominations being held up on the Senate floor hurts our national security and undermines our capacities.

Ambassador Noyes, you have got a huge amount of challenges in the portfolio you have been nominated to oversee, including recent developments in Afghanistan, and I am going to be submitting some questions to the record for you.

Ambassador Leaf, I just returned from a trip to Lebanon, Israel, and the West Bank with Senator Murphy and others, and I have a couple questions related to that trip, starting with Lebanon.

We were pleased to see that after over a year of no government, last Friday we finally have a government in Lebanon. As you know, that is just the first step. They have got to address the economic crisis, bring more accountability and transparency to a system that is rife with political corruption, and keep elections on track for next year.

But the one institution in the country that is almost universally respected is the nonsectarian Lebanese Armed Forces. And my question to you, and it is a simple question, is do you agree it is in our national interests to continue to support that effort?

And I will add one of the things that was highlighted during our visit was that because of the economic crisis, pay for members of the Lebanese Armed Forces has just collapsed.

In fact, there is a story today the Lebanese Armed Forces is providing helicopter rides for tourists in order to raise money, and the pay of the Lebanese Armed Forces is now way below what Hezbollah pays its militias.

A question. So you agree that continued U.S. support for the Lebanese Armed Forces is in our interest of providing some measure of stability respect to interfaith communities, inter-communal stability, and national stability? Just yes or no.

Ambassador LEAF. Yes, absolutely. If you would like, I can offer a few other thoughts on this.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. Let me get on the other questions. If I have time in the end—

Ambassador LEAF. Please.

Senator Van Hollen:—I will circle back.

We also, as I said, went to Israel and the West Bank. In Israel, we affirmed our support for the replenishment of the Iron Dome and our support for the Abraham Accords.

We also discussed both in Israel and the West Bank President Biden's plan to reopen the consulate in Jerusalem that had been

in existence for over a hundred years before the previous administration terminated it.

My question is does the president plan to continue with that commitment to open the consulate and what would be the timetable?

Ambassador LEAF. Yes, Senator, that is the President's commitment, and he believes, and Secretary Blinken spoke to this issue over the last couple months that reopening the consulate provides a critical platform for diplomatic engagement with both the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian people.

I am not privy to the plans in the State Department in terms of timing of that. But, if confirmed, of course, I will work to execute the President's commitment.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. In my remaining time, let me now circle back to Lebanon, and in addition to elaborating on the Lebanese Armed Forces just follow up with the issue that Senator Murphy raised, which is, as you know, Iran right now is sending tankers with fuel to Hezbollah via a port in Syria to be transported over land.

Our really great ambassador there, Ambassador Shea, has expressed her strong opposition to that but also proposed an alternative, a much more sustainable plan, a real plan that involves bringing electricity from Egypt through Jordan to Lebanon but would have to transit Syria.

There are issues of whether or not that is compliant with the Caesar Act or whether a waiver would be required. Can you just offer your thoughts on that, in addition to the Lebanese Armed Forces?

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for calling out Ambassador Shea for her great efforts there on the ground with her team.

Yeah, it is interesting, the issue of this acute energy crisis. It is side by side with the general disintegration of the economy, which is, as you and Senator Murphy saw, is having a terrible deleterious effect across society and is crumbling the foundations of the LAF itself. I mean, the currency has lost 90 percent of its value in the last two years. Imagine what a soldier makes.

On this issue of an energy solution, side by side with this, frankly, PR stunt by Hezbollah, this is a regionally produced solution or proposed solution, which, as you say, it is our partners, Egypt and Jordan, who have teamed together to look at the issue of excess electricity and natural gas to get it across Syria into Lebanon.

This is a project that, as I understand it, is endorsed by the World Bank. So, the State Department is looking at it carefully within the framework of U.S. law and sanctions policy.

But it shows some promise on the face of it and, of course, the Department will consult thoroughly with Treasury on the way forward. But it, certainly, offers the prospect of a cheaper, cleaner, and defensible solution, a short-term fix to what is a larger terrible problem in Lebanon.

And the first step, of course, is that they have finally, after 13 months, put together a government, which is only the first step. Important economic reforms must follow after.

And I will just say, finally, on the LAF, support for the LAF as the true cross confessional institution of public trust and capability in the country will remain a priority for this administration.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let me follow up on one point that Senator Van Hollen made.

And I look forward to hearing back from the department. I helped write the Caesar Act and I do not want to give relief to the Assad regime.

However, in this particular case for these particular circumstances, if the department makes the determination that that is the only impediment towards an agreement for energy flow into Lebanon, I have asked them to come to me because I think it is important enough to find a way forward.

Let me also follow on. A question, Ambassador Leaf, that was promoted to you by Senator Murphy—and he and I do have a respectful disagreement about the JCPOA—I understood your answer to say that if we can get a compliance-for-compliance deal we will do that, and then the stronger longer comes later. Is that it?

Ambassador LEAF. Senator, what I meant by that was follow-on negotiations would necessarily look at building out on the JCPOA.

The CHAIRMAN. Right, but they would come later?

Ambassador LEAF. Following it. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah. That is the problem. The conversations that I have had with the administration is that returning to the JCPOA with a commitment from the Iranians for a negotiation on what is longer and stronger, that is something I could support.

But if it is just compliance-for-compliance and then we wait to see whether the Iranians are actually serious about longer and stronger, that is a problem because they will have received what they wanted.

And let us remember that our circumstances today are different than when we entered the JCPOA. Number one, time has elapsed. The sunset clauses are closer. Some of them have already elapsed on some critical issues.

And Iran has moved forward on its abilities and knowledge in terms of enrichment. We are not in the same place. Even with compliance-for-compliance, we are not in the same place.

I do not hold you responsible for this because even though you work at the NSC it is, I am sure, above your pay grade. But I just want to make it clear that from the chairman's point of view this is a problem.

And so I have given the administration a lot of room under the basis that they are looking for an agreement that goes back to compliance but is also a pathway to longer and stronger, and just that it will happen later on in the hopes that the Iranians will be good actors is not something that I can be supportive of.

I just want to raise that question. I think this question is rather self-obvious, but I just want to do it for the record.

Do you commit to fully supporting Israel's right to self-defense and its qualitative military edge, including through U.S. military assistance?

Ambassador LEAF. Yes, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I want to go to Lebanon as well. This economic crisis has pushed the middle class into poverty, but the country's political elite still have shown no appetite for needed reforms.

This new government, it is my hope that Hezbollah will allow this government to operate.

How do we balance the need to help alleviate suffering in Lebanon while directly contributing to security and stability—which directly contributes to security and stability not only in Lebanon but Israel and throughout the region, but ensure that our assistance is being used to incentivize reforms?

Ambassador LEAF. Thank you, Senator. You have put your finger on the crux of the issue.

There is a situation that in real terms is quite terrifying that confronts Lebanon and I wish the Lebanese political class and its leaders and those who formed the caretaker government have felt the same sense of urgency about the situation that outsiders like the U.S. Government, the French Government, and others have felt about the situation.

There is at play here, a need for pressure and inducements but, really, not inducements in an immediate sense. It is, rather, that this government, having been formed, it is only the first minimal step on what has to be a long road of structural economic reform, which will then unlock, be it international financing, loans, and other forms of foreign assistance.

The Biden administration has been working this set of issues closely with France and several other regional partners to provide that constant pressure on individuals as well as the government to make it clear that there is no rescue coming from outside.

The solution to Lebanon lies in Lebanese hands. But it is going to be a long slow road ahead.

The CHAIRMAN. I hope we will do what is necessary to try to get them to be part of the decision-making necessary so they can get IMF funding and reforms and move on, and I think there is a great will in the Congress to help Lebanon but Lebanon must help itself in that regard.

And I think if the message is there that we are standing willing to help, then the onus is upon its own leaders to create that opportunity.

Ambassador LEAF. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I just want to touch on Egypt with you and then I will move on.

Egypt is both an incredibly important security partner to us, to the region, to Israel. I was in Greece this summer. I spoke to the foreign minister. He made a very big point about Egypt's stability in the region.

They are a member of the East Med Gas Forum along with Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and Jordan. They worked to deescalate the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the past conflicts. They, obviously, are playing a significant role in that regard.

They have issues as well. They have issues with the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, or what we call the GERD. And when I speak to them, I believe that they are serious about their red lines on the GERD. And, though, while they do not seek it, I, certainly,

think the last thing we can avoid is a conflict there, at the end of the day. I hope that you will join whoever is in the administration focused on this to try to find a resolution.

Then, of course, we have our continuing challenges on human rights. I know that the Egyptians argue that, look at what we are doing for the quality of life for the Egyptian people. That should be considered human rights, too.

But imprisonment and unlawful detention is also not acceptable on these set of circumstances. We have to press them on all these different fronts, and I will assume that that is something that you will do, if confirmed.

Ambassador LEAF. If confirmed, I will absolutely do that. And you have sketched out exactly the color, the texture, the complexity of that relationship. But it is quite strategic.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Ms. Smith, I have some real concerns about NATO in terms of where we are headed, and your time there will be very important. They fall in two buckets. One is NATO, of course, was created as a security architecture, which has been exceptionally successful.

But it was also founded on a set of principles, of values, that were joined by the member nations. And, of course, the provision of the NATO treaty that says an attack on one is an attack on all is a critical nature of that. We have reaffirmed that.

But what happens in the eventuality that an attack by one NATO member against another NATO member takes place? It is a serious issue, and while we never envisioned that, I am deeply concerned about Turkey's actions in the eastern Mediterranean against another NATO ally, Greece, where we have Souda Bay, where we are deepening our relationship. We are on the verge of signing a new defense cooperation agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding, hopefully, in October.

I think that is a discussion that NATO is going to have to have. I would like to get your impressions on that.

Ms. SMITH. Thank you, Senator.

NATO, as you know, recently spent some time drafting this 2030 report thinking about where the allies want to take the Alliance towards 2030 and what capabilities it would need, what new mechanisms it might need, what measures it could undertake to address some new challenges.

But, really, at the heart of that report sits the importance of Alliance cohesion and unity, and that is a theme that runs throughout the report.

And as I noted in my opening remarks, I am concerned about some of the actions we are seeing in some NATO member states that bring into question whether or not each member state is upholding our shared values of democracy, individual liberty, and rule of law.

If confirmed, I would work to ensure that we can return our focus back to Alliance unity, solidarity, and resolve.

On your question about Turkey more specifically, this is an ally inside the NATO Alliance that has played a key role in some of its cooperation with both the United States and other NATO allies in the counterterrorism realm.

But we have also had some really hard questions with Turkey and some tough discussions, particularly about their decision to purchase the S-400s, which all of us have made clear are not compatible with the Alliance, not interoperable, and I think, rightly, past U.S. administrations, other allies, have warned the Turks that these types of purchases cannot be made operational. They cannot be maintained. They should not have been purchased in the first place.

And so we have to continue to drive the message home to our friends in Ankara that it is important that we focus on that Alliance cohesion.

Yes, we can have some tough conversations with our friends in Ankara, difficult discussions about human rights as well, but also acknowledge that Turkey is an ally and that all of us want Turkey to remain facing westward.

The CHAIRMAN. We want them facing westward as long as they are also sharing westward values. When you purchase the S-400, which is in violation of CAATSA, that I helped write—when you—totally not interoperable with the NATO Alliance—when you commit actions that instigate against another NATO ally in Greece—you overfly their airspace, you invade their territorial waters, you threaten their exclusive economic zone—when we say that there are more lawyers and journalists in prison in Turkey than in any other part of the world, and there are some bad parts of the world, that speaks volumes about not sharing on values.

What they did in Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the list is replete. I just hope that you will be going clear eyed with an understanding of this challenge.

Yes, we want them to be everything we aspired of them—the bridge between East and West, the secular, more democratic country, a strong NATO ally, respecting the rule of law.

But under President Erdoğan that is not the reality, and as it is in life, we have to deal with that which is the reality, not that which we aspire to.

I hope you will be thinking about that because we have to answer the question, God forbid, that one NATO ally attacks another what is the answer of the Alliance then.

Secondly, I hope you will pay attention to what is the new hybrid warfare that, particularly, Russia has done.

We need to be able to think about how we respond in that regard when Russia uses forces that are irregular—but they are Russian forces for all intents and purposes, whether they are the Wagner Group or others—and at the end of the day, threatens stability in the region, as well as the new cyber challenges that we have, which are a new form of warfare.

Are those items that you will be paying attention to, if confirmed?

Ms. SMITH. Absolutely. Russia remains the biggest geopolitical threat to the Euro-Atlantic region, certainly, will be the biggest military threat to the NATO Alliance for the foreseeable future, certainly, over the next decade.

NATO has done a lot to enhance its deterrence and defense posture since Russia went into Ukraine in 2014. But as you note, Senator, there is more work to be done. Russia's aggression continues.

We have to hold Russia accountable for their actions across the full spectrum of instruments whether we are talking about conventional capabilities, flying into NATO airspace, acts of intimidation, or cyber attacks.

NATO has done a lot to take on the cyber challenge, particularly in 2016, acknowledging that this is a new domain for the Alliance. But we do have more work to do in that regard.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. We look forward to you getting there soon because I think these issues are really percolating as we speak.

Finally, Ambassador Bauer, I do not want you to think you are not the object of my affection in terms of any questions.

Let me ask you, President Macron has sought to advance a concept of strategic autonomy, to use his words, which some have interpreted as France distancing itself from the United States and creating tensions within NATO.

What are your views on this question of strategic autonomy and what would you be saying, upon confirmation, to President Macron about it?

Ambassador BAUER. Thank you for the question.

As Ms. Smith was noting, NATO is the premier transatlantic forum for national security. That is, for us, our top priority is our NATO Alliance.

And France is, indeed, a very good partner on that, and I greatly appreciate their interest in strengthening security in Europe, and I would ask them, perhaps, as their first step to help us in encouraging those who are not meeting their commitments to the 2 percent in NATO and to other capabilities within NATO to do that.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. I get the sense of being stronger. I just hope that it is stronger in complete alignment with NATO. We are all for being stronger. But the last thing we need is a separate parallel effort with NATO when NATO can use all the strengthening it can get. I think that will be one of your important jobs.

And the last thing I would just say, commend to you, that the French care a great deal about Lebanon and we have heard that there has been some engagement. I hope you will deepen that and play with Ambassador Leaf and others a role to bring this whole combination of governments together.

I think the stability in Lebanon is incredibly important. I have had many discussions with the French ambassador here as well as the French foreign minister and some of their negotiators on the Iran portfolio.

We have talked to them about what the administration now describes as stronger and longer, that there has to be more than just a return to the JCPOA.

They seem to suggest that, yes, we recognize that, and I hope that you will be able to deepen that approach if you are confirmed to your position.

Ambassador BAUER. Thank you. That would certainly be a priority for me.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

All right. I have no other members virtually or otherwise. We thank you all for your testimony.

The record for the hearing will remain open until the close of business on Thursday, September 16, 2021. Please ensure that questions for the record are submitted no later than Thursday.

We would say to our nominees that there will inevitably be questions for the record for you. We would ask you to answer them fully, and I say that because we very often get answers that are very superficial, which then causes members to hold up a nominee's business meeting and we have to go back to the department to say this answer is not sufficiently answered.

To the extent that you get a question, please answer them expeditiously, answer them fully, so we can have your nominations be brought up at a business meeting.

With the thanks of the committee, to all of you for your willingness to serve, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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### Additional Material Submitted for the Record

LETTER SUBMITTED BY ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS, USN (RET.),  
FORMER SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER AT NATO, SUPPORTING  
THE NOMINATION OF JULIANNE SMITH TO BE U.S. PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC  
TREATY ORGANIZATION



September 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch,

I write today to strongly and personally recommend Julie Smith to be the US Ambassador to NATO. I have known and worked closely with Julie for well over a decade, going back to my service as a 3-star Admiral in the Pentagon, most notably during my tour as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, and through the present day in her various defense policy roles in Washington. A few of the key points to be made concerning her career and service include:

- 25 years experience working on transatlantic security issues in government (Pentagon and White House); out of government (CNAS, CSIS, GMF); and overseas (have worked in both France and Germany and speak both languages). She is a committed Atlanticist.
- vast network of contacts in Europe, including at the minister and head of state level, which will help her do her job at NATO.
- deep knowledge of NATO issues, having worked and written about them for the past two decades.
- conceptualized, wrote, and ran CNAS's first two war games with Jerry Hendrix: "Assured Resolve" (which focused on hybrid threats to the Baltic States) and "Forgotten Waters" (which addressed the GIUK Gap and NATO's lack of situational awareness in that region).
- strong record of innovatively working across the aisle. Launched a program after Trump won to bring Europeans to 12 cities around the US to talk to Americans outside of Washington about U.S. foreign policy.
- served as both acting national security advisor and deputy national security advisor to Joe Biden as VP. Will have his ear in Brussels.
- spent the last three years researching and writing on Europe's evolving attitudes and vulnerabilities as they relate to China (with pieces in both the NYT and Foreign Affairs on this subject).

But beyond her deeply impressive biography, what I'd like to convey in this brief letter are her character, determination, and leadership. Again and again, I watched her deal with complicated international issues at the very heart of the NATO Alliance with creativity, energy, and collegiality. Often as Senior Military Assistant to SECDEF as a 3-star and later as SACEUR, I would look to Julie for advice on issues back in Washington and over in Brussels as well. She is uniformly kind, humble, and thoughtful, whether she is dealing with the most junior member of her staff or the Supreme Allied Commander at NATO. In Navy terms, she is a perfect "shipmate."

As SACEUR, I was in constant contact with the US Ambassador to NATO, and have watched that office serve as the fulcrum of US policy within the Alliance. It requires the nicest diplomatic touch alongside a rock-solid knowledge of both Europe and NATO itself: Ambassador Julie Smith would bring both qualities to the halls of this venerable and still vital Alliance. Please approve her nomination! All the best and very respectfully,

Admiral James Stavridis, USN (R)  
Vice Chairman, Global Affairs, The Carlyle Group  
Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Rockefeller Foundation  
16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO

## Responses to Additional Questions for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* How many individuals are in the current P-2 referral queue?

*Answer.* To date, I understand over 20,000 cases consisting of around 55,000 individuals have been referred to the Afghan P-2 refugee resettlement program.

*Question.* How will PRM work with individual Afghans who have submitted applications through the P-2 referral process?

*Answer.* On August 2, 2021, the Department of State announced a new Priority 2 (P-2) designation granting U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) access for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members. (See <https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/>.) The Department of State has designated certain categories of Afghan nationals as having access to the USRAP by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement. This priority group includes Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or nongovernmental organization (NGO). It expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation but are not eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa because they did not have qualifying employment or because they have not met the time-in-service requirement to become eligible for an SIV.

In addition to the P-2 designation noted above, Afghans may also gain access to the USRAP through Priority 1 referrals by a specific entity (U.S. embassy, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or a designated NGO), or Priority 3, reunification of family members of refugees already resettled in the United States.

The Department of State has issued instructions regarding how U.S.-based media and NGOs can submit referrals for P-2 designation for Afghan nationals. (See <https://www.wrapsnet.org/siv-iraqi-syrian-afghan-p2/>.) Organizations can use these instructions to refer to the USRAP any Afghan national staff (plus their spouse and children) who might be in danger now or in the foreseeable future.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Priority 2 designation expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many thousands of Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation. As President Biden has made clear, assisting these Afghan allies is a top priority for the administration.

I understand that PRM is still receiving P2 referrals from U.S. employers, service members, and qualifying media and non-governmental organizations. The U.S. Government cannot currently process refugee referrals inside Afghanistan, so Afghan nationals who are referred for resettlement will be processed upon leaving the country. I am not aware of a timeline for that process nor a specific number of Afghan P-2 referrals that PRM expects to process in the next year. The administration recognizes the role this new designation and the refugee resettlement program in general will play in the lives of those that risked their safety to assist the United States. As President Biden has made clear, helping these Afghans is an ongoing commitment of the United States.

*Question.* How long should it take PRM to process P-2 applications during the pre-screening phase?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the amount of time it will take for the relevant PRM-funded Resettlement Support Center to pre-screen cases will vary according to region. In general, it takes approximately 12 to 18 months to process a refugee resettlement case from start to finish including pre-screening, the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services interview, and required security vetting.

*Question.* Do you support expanding the P-2 eligibility to include sub-grantees and sub-contractors of U.S.-funded projects, given that the risks these staff face are no less grave than those of primary recipients? If not, why not?

*Answer.* I understand the Department's policy is that Afghans who worked for sub-grantees or sub-contractors of U.S.-funded projects may be referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program through an Embassy P-1 referral if the individual is well-known to a U.S. Government official and has imminent or compelling protection concerns. Alternatively, such individuals who register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in a third country may be referred for resettlement in the United States by UNHCR. I understand that sub-grantees and sub-contractors of U.S.-funded projects do not formally qualify for the P-2 program.

*Question.* Once eligible organizations have submitted referrals, how will employers, organizations, and referred individuals receive information about the status of their applications?

*Answer.* After the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has received a referral from a U.S. Government agency, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization, or a U.S.-based media organization, and the individual has relocated to a country where refugee processing can occur, I understand the referred individual will need to contact PRM to begin processing their case. Individuals should follow the guidelines on wrapsnet.org to contact PRM. At that point, PRM will assign the case to a PRM-funded overseas Resettlement Support Center for processing.

*Question.* What are the administration's plans to process Afghans in third countries?

*Answer.* Once an individual referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) arrives in a country where processing is feasible and reaches out to PRM, following the guidelines found on wrapsnet.org, I understand that PRM will create and assign a refugee case to the appropriate PRM-funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC) to begin processing the case where the refugee is located. I understand that RSCs will collect data and pre-screen Afghan USRAP applicants, and all individuals will need to complete a refugee interview with a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer.

*Question.* What role and presence, if any, will U.S. agencies have in third countries? What role, if any, will UN agencies and international NGOs play there?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that there are regional PRM-funded Resettlement Support Centers that process U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) cases for individuals once they reach a third country. I also understand that individuals with urgent protection needs may register and seek assistance from the Government of the country they are in or from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

*Question.* How will PRM specifically ensure that they have access to basic services while awaiting U.S. Government P-2 processing?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that individuals with urgent needs should follow procedures to register for international protection and assistance with the government of the country where they are located. They may also register and seek assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. If confirmed, I would work with international humanitarian partners and other governments to address their needs for basic services.

*Question.* What will be the contingency plan should at-risk Afghans' applications for P-1, P-2, and SIV be rejected while they are in a third country?

*Answer.* Individuals with urgent protection needs should follow procedures to register for international protection and assistance with the government of the country where they are located. They may also register and seek assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. If confirmed, I would work with international humanitarian partners and other governments to address their protection concerns and needs for support. The United States appreciates that other countries have agreed to host and resettle at-risk Afghans, and if confirmed, I would pursue durable solutions for these individuals.

*Question.* What steps, if any, is PRM taking to provide similar protections or pathways for Afghans employed by international organizations?

*Answer.* I understand that Afghans employed by international organizations may be referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program through an Embassy P-1 referral, if well-known to a U.S. Government official, or through a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees referral to the United States or another resettlement country.

*Question.* What will be the process for P-2 eligible Afghans who were paroled into the U.S.?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that Afghan individuals at risk who are paroled into the United States as a result of the U.S. airlift are transferred temporarily to a U.S. military installation. Following medical and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service processing on the military base, these Afghan parolees can access the Afghan Placement & Assistance (APA) Program once they arrive at their final destination in the United States. The purpose of the APA Program is to provide paroled Afghans with initial relocation services for 30 to 90 days after arrival as they begin

to rebuild their lives in the United States. These services are provided through local refugee resettlement agencies and community partners.

*Question.* Will the administration modify the P-2 program to allow for processing while in the U.S.?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the U.S. Government is currently exploring options under the P-2 program for processing Afghans who have been paroled into the United States.

*Question.* How is PRM working with other federal agencies and the White House to conduct an assessment of security vetting processes, particularly in light of EO 14013?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Department of Homeland Security is the lead agency for vetting of all travelers applying for admission to the United States, including refugees. I understand PRM is working closely with the DHS' Citizenship and Immigration Service and other U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) vetting partners to conduct needed reviews and implement technical improvements to USRAP security vetting. I also understand that includes the goal of incorporating refugee vetting into the National Vetting Center to enhance the efficiency and reduce redundancies in vetting, without compromising the security of the American people.

*Question.* What steps do you think PRM should be taking with DHS to improve refugee vetting and security checks?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the lead agency for vetting of all travelers applying for admission to the United States, including refugees. As noted previously, I understand PRM is working closely with the DHS' U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service and other USRAP vetting partners to conduct the needed reviews and implement technical improvements to U.S. Refugee Admissions Program security vetting. I also understand that includes the goal of incorporating refugee vetting into the National Vetting Center to speed the process and reduce redundancies, without compromising the security of the American people.

*Question.* Would you commit to reviewing and implementing the reports required by EO 14013 on vetting and SAO checks?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to reviewing and implementing fully and completely all of the reports and measures in E.O. 14013 that the President directs, including those focused on the Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) process and security vetting for refugee applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. I believe the security of the American people remains paramount in all Department of State programs and initiatives and will work in keeping with that belief if confirmed.

*Question.* How is the Department engaging with allies around the world to meet the UN appeals for urgent humanitarian funding to support the needs of Afghans inside Afghanistan, including millions of IDPs?

*Answer.* I understand that the State Department continues to support the needs of vulnerable Afghans through urgent humanitarian funding, highlighted by the recent announcement of \$64 million in new humanitarian assistance to people affected by the ongoing crisis, bringing the total on behalf of the United States to \$330 million this fiscal year. This new support to United Nations agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Health Organization, and to international non-governmental organizations, is part of the nearly \$1.2 billion in humanitarian funding to Afghanistan pledged by nations around the world. My understanding is that the Department continues to engage partners at the highest levels to encourage full funding of urgent appeals and a continued commitment to Afghans in need. If confirmed, I would call for international responsibility sharing to meet humanitarian needs there and around the world.

*Question.* Should the United States and the international community demand certain commitments from the Taliban before providing development aid? Should we insist that we will only provide support if they uphold the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the State Department and USAID are reviewing all types of U.S. foreign assistance to Afghanistan. In my view, that review should include discussion of our posture and expectations vis-à-vis the Taliban. I would refer you to my colleagues at USAID and in the South Central Asia bureau at the State Department on the USG's plans to provide development aid to Afghanistan. Insofar as humanitarian aid, I understand that U.S. humanitarian assistance

is provided on the basis of need through international and non-governmental organization partners, not directly to governments. In Afghanistan, more than 18 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the face of food insecurity, protection risks, health crises, climate change, and conflict instability. The United States Government's humanitarian partners have reiterated their commitment to stay and to deliver lifesaving assistance directly to the people of Afghanistan with impartiality, neutrality, and independence; this commitment is based on the needs of the Afghan people, regardless of Taliban undertakings.

*Question.* What efforts will PRM be making and supporting to bring refugee labor mobility to the United States and expand efforts internationally to scale this additional solution for refugees and other displaced people?

*Answer.* I understand that the administration's Collaborative Migration Management Strategy (CMMS) includes a specific line of effort to enhance regional labor migration pathways, under which PRM, the U.S. interagency, international organization partners, and partner governments in North and Central America will expand existing and create new temporary work visa programs in the region. This is an important initiative, and if confirmed, I would seek to expand interim solutions, including further resettlement and labor mobility opportunities for refugees and other forcibly displaced people in other parts of the world.

*Question.* Migration is one of the greatest global challenges we face. Creating safe, legal pathways for migration should be a key component of our response. What is PRM doing to encourage development of refugee labor mobility pathways internationally and to make skilled labor visas accessible to refugee populations into the United States?

*Answer.* I agree on the critical importance of creating legal migration pathways, particularly in this hemisphere. If confirmed, I will implement the administration's Collaborative Migration Management Strategy (CMMS), which includes a specific line of effort to enhance regional labor mobility pathways. I understand PRM is working with the U.S. interagency, international organization partners, and partner governments in North and Central America to expand existing and create new temporary work visa programs in the region to provide pathways for safe, lawful employment to people likely to migrate seeking economic opportunity.

I respectfully refer you to the Refugee Career Pathways program in the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement for information about employment for refugees who have been resettled to the United States.

*Question.* What is PRM doing to encourage and ensure that those who come with skills, training, education and English language capability are matched to private sector employment opportunities commensurate with their abilities, so that they can contribute and provide for themselves and their families from the outset of their entry into the United States?

*Answer.* I understand the Reception & Placement Program, funded by PRM, lays the foundation for refugees to transition successfully to life in the United States. I also understand that a critical component of that success is the ability of refugees to achieve early self-sufficiency through employment. Resettlement agencies carefully consider the availability of appropriate employment opportunities as one of the key factors when determining where to resettle individuals, drawing on information from a network of over 200 local resettlement agency affiliate offices in approximately 150 communities around the country. For more information on refugee employment programming and outcomes, I would refer you to the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* What would be your goals and priorities as Assistant Secretary of State for the bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would have three overarching goals as PRM Assistant Secretary.

The first goal would be to represent American values and American leadership in the world. To this end, I would lead PRM in promoting protection, providing life-saving humanitarian aid, and seeking durable solutions through humanitarian diplomacy for over 80 million people in populations of concern. I would promote policies for safe, orderly and humane migration as well as population policies that en-

hance maternal and child health. To these ends, I would be a responsible steward of the taxpayer dollars that make PRM's work possible, emphasizing risk mitigation approaches to ensure aid reaches its intended recipients. I would emphasize greater international burden sharing to meet global humanitarian needs as well as needed reforms in international organizations to make them more efficient, effective, and accountable.

My second goal would be to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, as directed by the President. I would collaborate closely with partners at the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services and in close consultation with the Congress on this objective, and with PRM's excellent international organization and non-government organization partners, seeking innovations such as private-public partnerships to make the program more effective.

Last but not least, I would seek to rebuild the PRM bureau. PRM's response to recent events in Afghanistan impressed me deeply—people working 14 to 16-hour days, seven days a week, deploying to other locations around the world at short notice, to help people at risk. I would seek to fill the many staff vacancies in the bureau as quickly as possible, both to increase PRM's long-term capabilities and to provide relief for the existing team, and work with the Administration to ensure the bureau has the adequate resources needed to accomplish its work. I would hold staff members accountable for their performance and conduct; reward strong performance; increase professional development opportunities for PRM's staff; and emphasize the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion as hallmarks of a strong team.

*Question.* Please comment on the U.S. Government's international emergency response capacity and contingency planning. How might PRM improve its capacity to protect lives and provide life-sustaining assistance?

Answer. The United States maintains a robust capacity to respond to humanitarian crises which exceed the ability and resources of an affected country to respond. The United States also engages in contingency planning within our own government and with international, local, and multilateral partners to coordinate humanitarian responses, which is particularly important as the scale and scope of disasters increases. I understand PRM is augmenting its own capacity as well as the capacity of its partners to respond to increasing humanitarian requirements and more complex operating environments, and if confirmed, I would continue to support these efforts.

*Question.* How will you work with USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance to ensure greater alignment, eliminate duplication and waste, expand humanitarian access, mitigate the risk of diversion by armed actors and terrorist groups, and ensure U.S. humanitarian assistance is effectively targeted toward those in greatest need? How will you work with our U.N. partners to do the same?

Answer. I understand that PRM and USAID/BHA are in regular communication from the working level up to leadership on the full range of programmatic and policy issues and have robust coordination mechanisms. One of my top priorities is to ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are used in the most efficient and effective manner possible to reach intended beneficiaries. One element of that is ensuring appropriate coordination with USAID/BHA, leveraging each entity's respective strengths to achieve U.S. humanitarian objectives. Regular engagement with United Nations (UN) partners at the field and headquarters levels also ensures appropriate use of U.S. funding and focuses assistance on those most in need. If confirmed, I will continue this close collaboration between PRM and USAID/BHA and close partnership with U.N. entities.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the budget allocated to PRM in recent years?

Answer. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance continues to grow year after year, and needs far outpace global resources to respond. Congress has been responsive to this growth in needs, as well as new and evolving requirements such as those related to the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, Afghanistan. The level of funding appropriated for humanitarian assistance reflects the strong bipartisan commitment to assisting the world's most vulnerable persons and to leading with our values and has accordingly supported PRM in providing a robust and agile response. In FY 2022, I expect PRM will continue to require sustained support to respond to existing crises and any new needs as they emerge. If confirmed, I would also make it a priority to seek increased contributions from other nations and organizations and to foster public-private partnerships to respond to these growing crises, in the interest of international responsibility sharing.

*Question.* To what extent does the current level of staffing of the PRM bureau address its three fundamental areas of responsibility: population, refugees, and migration?

*Answer.* PRM has an existing cadre of well qualified, dedicated staff. I understand that Department leadership recently approved 68 new permanent positions in PRM to advance humanitarian diplomacy in critical regions, better implement humanitarian goals and objectives, provide oversight for program integrity, and more efficiently program, manage, and monitor billions of dollars of foreign assistance to international and non-governmental organizations. Once these new positions and other vacancies in the bureau are filled, PRM will be well positioned to address all three fundamental areas of responsibility. If confirmed, I will seek to fill these positions as quickly as possible.

*Question.* What is your assessment of PRM's level of accountability and effective planning, as well as its ability to conduct program oversight?

*Answer.* I understand that PRM has a robust planning and programming process to align its allocations of funds with strategic priorities. PRM also regularly monitors its financial awards to non-governmental and international organizations at the field, regional, and headquarters levels to safeguard U.S. taxpayer dollars, as evidenced by excellent, publicly available audit reports. As humanitarian needs have grown around the world, I understand that PRM has sought to increase its staffing and oversight capabilities. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring PRM's programs are effective and accountable both to the beneficiaries and the American public.

*Question.* What are the key protection and assistance needs of today's refugees, IDPs, and migrants? If confirmed, how would you recommend that PRM marshal its resources to address these challenges? What countries or regions should PRM prioritize?

*Answer.* Protection and humanitarian assistance needs are immense as numbers of people displaced by conflict and crises globally have reached record levels in recent years. Among the most pressing needs are access—both access for humanitarian aid providers to reach people in need, and access to protection for people fleeing persecution and violence, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, and protection of children and others in particularly vulnerable situations. These urgent needs cut across all countries and regions. If confirmed, I would ramp up bilateral and multilateral U.S. humanitarian diplomacy to advocate for the protection of populations of concern, and leverage U.S. influence to prioritize protection efforts by international organizations and NGO partners.

*Question.* How has COVID-19 impacted the work of PRM's implementing partners? What do you anticipate will be the priorities for addressing the immediate needs and secondary impacts of the virus on vulnerable and displaced populations worldwide?

*Answer.* The COVID-19 pandemic has affected PRM's implementing partners' programming and ability to provide assistance in a timely manner due to increased operational costs, ongoing travel and access constraints, and other movement restrictions. It has also directly affected the health and welfare of marginalized populations around the world and exacerbated pre-existing gaps in health, protection, assistance, education, and livelihoods. I understand PRM's partners emphasize meeting international standards for assistance and protection for the most vulnerable while at the same time advocating for the inclusion of marginalized, displaced, and hard-to-reach populations such as refugees in national plans for vaccine delivery, relief, and recovery.

*Question.* Please discuss U.S. global humanitarian budget priorities for this fiscal year and next, with particular reference to humanitarian crises, the impact of COVID-19, and the potential consequences for humanitarian portfolios. What changes, if any, would you prioritize in PRM's funding approach to humanitarian response and/or its work with implementing partners, including U.N. agencies and NGOs?

*Answer.* Total humanitarian needs far outpace global resources to respond, and the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded existing vulnerabilities. I understand PRM's FY 2021 budget priorities will continue to FY 2022 and include response to the global pandemic; urgent humanitarian assistance to support those affected by crises in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Syria, among others; and rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

PRM's approach reflects strong bipartisan commitment, demonstrated through successive Administrations, to assisting the world's most vulnerable people and to

leading with our values. If confirmed, I am committed to maintaining U.S. humanitarian leadership and working with Congress to respond to existing as well as emerging humanitarian needs.

*Question.* How does the U.S. Government coordinate its responses to migration crises, such as those in Venezuela or Central America?

*Answer.* Interagency coordination between the State Department, USAID, and other agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security is critical in responding to migration crises. My understanding is that the National Security Council leads broad coordination through interagency meetings. Outside of that formal process, working level counterparts exchange information through standing meetings, ad hoc huddles, and technical advice on program and policy implementation and evaluation. At diplomatic posts overseas, PRM's Refugee Coordinators facilitate in-country coordination. If confirmed, I will continue this close collaboration between PRM and counterparts in the Department and the interagency.

*Question.* When and where does PRM take the lead and what, if any, are the differences in its approach as compared to that of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)?

*Answer.* My understanding is that PRM and USAID play separate but complementary roles in responding to humanitarian crises. PRM takes the lead in providing urgent humanitarian aid and protection to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants, working through international organizations and non-governmental organizations. USAID takes the lead in response to natural and man-made disasters, disaster preparedness, and support for internally displaced populations; USAID also provides food aid to refugees. USAID also funds development programs. In situations where PRM and USAID responsibilities converge, I understand they have robust coordination mechanisms in the field and in Washington to ensure the overall efficiency and effectiveness of U.S. assistance. If confirmed, I will continue this close collaboration between PRM and USAID.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the scope of risks to women and girls, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are ways that PRM programs specifically address these protection needs?

*Answer.* In times of crisis, women and girls are at enormous risk of gender-based violence (GBV)—from armed groups, strangers, neighbors, and family members. These risks in humanitarian settings were exacerbated by COVID-19 and corresponding mitigation measures, resulting in a “shadow” pandemic of GBV and worldwide spikes in GBV risks and reports. In response, the U.S. humanitarian response to COVID-19 prioritized protection activities, including programs to help prevent GBV and provide psychosocial services to GBV victims, along with healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance in the COVID-19 humanitarian response.

#### UNRWA

*Question.* What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that the administration's resumption of funding for UNRWA does not benefit Hamas and its affiliates?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am firmly committed to ensuring that U.S. Government funding does not end up in the hand of terrorists, including Hamas. The Administration provides assistance to international organizations and non-governmental organizations in a manner consistent with U.S. law and does not provide assistance to Hamas. PRM takes seriously its oversight of assistance provided to U.N. operations, including UNRWA, to ensure U.S. taxpayer-funded assistance is reaching the intended recipients, and if confirmed I would maintain this focus. I understand UNRWA employs safeguards to prevent support from reaching terrorist organizations, including vetting of staff, contractors, and beneficiaries; robust monitoring of its programs; thorough investigations of any allegations of abuses; and accountability for those who violate its policies.

*Question.* What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that the administration's resumption of funding for UNRWA does not include textbooks that include anti-Semitic material?

*Answer.* I condemn incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in any form. U.N. agencies, including UNRWA, do not develop their own curricula, but use the curricula of host governments. When concepts contrary to U.N. principles are identified in host governments' educational materials, UNRWA provides instructions and supplementary materials for its staff to address the issue. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of adhering to humanitarian principles, including neutrality, in discussions with UNRWA.



*Question.* To what extent has the administration considered phasing out its support for UNRWA and transitioning it to other international relief agencies, such as the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)?

*Answer.* My understanding is that UNHCR does not have a mandate to provide support for Palestinian refugees in the areas where UNRWA works. Only UNRWA has the mandate, set by the U.N. General Assembly, to provide essential services directly to Palestinian refugees in the five regions it covers. In order to fulfill its mandate, UNRWA employs teachers and health care workers who provide services directly to beneficiaries. The UNHCR mandate also includes a focus on seeking durable solutions such as resettlement, repatriation, and local integration for refugees, while UNRWA does not have that mandate. Decisions on resettlement, repatriation, and local integration of Palestinian refugees must be negotiated directly between Israel and the Palestinians as final status issues.

#### *IRAQ P-2*

*Question.* The State Department notified Congress in April 2021 that it had indefinitely suspended the P-2 program for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis. This notification followed a January 2021 State Department statement that the Department of Justice was “prosecuting individuals for stealing U.S. Government records to take advantage of this program,” which triggered a 90-day suspension. With the special immigrant visa program for Iraqis who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. Government no longer accepting new applications, this P-2 program has been seen as a key avenue for Iraqis who assisted the United States to gain U.S. admission.

- What is the status of the review of the P-2 program for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis? What changes are under consideration for better securing this and perhaps other P-2 programs? When do you expect a revised P-2 program for U.S.-affiliated Iraqis to be reinstated?

*Answer.* I understand PRM has been working closely with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security at the State Department and with the Department of Homeland Security to support the investigation into the P-2 program for U.S. affiliated Iraqis and to ensure no individuals identified by the investigation travel to the United States. I also understand PRM has contracted a specialist team to analyze current Iraqi P-2 program operating procedures, develop recommendations to mitigate fraud vulnerabilities once the program reopens, and re-verify the qualifications of cases in the existing Iraqi P-2 pipeline. Once the overall framework for re-vetting cases has been established, it is my understanding that individual screenings and admission of those who pass this enhanced screening will begin.

*Question.* What was the involvement of former U.S. Embassy Moscow local employee Olesya Leonidovna Krasilova in the Iraqi P-2 fraud scheme?

*Answer.* I understand that the Department cannot comment on an ongoing criminal investigation. I respectfully refer you to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia for additional information.

*Question.* Does the U.S. Government suspect her involvement in any other criminal activity, espionage, or improper/inappropriate conduct with coworkers or contacts during her time as an employee of the United States Government?

*Answer.* As this is an ongoing criminal investigation, I understand that the Department cannot comment on the findings.

*Question.* In a press briefing on March 6, 2020 (<https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign-policy/news/-/asset-publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4078184>), Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed Krasilova was employed by a “Russian Government-funded agency,” when she was arrested by Spanish authorities pursuant to a U.S. extradition request. Which Russian agency did she work for? How soon after her employment at U.S. Embassy Moscow was terminated did Krasilova begin working for a Russian Government-funded agency?

*Answer.* I understand that the Department cannot comment on the findings as there is an ongoing criminal investigation. The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia may be able to provide additional information.

#### *P-2 PROGRAMS*

*Question.* Bills have been introduced in the current Congress that would establish new P-2 groups for certain residents of Hong Kong and certain residents of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. If you are familiar with these proposals, can you offer any feedback on them? Do you have any general suggestions for congressional offices in drafting bills to establish new P-2 groups?

Answer. I am aware of the bills that would establish new P-2 groups for certain residents both of Hong Kong and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. If confirmed, I can assure you that I am committed to working within the Department, with Congress, international partners, and advocacy groups to ensure that all vulnerable individuals, including residents of Hong Kong and Uyghurs, have equal access to protection, including refugee resettlement in the United States and other countries.

*Lautenberg Amendment*

*Question.* What is the status of the Lautenberg program? Are there still Lautenberg applicants in Austria? How many Lautenberg applicants are in pipeline?

Answer. I understand refugees suffering religious persecution continue to be resettled under the Lautenberg program, and that the Department expects approximately 1,000 refugees from the Eurasia region to be resettled in the U.S. in FY 2021.

The Lautenberg Iranian program was suspended by the Government of Austria in early 2017, leaving over 800 Iranian applicants in Vienna. It is my understanding that most of those 800 Lautenberg Iranian applicants have since been resettled to the United States, however, approximately 78 Iranian applicants who were denied resettlement in the United States remained in Austria and are believed to have received asylum. I understand PRM and Embassy Vienna are negotiating with the Government of Austria on a potential restart of the Iranian Lautenberg program.

I understand that following a longstanding policy that protects refugee data, locations, and security check statuses, PRM does not disclose USRAP pipeline numbers.

*UNFPA*

*Question.* Does UNFPA engage with entities in the People's Republic of China which fund forced sterilization or abortion?

Answer. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) does not condone or support China's coercive population policies. My understanding is that UNFPA's activities in China to advance voluntary family planning that respects human rights, have been credited with positively influencing the partial liberalization of China's one-child policy. UNFPA lists the Republic of China's National Health Commission (NHC) as one of many partners in the current country program document, consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. UNFPA does not provide funding to the NHC, however, and the NHC does not implement any UNFPA activities.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to upholding all provisions of law prohibiting the use of U.S. foreign assistance resources to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, to support programs of coercive abortion or forced sterilization, or to lobby for or against the legalization of abortion, including the Kemp-Kasten amendment as it relates to UNFPA?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all provisions of law related to U.S. foreign assistance including those related to prohibiting the performance or promotion of abortion as a method of family planning, coercive abortion, or forced sterilization.

*Afghanistan*

*Question.* Despite the large need of resettlement, will you pledge that if confirmed, the U.S. will continue to use vigorous vetting procedures for all refugee admissions, including those from Afghanistan? My staff asked the Department about vetting protocols, including potential timelines, two weeks ago. If confirmed, would you engage right away on ensuring this information is shared?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States. If confirmed, I commit to working with you and all Members of Congress to achieve timely responses to your inquiries and requests on matters involving PRM, including what role the State Department has in vetting processes. I also commit to working closely with DHS and other vetting agencies to use vigorous vetting procedures for all refugee admissions to uphold the safety and security of the American people.

*Question.* How will you work with neighboring countries to assist with the large outflows of refugees from Afghanistan?

Answer. The United States is working with its partners to review and strengthen humanitarian preparedness and priority interventions in the region in the event of new refugee outflows from Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will encourage continued coordination between host governments and humanitarian organizations to monitor

and respond to the protection and assistance needs of displaced Afghans in the region. I will also urge states to uphold their respective obligations to not return Afghan refugees or asylum seekers to persecution or torture, and to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

*Question.* In August 2021, DHS announced a new P-2 designation for certain Afghan nationals. The announcement indicated that PRM had created an “Afghan Referrals Workgroup comprised of federal agencies to refer individuals directly” for U.S. refugee resettlement consideration. Please explain the eligibility requirements for this P-2 program, and how the referral system works. How many Afghan nationals does PRM expect to admit as refugees under this program, and when are these admissions expected to occur?

*Answer.* On August 2, 2021, the Department of State announced a new Priority 2 (P-2) designation granting U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) access for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members. (See <https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/>.) The Department of State has designated certain categories of Afghan nationals as having access to the USRAP by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement. This priority group includes Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or nongovernmental organization (NGO). It expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation but are not eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa because they did not have qualifying employment or because they have not met the time-in-service requirement to become eligible for an SIV.

In addition to the P-2 designation noted above, Afghans may also gain access to the USRAP through Priority 1 referrals by a specific entity (U.S. embassy, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or a designated NGO), or Priority 3, reunification of family members of refugees already resettled in the United States.

The Department of State has issued instructions regarding how U.S.-based media and NGOs can submit referrals for P-2 designation for Afghan nationals. (See <https://www.wrapsnet.org/siv-iraqi-syrian-afghan-p2/>.) Organizations can use these instructions to refer to the USRAP any Afghan national staff (plus their spouse and children) who might be in danger now or in the foreseeable future.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Priority 2 designation expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many thousands of Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation. As President Biden has made clear, assisting these Afghan allies is a top priority for the administration.

I understand that PRM is still receiving P2 referrals from U.S. employers, service members, and qualifying media and non-governmental organizations. The U.S. Government cannot currently process refugee referrals inside Afghanistan, so Afghan nationals who are referred for resettlement will be processed upon leaving the country. I am not aware of a timeline for that process nor a specific number of Afghan P-2 referrals that PRM expects to process in the next year. The administration recognizes the vital role this new designation and the program in general will play in the lives of those that risked their safety to assist the United States. As President Biden has made clear, helping these Afghans is an ongoing commitment of the United States.

*Question.* How many U.S. citizens are currently in Afghanistan? Please address the total number of U.S. citizens in Afghanistan, independent of how many may have indicated, at some point, an interest in staying in Afghanistan.

*Answer.* U.S. citizens are not required to register with the Department of State or an embassy when they arrive in or depart from a country. Based on the requests received, the Department believes that most American citizens who wished to leave have departed. The number of remaining U.S. citizens in Afghanistan who have expressed a desire to leave remains fluid, and the Department remains committed to assisting them.

*Question.* How many U.S. legal permanent residents are currently in Afghanistan? Please address the total number of U.S. legal permanent residents in Afghanistan, independent of how many may have indicated, at some point, an interest in staying in Afghanistan.

*Answer.* Like U.S. citizens, Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) are not required to register with the Department of State or an embassy when they arrive in or depart from a country. The U.S. Government was able to evacuate or facilitate the relocation or evacuation of more than 124,000 individuals, including U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and foreign and Afghan allies, from August 14 to August 31.

*Question.* How many Special Immigrant Visa applicants are currently in Afghanistan?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken explained during his September 13 testimony, the State Department is working on getting numbers right now. The State Department still continues to receive communications from Special Immigrant Visa applicants in Afghanistan and the commitment to those applicants is ongoing.

*Question.* How many Special Immigrant Visa applicants' dependents are currently in Afghanistan?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken explained during his September 13 testimony, the State Department is working on numbers right now. The State Department still continues to receive communications from Special Immigrant Visa applicants and their dependents in Afghanistan and the commitment to them is ongoing.

*Question.* How many Afghans who were identified as at-risk but did not fit into the U.S. citizen, LPR, or SIV categories are currently in Afghanistan?

Answer. It is my understanding that at this time the number of Afghan citizens "at risk" as a result of their affiliation with the United States, or by virtue of their profiles, that have been referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) under either a Priority 1 (P-1) or Priority 2 (P-2) referral, exceeds 20,000. I understand PRM intends to fund U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) domestic and overseas implementing partners at an initial operating level to support 65,000 arrivals at the beginning of FY 2022. PRM will be prepared to increase funding as needed if arrivals surpass this initial operating level, though at this time there is not a precise estimate of the number of anticipated arrivals. While many P-2 submissions to the USRAP program do not meet the program's criteria relating to employment or U.S. affiliation, the volume of submissions continues to rise. Afghan nationals who feel they are at risk cannot self-refer to the USRAP. A P-1 or P-2 referral of an at-risk individual to USRAP for potential resettlement does not convey immigration status and does not confer evacuation assistance. I understand the United States will continue to support the Afghan people through humanitarian aid, diplomacy, and international cooperation.

*Question.* If the Taliban requires visas for persons to exit Afghanistan, and the U.S. no longer has a diplomatic presence inside Afghanistan, how will the U.S. get visas to those trying to exit the country?

Answer. The Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for the processing and issuance of U.S. visas abroad. My understanding is that the State Department is developing visa processing alternatives so that it can continue to deliver these important consular services for the people of Afghanistan, and respectfully refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more specific information.

*Question.* Has the U.S. requested another country to facilitate the distribution of U.S. visas?

Answer. While the subject-matter of your question is not under the purview of PRM, my understanding is that the State Department is developing alternatives so that it can continue to process visas and provide other important consular services for the people of Afghanistan. I refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more specific information.

*Question.* How will the State Department facilitate the evacuation of eligible Afghans of any category whose passports or travel documents were destroyed by the U.S. during the withdrawal?

Answer. It is my understanding that, as is standard operating procedure in case of an emergency evacuation from post, Embassy Kabul personnel were forced to destroy sensitive paper record holdings as part of the evacuation, including paper visa records. This was done to minimize the U.S. footprint and reduce the sensitive material remaining for security reasons, and in this case also to protect the identity of our Afghan allies. I understand the Department has been able to recover many of these records and share them with the Department of Homeland Security; for more specifics, I respectfully refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs. I further understand the State Department is developing alternatives to deliver consular services to facilitate the safe and orderly travel of U.S. citizens, Legal Permanent Residents, and Afghans to whom the United States has special commitments, including those whose documents may have been destroyed in the evacuation of the Embassy.

*Question.* Do you have records of whose passports or travel documents were destroyed?

Answer. While the subject-matter of your question does not fall within the purview of PRM, it is my understanding this is standard operating procedure during an emergency evacuation to minimize the U.S. footprint and reduce the amount of sensitive material remaining. The drawdown and closure of the Consular Section of Embassy Kabul was conducted in accordance with this standard operating procedure. I understand the State Department will review its records for any case where travel documents may have been destroyed per emergency protocol and explore all options to assist affected persons with onward travel. I would refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more specific information.

*Question.* How many U.S. citizens did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to the United States?

Answer. I understand that approximately 6,000 U.S. citizens were evacuated from August 14—31. From August 31 through September 15, approximately 60 more U.S. citizens and 25 Legal Permanent Residents departed Afghanistan with U.S. assistance utilizing charter flights and overland crossings. The U.S. Government continues to make good on its pledge to U.S. citizens, Legal Permanent Residents, and Afghans to whom we have a special commitment and has committed to helping them depart Afghanistan, if and when they choose to do so. These figures continue to change as other U.S. citizens are able to depart from Afghanistan through a variety of means. I refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more information on U.S. citizens abroad, and the Department of Homeland Security, who will have more detailed information about the arrival of U.S. citizens to the United States.

*Question.* How many U.S. Legal Permanent Residents did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to the United States?

Answer. The State Department has assisted Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) wishing to depart Afghanistan throughout this effort. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, LPR, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome, resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of Operation Allies Welcome.

*Question.* How many SIV principal applicants did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to the United States?

Answer. The United States Government is working on getting numbers right now. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* How many SIV applicants dependents did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to the United States?

Answer. The United States Government is working on getting numbers right now. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* How many Afghans did the USG evacuate to the United States who did not fit into the U.S. citizen, LPR or SIV categories?

Answer. The United States Government is working on getting numbers right now. The decision on admission category for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

#### *Special Benefit Humanitarian Parole*

*Question.* How many Afghans have received special benefit humanitarian parole?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for granting parole and tracking those numbers, and I respectfully defer to them to respond to this query.

*Question.* What benefits are Afghans who have been paroled into the country receiving?

Answer. I understand that Afghans granted parole as a result of the U.S. airlift will have access to the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) Program, funded by PRM. The purpose of this program is to provide these Afghans with initial relocation services for 30 to 90 days after arrival as they begin to rebuild their lives in the United States. These services are provided through local refugee resettlement agencies and community partners, which receive a one-time per capita amount of \$2,275 of which \$1,225 is used to fund assistance needs such as housing and basic necessities, including food, clothing, and furnishings. The remainder of this funding supports services including cultural orientation, enrollment in English language instruction, school enrollment, immigration assistance, and referral to other social, medical, and employment services. At this time, I understand these Afghan parolees are not eligible for the same benefits as refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders such as refugee-specific cash and medical assistance, or mainstream benefits including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid, except parolees are eligible for SNAP benefits if there is a child under 18 in the family.

*Question.* What are the conditions of their parole?

Answer. I understand that Customs and Border Protection has granted two-year parole status for many Afghan individuals at risk who arrived under the airlift. Consistent with 8 U.S.C. § 1305 and as a condition of their parole, it is my understanding that parolees must provide their address to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [www.uscis.gov/addresschange](http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange) and must notify USCIS of every change of address no later than 10 days after each move; and must comply with all public health directives, requests for additional information from the Department of Homeland Security and federal law enforcement; and follow local, state and federal laws and ordinances.

For full information on the parole conditions, I respectfully refer you to the Customs and Border Protection service.

*Question.* What vetting is occurring at U.S. reception centers, such as the Dulles Expo?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants prior to their application for admission to the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a component of DHS, is responsible for screening applicants upon entry and granting or denying admission to every individual who arrives to the United States and I respectfully refer you to them for information on this issue.

*Question.* Who is responsible for vetting upon arrival?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States. I refer you to my answer to your question No. 47. PRM was not involved in screening individuals evacuated as part of the U.S. military airlift August 14-31.

*Question.* Are you collecting biometric data for all Afghans admitted or paroled into the United States?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States and I respectfully refer you to them, though I understand that the screening and vetting process involves biometric and biographic screenings.

*Question.* Do you have copies of all the flight manifests?

Answer. I understand that U.S. Transportation Command maintains a database of flight manifests of both military and Department of State-chartered flights from overseas sites into the continental United States. I also understand that a number of flights submitted manifests directly to Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) via the Advance Passenger Information System. The State Department is coordinating with CBP to obtain those manifests missing from the consolidated database, though that work does not fall under the purview of PRM.

*Question.* Do you provide identity documents for Afghans who do not have any?

Answer. My understanding is that the State Department is not providing identity documents to Afghan nationals. I respectfully refer you to the Department of Home-

land Security, which is coordinating Operation Allies Welcome, for further questions.

*Question.* If so, by what means do you verify identity?

Answer. I understand the State Department is not providing identity documents to Afghan nationals.

*Question.* What happens to Afghans who fail vetting, for any reason?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States. I would refer you to DHS for more information.

#### *Afghans Evacuated to U.S. Bases*

*Question.* How many U.S. citizens did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to U.S. bases overseas?

Answer. From August 14 to August 31, I understand that approximately 6,000 U.S. citizens were safely evacuated along with eligible family members on USG flights. Since the suspension of embassy operations on August 31 through September 15, an additional approximately 60 U.S. citizens and 25 Legal Permanent Residents have departed Afghanistan with U.S. assistance utilizing charter flights and overland crossings. Most of these citizens and residents were evacuated to or through U.S. military bases overseas. I respectfully refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs to answer questions about its assistance to U.S. citizens overseas, including on U.S. bases.

*Question.* How many U.S. Legal Permanent Residents did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to U.S. bases overseas?

Answer. I understand that the State Department has assisted Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) wishing to depart Afghanistan throughout this effort. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, LPR, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals ultimately arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* How many SIV principal applicants did the USG evacuate from Afghanistan to U.S. bases overseas?

Answer. The United States Government is working on getting numbers right now. Thousands of evacuees were in different stages of the SIV process—many had only just inquired about their eligibility at the beginning of operations. The U.S. Government focused on evacuating American citizens, Legal Permanent Residents, and Afghan allies out as fast as possible while the airport was functioning. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* How many SIV applicants' dependents did the USG evacuate Afghanistan to U.S. bases overseas?

Answer. The United States Government is working on getting numbers right now. Persons relocated were in different stages of the SIV process—many had only just inquired about their eligibility at the beginning of the operation. The decision on admission category for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, which will be in the best position to provide the most accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* How many Afghans did the USG evacuate to U.S. bases who did not fit into the U.S. citizen, LPR or SIV categories?

Answer. The decision on admission category—U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, Special Immigrant Visa, or other category—for any individuals arriving to the United States, including Afghans who were evacuated from overseas as a part of OAW, resides with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection. The Department of Homeland Security, as the lead agency for Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), ultimately will be in the best position to provide the most

accurate breakdown of the various categories of Afghans evacuated as a part of OAW.

*Question.* What vetting is occurring on the bases?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States, and I respectfully refer you to them for a response.

*Question.* Who is responsible for vetting upon arrival?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a component of DHS, is responsible for screening upon entry and granting or denying admission to every individual who arrives to the United States.

*Question.* Are you collecting biometric data for all Afghans admitted or paroled into the United States?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States. I understand that the screening and vetting process involves biometric and biographic screenings. The U.S. Government has worked urgently and carefully to facilitate screening and vetting operations without compromising national security.

*Question.* Do you have copies of all the flight manifests?

Answer. I understand that U.S. Transportation Command maintains a database of flight manifests of both military and Department of State-chartered flights from overseas sites into the continental United States. I also understand that a number of flights submitted manifests directly to Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) via the Advance Passenger Information System. The State Department is coordinating with CBP to obtain from CBP about those manifests.

*Question.* Do you provide identity documents for Afghans who do not have any?

Answer. My understanding is that the State Department is not providing identity documents to Afghan nationals. I respectfully refer you to the Department of Homeland Security, which is coordinating Operation Allies Welcome, for further questions.

*Question.* If so, by what means do you verify identity?

Answer. I understand the State Department is not providing identity documents to Afghan nationals.

*Question.* What happens to Afghans who fail vetting, for any reason?

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States. I would refer you to DHS for more information.

*Question.* How many U.S. citizens left Afghanistan but have not made it the U.S. are residing in third countries?

Answer. I understand that U.S. citizens are not required to register their presence in a country with the Department of State, and the State Department does not track their whereabouts. The State Department cannot ascertain how many U.S. citizens who left Afghanistan are now residing in third countries. I respectfully refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for answers about their assistance to U.S. citizens still in Afghanistan and abroad after leaving Afghanistan.

*Question.* How many U.S. legal permanent residents left Afghanistan but have not made it the U.S. are residing in third countries?

Answer. The State Department does not have an exact number of Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) and their immediate family members who have departed Afghanistan. LPRs are not required to register their presence in a country with the Department of State, nor does the State Department track their whereabouts. The State Department cannot ascertain how many are now residing in third countries.

*Question.* How many SIV applicants left Afghanistan but have not made it to the U.S. are residing in third countries?

Answer. The State Department is working to ascertain those numbers now. I refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more information.

*Question.* How many SIV applicants left Afghanistan but have not made it the U.S. are residing in third countries?



Answer. The State Department is working to ascertain those numbers now. I refer you to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more information. Thousands of Afghans are in different stages of the SIV process—many had only just inquired about their eligibility at the beginning of August.

*Question.* How many applications have you received from P-1 or P-2 refugee status from Afghans?

Answer. I understand over 20,000 cases relating to approximately 55,000 individuals have been referred to the Afghan P-1 and P-2 refugee resettlement program to date.

*Question.* What, if any, agreements have you made with foreign governments to host Afghan populations?

Answer. My understanding is that the United States strongly encourages foreign governments to allow entry for Afghans and to coordinate with humanitarian international organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghans in need. The United States also urges states to uphold their respective obligations to not return Afghan refugees or asylum seekers to persecution or torture, and to respect the principle of non-refoulement. The State Department will also continue its existing support of Afghan refugee populations in neighboring countries. This includes supporting third-country resettlement efforts led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and funding appeals from UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration to provide lifesaving protection, emergency food aid, shelter, and livelihood support to Afghan refugees outside Afghanistan.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* How has COVID-19 impacted the work of PRM's implementing partners? What do you anticipate will be the priorities for addressing the immediate needs and secondary impacts of the virus on vulnerable and displaced populations worldwide?

Answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted PRM's implementing partners' programming and ability to provide assistance in a timely manner due to increased operational costs, ongoing travel and access constraints, and other movement restrictions. It has also directly affected the health and welfare of marginalized populations around the world and exacerbated pre-existing gaps in health, protection, assistance, education, and livelihoods. I understand PRM's partners emphasize meeting international standards for assistance and protection for the most vulnerable while at the same time advocating for the inclusion of marginalized, displaced, and hard-to-reach populations in national plans for vaccine delivery, relief, and recovery.

*Question.* How does the U.S. Government coordinate its responses to migration crises, such as those in Venezuela or Central America? When and where does PRM take the lead and what, if any, are the differences in its approach compared to that of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)?

Answer. Interagency coordination between the State Department, USAID, and other agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security is critical in responding to migration crises. My understanding is that PRM and USAID play separate but complementary roles. PRM takes the lead in providing urgent humanitarian aid and protection to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants, working through international organizations and non-governmental organizations. PRM also supports efforts to help governments build capacity to protect vulnerable populations and humanely manage migration. USAID takes the lead in response to natural and man-made disasters, disaster preparedness, and support for internally displaced populations; USAID also provides food aid to refugees. USAID also funds development programs in select contexts, such as in Central America, to address root causes of irregular migration and reintegration of returned migrants. In situations where PRM and USAID responsibilities converge, I understand they have robust coordination mechanisms in the field and in Washington to ensure the overall efficiency and effectiveness of U.S. assistance. If confirmed, I will continue this close collaboration between PRM and USAID.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the scope of risks to women and girls, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are ways that PRM programs specifically address these protection needs?

Answer. In times of crisis, women and girls are at enormous risk of gender-based violence (GBV)—from armed groups, strangers, neighbors, and family members. These risks in humanitarian settings were exacerbated by COVID-19 and corresponding mitigation measures, resulting in a “shadow” pandemic of GBV and worldwide spikes in GBV risks and reports. In response, the U.S. humanitarian response to COVID-19 prioritized protection, including programs to help prevent GBV and provide psychosocial services to GBV victims, along with healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance in the COVID-19 humanitarian response.

*Question.* President Biden indicated that he plans to set the FY 2022 refugee ceiling at 125,000 in his May 2021 statement on refugee admissions. Do you consider the admission of 125,000 refugees in FY 2022 to be achievable? What, if any, changes to the refugee program have been implemented or are under consideration to facilitate increased refugee admissions in FY 2022?

Answer. I expect the U.S. Government will make every effort to reach the target established by the President following consultations with Congress. In the immediate term, I understand PRM intends to fund U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) domestic and overseas implementing partners at an initial operating level to support 65,000 arrivals at the beginning of FY 2022 and will be prepared to increase funding as needed if arrivals surpass the initial operating level.

I understand the President’s Executive Order 14013 on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration directs review of a series of bold reforms and initiatives for the USRAP, to support increased refugee admissions in FY 2022 and beyond. My understanding is that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) aims to increase staffing significantly, upscale in-person “circuit rides” by USCIS employees to interview refugee candidates in person, increase refugee video interviews, identify current bottlenecks, and implement process improvements to its adjudicatory processes. I expect that the USRAP will leverage technological solutions to strengthen data-driven decision-making and streamline refugee processing with the deployment of START and Global, the Department of State’s and USCIS’s respective new refugee applicant case management systems, while enhancing the security of all of refugee processing systems.

*Question.* In August 2021, DHS announced a new P-2 designation for certain Afghan nationals. The announcement indicated that PRM had created an “Afghan Referrals Workgroup comprised of federal agencies to refer individuals directly” for U.S. refugee resettlement consideration. I am very concerned about the plight of Afghan nationals who have been designated as P-2 refugees. How many Afghan nationals does PRM expect to admit as refugees under this program, and what is the status of current refugees? When are these admissions expected to occur?

Answer. As you note, on August 2, 2021, the Department of State announced a new Priority 2 (P-2) designation granting U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) access for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members. (See <https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/>.) The Department of State has designated certain categories of Afghan nationals as having access to the USRAP by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement. This priority group includes Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or nongovernmental organization (NGO). It expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation but are not eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa because they did not have qualifying employment or because they have not met the time-in-service requirement to become eligible for an SIV. In addition to the P-2 designation noted above, Afghans may also gain access to the USRAP through Priority 1 referrals by a specific entity (U.S. embassy, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or a designated NGO), or Priority 3, reunification of family members of refugees already resettled in the United States.

The Department of State has issued instructions regarding how U.S.-based media and NGOs can submit referrals for P-2 designation for Afghan nationals. (See <https://www.wrapsnet.org/siv-iraqi-syrian-afghan-p2/>.) Organizations can use these instructions to refer to the USRAP any Afghan national staff (plus their spouse and minor children) who might be in danger now or in the foreseeable future.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Priority 2 designation expands the opportunity to permanently resettle in the United States to many thousands of Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their U.S. affiliation. As President Biden has made clear, assisting these Afghan allies is a top priority for the administration.

I understand that PRM is still receiving P2 referrals from U.S. employers, service members, and qualifying media and non-governmental organizations. The U.S. government cannot currently process refugee referrals inside Afghanistan, so Afghan nationals who are referred for resettlement will be processed upon leaving the country. I am not aware of a timeline for that process nor a specific number of Afghan P-2 referrals that PRM expects to process in the next year. The Administration recognizes the role this new designation and the refugee resettlement program in general will play in the lives of those that risked their safety to assist the United States. As President Biden has made clear, helping these Afghans is an ongoing commitment of the United States.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* Do you agree that UNRWA is a deeply problematic organization?

Answer. This administration supports the work of UNRWA, which provides critical services to vulnerable Palestinian refugees. UNRWA is a lifeline for thousands of Palestinian refugees in the region, as seen in May during the violence in Gaza. That said, I agree that UNRWA must undertake reforms to improve its efficiency, effectiveness and neutrality, and that UNRWA Commissioner General Lazzarini is leading efforts to this end. It is my understanding that the framework under which the United States resumed funding for UNRWA includes provisions for regular reporting, consultations, and monitoring of U.S.-funded aid. If confirmed, I will focus on management and other reform issues at UNRWA to ensure it is upholding its commitments to neutrality and is as effective and efficient as possible.

*Question.* As the largest individual donor to UNRWA, do you believe the U.S. should leverage our assistance to seek transparency and reforms from the agency?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will seek reforms related to neutrality, transparency, and management at UNRWA.

*Question.* The director of UNRWA recently acknowledged that the group's educational materials included inappropriate material. This is an ongoing problem that UNRWA pledges to fix, but never seems to adequately address. If confirmed, will you make it a priority to demand the removal of the incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in UNRWA materials?

Answer. I condemn incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in any form. I understand that UNRWA staff found the unacceptable content in supplemental educational material prepared in response to the pandemic, and UNRWA acted promptly to remove it. UNRWA's Commissioner General has committed to notifying the Agency's Advisory Commission immediately of any violations of its zero-tolerance policy and to collaborating with Commission members on educational issues. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of humanitarian principles, including neutrality, in discussions with UNRWA.

*Question.* I remain deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crises in Latin America, which is in part caused by the Maduro regime refusing to respond to the needs and priorities of the Venezuelan people. There are millions of Venezuelan refugees and migrants seeking asylum in the United States and other countries in the region, who are undoubtedly placing significant strain on those countries' refugee and governance systems. If confirmed, what is your long-term strategy to coordinate the bureau's efforts with these countries' efforts to accept Venezuelan refugees and migrants?

Answer. I share your concerns. The situation in Venezuela is a tragedy. Since FY 2017, the United States has provided over \$1.4 billion in humanitarian assistance, including over \$597 million in PRM programming, to international organizations and non-governmental partners to protect and assist vulnerable Venezuelans in seventeen host countries in the region. My understanding is that PRM assistance includes funding for temporary shelter and access to food, water, and sanitation facilities; legal support for asylum-seekers; capacity-building for regional asylum authorities; and livelihoods opportunities. If confirmed, I would continue to support the Department's engagement in international fora, including the Quito Process to enhance coordination among host countries and advocate for a regional solution to the Venezuela crisis.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* The Biden administration's unprecedented evacuation of more than 120,000 people from Afghanistan brought many Americans home but it also delivered many Afghans out of harm's way. Those Afghans are now spread out around the world, including in the 13 partner countries that are serving as way points for refugees before they come to the United States. How we take care of these individuals over the coming days, months and years will determine our true commitment to American values. What should the U.S. be doing right now to best serve these Afghans and the communities that are welcoming them?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that there is ongoing and robust interagency engagement with the partner countries who generously agreed to host Afghans. Secretary Blinken recently traveled to Qatar and Germany to highlight U.S. appreciation for all that those countries and others have done to support the airlift and relocation efforts. Once they arrive in the United States, the recent evacuees are receiving orientation services, health care, and resettlement support from a broad range of U.S. agencies and humanitarian partners, as Secretary Blinken described in his September 14 appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I also understand that the State Department has continued to support the needs of vulnerable Afghans remaining in Afghanistan or who are refugees in other countries through urgent humanitarian funding direct to international and non-governmental organizations and has been clear in its commitment to continuing to work with the international community to make sure these needs are addressed. If confirmed, I would continue this important engagement and support to respond to the needs of at-risk Afghans and the countries that host them.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work with our allies to ensure the protection of Afghan refugees around the world?

*Answer.* I understand that the United States is working with its partners to strengthen humanitarian preparedness and priority interventions in the event of new refugee outflows from Afghanistan and will continue urging states to uphold their respective obligations to not return Afghan refugees to persecution or torture and to respect the principle of non-refoulement. If confirmed, I will encourage continued coordination between host governments and humanitarian organizations to respond to the protection and assistance needs of Afghan refugees, including supporting efforts led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and funding humanitarian partners to provide lifesaving protection, emergency food aid, shelter, and livelihood support to Afghan refugees outside Afghanistan.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work with our NGO partners who are crucial to the refugee effort in the United States?

*Answer.* My understanding is that PRM is working with nine resettlement partners and affiliates across the country to welcome Afghans into American communities. Placement of individuals and families prioritizes reunification with U.S.-based family and friends and also considers the needs and characteristics of each individual and family. With U.S. government support, the agencies will provide initial relocation support to Afghans to assist with critical needs such as housing, enrolling children in school, and basic necessities such as food, clothing, and furnishings. Additional support from the private sector will be critical to meeting the needs of this population, and I was happy to note the recent announcement of welcome.us and related initiatives to facilitate this important private sector support for our non-governmental organization partners. If confirmed, I would continue to liaise closely with PRM's resettlement partners and private sector supporters on this important work.

*Question.* My office has sent the names of more than 3,000 vulnerable Afghans to the State Department over the last several weeks. I am very concerned about those who remain behind, especially women and girls whose lives are at risk because of their existence. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that as many Afghans as possible who qualify for a Priority 2 designation are able to be processed and travel to the United States as expeditiously as possible?

*Answer.* I understand that, to date, over 20,000 cases consisting of around 55,000 individuals have been referred to the Afghan P-2 refugee resettlement program. PRM and its partners are working as quickly as possible to process these cases and have surged staffing as part of this unprecedented effort. The United States Government does not have the ability to process these cases inside Afghanistan at this time, so I understand case processing for these referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program cannot begin until the individual relocates to a country where proc-

essing is feasible. Once in such a country, they will need to inform PRM of their current location and provide contact information. PRM will create a case and assign it to the appropriate U.S.-funded Resettlement Support Center for processing.

*Question.* In your opinion, are there any actions Congress needs to take to support the maximum use of the Priority 2 designation, including ensuring all arrivals receive resettlement benefits? If confirmed and once you are in place, will you commit to working with Congress to ensure the efficiency of the refugee system?

*Answer.* I am aware of the bill currently in Congress that would provide parolees with access to refugee benefits on arrival in American communities, and understand the administration strongly supports that bill. My understanding is that the Department is surging resources to review the large number of Priority 1 and Priority 2 (P-2) refugee referrals received in recent weeks. If confirmed, I am committed to working within the Department, with Congress, with international partners, with advocacy groups, and with private sector supporters to ensure that the P-2 designation is used appropriately and fully where applicable, and that all Afghans so designated have access to the resources needed to start anew in America. More broadly, I also am firmly committed to working with Congress to rebuild the entire U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and ensure its efficiency for all resettled refugees.

*Question.* As you know, several countries have offered to host many of the Afghans in transit as they await vetting and processing before entering the United States. For some of those countries, this could pose a tremendous strain on their own resources. What resources do you think will be needed to help house those Afghans destined for the United States, and are there any additional resources we could direct to these countries?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that interagency teams overseas are closely coordinating the operational and logistical support required to process Afghans destined for the United States and ensure such processing can continue. In the interim, as host governments identify requirements, these interagency teams are working to respond, including via international organizations and other partners. If confirmed, I would continue our engagement with host governments and humanitarian partners managing these operations and would lead PRM's effort to review funding appeals from those partners who request additional resources to host Afghans.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* If confirmed, would you commit to PRM reviewing the vetting process for incoming refugees from Afghanistan to ensure that there are no gaps in the process as a result of the hasty withdrawal process?

*Answer.* The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States.

If confirmed, it is my intent to review fully and completely the Department of Homeland Security's screening and vetting conducted for Afghans (and other citizens of other nations) applying to come to the United States under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. I commit to working closely with all of PRM's partner agencies to conduct such vetting.

*Question.* We understand the Embassy destroyed many passports and visas in Kabul. How does PRM vet refugee candidates in the cases where needed national IDs have been destroyed or not available?

*Answer.* The Department of Homeland Security has the lead on the screening and vetting requirements for all applicants for admission to the United States.

With regard to applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), which is separate from the U.S. entry of Afghans under Operation Allies Welcome, it is my understanding that PRM and its interagency partners have steadily strengthened security vetting since 9/11. USRAP applicants are subject to more vetting than any other type of traveler to the United States. I am also aware that the USRAP has the capacity to process refugee applicants who do not possess a national ID or passport.

*Question.* Of the refugees to be admitted this fiscal year, how many does PRM expect to be from Afghanistan? How does the Afghan refugee program impact refugee applications from other regions, including along the southern border?

*Answer.* As of September 15, 2021, 729 Afghan nationals have arrived under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) in FY 2021. These Afghans were not

relocated as part of the August 14-31 U.S. military airlift and underwent stringent USRAP processing overseas before admission. Neither the Afghans arriving via this airlift who were granted parole into the United States by the Department of Homeland Security, nor the Afghans admitted as refugees via the USRAP, have any impact on refugee applications from other regions.

*Question.* What steps are the Biden administration taking to support refugee admissions from threatened populations in China?

*Answer.* The United States is committed to placing human rights at the center of our foreign policy. Refugee resettlement is one of several ways the U.S. supports refugees globally and demonstrates its humanitarian leadership. I understand that eligible Hong Kong residents and Turkic Muslim Chinese citizens who fear persecution from the Government of the People's Republic of China may access the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in any appropriate category—including via referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As with most refugees from other nations, they must be outside of their country of nationality in order to qualify for refugee status. If approved, they may be resettled in the United States within the regional allocations for resettlement for the fiscal year in which they are admitted.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you prioritize supporting threatened populations in China?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is committed to putting democratic values at the center of U.S. foreign policy and to standing up for democracy, human rights, and human dignity. I am horrified by the crimes against humanity and genocide in Xinjiang, and the human rights abuses occurring across China. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with colleagues across the interagency and with allies, partners, and humanitarian organizations to advocate for Uyghurs, Hong Kong residents, and Tibetans, among others. I will also work to assist those fleeing persecution and other abuses in the People's Republic of China to find safe haven.

*Question.* Please discuss PRM's specific priorities to address humanitarian needs along the southern border.

*Answer.* I understand that in line with President Biden's Collaborative Migration Management Strategy, PRM priorities in Mexico include improving access to protection against human trafficking, exploitation, and other dangers to vulnerable migrants, such as those fleeing violence or torture. For example, I understand PRM supports gender-based violence prevention and response as well as child protection programs for migrants across Mexico. PRM also prioritizes urgent humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants. Key PRM efforts include supporting shelter capacity and COVID-19 mitigation measures, access to legal assistance, healthcare, and psycho-social support.

*Question.* How will PRM coordinate with other agencies in dealing with the southern border crisis?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will coordinate within the Department of State and with the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Agency for International, and other interagency partners in implementing the Administration's Collaborative Migration Management Strategy (CMMS) and parallel Root Causes Strategy (RCS) to address conditions in Central America that compel people to flee their homes and seek safety and opportunity abroad. These strategies increase humanitarian assistance and protection programs within the region, expand legal immigration pathways including through the U.S. Refugee Admission Program, and enhance border protection to reduce irregular migration to the southern border. Irregular migration is a deeply rooted challenge requiring short-, medium- and long-term solutions, such as those included in the CMMS and RCS.

*Question.* Do you expect a change in PRM's role in the interagency process particularly in light of USAID's relatively new Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance?

*Answer.* I do not expect a change in PRM's role in the interagency process. PRM and USAID/BHA each have important, distinct roles to play in responding to humanitarian crises, and it is imperative they respond in a coordinated manner as one U.S. Government with a common mission. If confirmed, I intend to maintain close coordination between PRM and USAID/BHA to ensure their efforts complement each other and build on their respective strengths.

*Question.* Looking ahead, what do you anticipate will be the U.S. contribution level to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)? What reforms do you believe are necessary with UNRWA?

Answer. President Biden pledged to restore U.S. economic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, and the United States resumed for UNRWA this fiscal year. As with other humanitarian partners around the world, continued financial support will depend on funding availability, global needs, performance, and adherence to commitments to the United States. If confirmed, I would focus on management and other reform issues at UNRWA, including neutrality and financial sustainability.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you ensure all legal conditions are met prior to the disbursement of assistance to UNRWA?

Answer. If confirmed, yes, I will ensure all legal conditions are met prior to the disbursement of assistance to UNRWA.

*Question.* The director of UNRWA recently acknowledged that the group's educational materials included inappropriate material. This is an ongoing problem that UNRWA pledges to fix, but never seems to adequately address. If confirmed, will you make it a priority to demand the removal of the incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in UNRWA materials?

Answer. Yes. I condemn incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in any form. I understand UNRWA staff found the unacceptable content in supplemental educational material prepared in response to the pandemic, and UNRWA acted promptly to remove it. UNRWA's Commissioner General has committed to notifying its Advisory Commission immediately of any violations of its zero-tolerance policy and to collaborating with Commission members on educational issues. If confirmed, I will prioritize adherence to humanitarian principles, including neutrality, in discussions with UNRWA.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

*Question.* Is there anything the U.S. should be doing to help Afghans who qualify for P-2 status to leave Afghanistan?

Answer. This administration has been clear about its enduring commitment to supporting our Afghan allies, including those that remain in country as well as those that seek to leave. My understanding is that at this time the U.S. government has no ability to do in-country processing or facilitate evacuation/relocation support for individuals referred to the Priority 1 or Priority 2 program who remain in Afghanistan. However, the administration is urging Afghanistan's neighbors to allow entry for Afghans and coordinating with humanitarian international organizations to provide assistance to Afghans in need. The United States is also reminding countries to respect the principle of non-refoulement. I understand the Taliban has provided assurances that Afghans with travel documents who wish to leave the country will be able to do so, and if confirmed, I would work with colleagues in the Department to ensure those assurances are upheld.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address the issue of Afghans who have left Afghanistan, apply for P-2 status while located in a third country, but are denied?

Answer. Individuals with urgent protection needs should register for international protection and assistance with the government of the country where they are located. They may also register and seek assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). If confirmed, I would work with international humanitarian partners and other governments to provide the support needed by those with protection concerns.

*Question.* Do you believe the Department has sufficiently staffed the job of processing P-2s or do additional staff need to be surged to meet demand?

Answer. My understanding is that the Department is surging resources to review the large number of Priority 1 and Priority 2 refugee referrals received in recent weeks. This includes recruiting volunteers from other bureaus to support the work of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). If confirmed, I will make filling vacancies in the Bureau, including to address needs such as processing P-2s, one of my first priorities.

*Question.* To your knowledge, how many P-2 applications have been granted, and in which third countries were successful P-2 applicants located when they applied for and were granted P-2 status?

Answer. Resettlement in the United States under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a 12-18 month process, so my understanding is that no Af-

ghans who were referred to the program and recently fled Afghanistan have had their cases approved yet. As of September 15, I understand the Department has received P-2 refugee referrals for approximately 20,000 cases involving 55,000 individuals.

*Question.* Will you commit, if confirmed, to providing this information to Congress on an ongoing basis?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to providing this information to Congress on an ongoing basis.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. JULIETA VALLS NOYES BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Question.* UNRWA committed to provide a semi-annual report to PRM on activities to inform evaluation of conformance with conditions on U.S. contributions to UNRWA. Have they provided that report? If not, when do you anticipate they will? Can you commit to transmitting that report to Congress?

Answer. My understanding is that UNRWA has not yet provided this report to PRM, but that it intends to do so in the near term. This will be an internal report provided by UNRWA to the State Department. If confirmed, I will, subject to the rules on the handling and protection of sensitive information, work with Congress to accommodate its oversight interests, which I recognize and take seriously.

*Question.* UNRWA committed to preventing the use of local textbooks that include content contrary to UN principles in education materials. The commitment is a reference to concerns—which now go back more than a decade—that UNRWA was facilitating the use of textbooks promoting genocidal anti-Semitism. This year UNRWA officials acknowledged that, indeed, educational materials facilitated by UNRWA include inappropriate material, amid reports that its textbooks included calls for “jihad” against Israeli Jews and accusations that Israeli Jews were spreading diseases to Palestinians. How long do you assess it will take UNRWA to cease the use of textbooks that promote anti-Semitism?

Answer. I condemn incitement of violence and anti-Semitism in any form. Textbooks that promote anti-Semitism or other types of hatred are unacceptable. I understand that UNRWA staff themselves found the unacceptable content you reference in supplemental educational material, and UNRWA acted promptly to remove it. I understand that U.N. agencies including UNRWA do not develop their own curricula but use the curricula of host governments. When UNRWA or others identify concepts contrary to U.N. principles in host governments’ educational materials, UNRWA provides instructions and supplementary materials for its staff to address the issue and the unacceptable materials are not taught. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of adherence with humanitarian principles, including neutrality, in discussions with UNRWA.

*Question.* What is the estimate in the report produced pursuant to Senate Report 113-81 accompanying PL 113-76?

Answer. I have been informed that this report is classified in order to protect Foreign Government Information. In keeping with Department policy, I have not been given access to classified information related to the position for which I have been nominated. If confirmed, I will seek a briefing on this report. It is my understanding that a copy of this report was transmitted to the Congressional committees with jurisdiction in 2015.

*Question.* What is the State Department’s assessment of the current number of Arab refugees who were displaced in 1948 from territories controlled by Israel?

Answer. The State Department does not have its own assessment of this number. I understand there are 5.7 million registered Palestinian refugees who are potentially eligible for United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) services, but far fewer avail themselves of UNRWA services. Descendants of eligible male “Palestine refugees” are eligible for registration with UNRWA for the purpose of accessing services. As a result, individuals of Palestinian descent born after the initial displacement have registered. This approach to including descendants is similar to the one used by U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in other protracted refugee situations, such as Afghanistan and Somalia.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER TO BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Eastern Mediterranean*

*Question.* I have been impressed with the French Government's support for democracies in the Eastern Mediterranean like Greece, Cyprus and Israel. Turkey continues to violate international norms and I have appreciated the French government's willingness to stand up to Ankara's aggression. This includes in the Caucasus where the French were critical of Turkish support for Azerbaijan in last year's war. How will you work with France to advance these shared concerns?

*Answer.* As a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, France is a key partner in promoting peace in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. French President Macron called for EU solidarity following disputes between Turkey and Greece and Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus over national gas reserves and what France sees as an increasingly "aggressive" Turkey. If confirmed, I will seek cooperation with the French on common interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and to maintain dialogue with Turkey to resolve disputes.

On Israel, France supports a two-state solution. If confirmed, I will work closely with French partners to align our perspectives on Israeli-Palestinian peace.

*Strategic Autonomy*

*Question.* President Macron has sought to advance a concept of Strategic Autonomy, which some have interpreted as distancing France from the United States and creating tensions within NATO. What are your views on Strategic Autonomy and are you concerned that it could serve to diminish support for NATO within Europe?

*Answer.* The Biden administration is committed to re-engaging European allies and revitalizing our alliances. If confirmed, I would welcome European efforts to spend more on defense, which responds to a long-standing U.S. call for more burden-sharing, and help fulfilling Allies' commitment to NATO to spend two percent of GDP on defense. However, the notion of European strategic autonomy risks undermining the primacy of NATO in ensuring Europe's defense, duplicating effort between the EU and NATO, and weakening Transatlantic relations. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Allies and collaborating with this committee to reinforce to all Allies the importance of European defense efforts being complementary with NATO.

*Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately. Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of State personnel?

*Answer.* This is a sensitive ongoing investigation and is a top priority for Secretary of State Antony Blinken. I understand a major interagency effort is investigating what is causing the incidents and how the Embassy community can be protected. If confirmed, I will do my utmost to ensure anyone who reports unexplained health incidents receives immediate and appropriate attention and care, and I will consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Embassy community.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that any employees or their family members who report a possible health incident will receive immediate and appropriate attention and care. If confirmed, I will communicate with our workforce to provide care for affected employees and their family members and work together with partners in Washington and the interagency to do what we can to protect against these incidents and, of course, to find the cause of what has been afflicting these members of our Embassy teams. I will also consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Embassy community.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Embassy community.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* In what areas do you feel we can collaborate more effectively with the French in Africa? How will you as U.S. Ambassador to France, if confirmed, support that?

Answer. France has significant ties in the Sahel and West and Central Africa and is a steadfast partner in the fight against terrorism. Our shared priorities include security, governance, economic development, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. If confirmed, I will work strategically with the French to ensure that our efforts are mutually supportive and reinforcing. I will encourage the French to use their strong political, economic, security, and cultural influence to promote the reforms that are the best path to long-term stability in these regions, and work with our interagency to support French objectives when aligned with ours.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* We are aware—as I’m sure you are—of President Macron’s calls for Europe to take greater charge of its own security by developing the “strategic autonomy” of the European Union. The United States has long supported the security of Europe, in particular our Allies in NATO.

- What are the implications of a stronger, more independent European defense strategy for the United States, and for NATO? Can Macron’s vision and NATO 2030 coexist?

Answer. NATO, of which France is a founding Ally and one of its most militarily capable, is the primary security organization for defense of the Euro-Atlantic and its members. Efforts to strengthen deterrence and defense in Europe must be complementary to and not duplicate NATO efforts, enhance NATO-EU cooperation, and strengthen Transatlantic relations. If confirmed, I will reinforce to all Allies and partners that NATO is the essential forum for consultation and action on Transatlantic security and defense issues while promoting greater cooperation with the EU.

*Question.* We have heard the current U.S. travel ban restricting entry of Europeans for more than a year now is harming relations. I know this is an area of deep frustration for the French, and I have received a letter from a French counterpart relaying their concern.

- What should be done to address these restrictions? How can we establish parameters for safe travel?

Answer. The Biden administration has prioritized protecting American citizens during this extraordinary pandemic, and the National Interest Exception policy is one way to ensure we facilitate critical travel while also being mindful of ongoing concerns about the spread of COVID-19, including the Delta variant. The administration is constantly reviewing the situation and the scientific data and adjusts policy accordingly. If I am confirmed, I will ensure we continue to implement the administration’s policy as efficiently as possible, and that we are communicating the policy clearly to the French public. If confirmed, I will also be sure to quickly share any additional information regarding shifts in the travel restriction policy.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you cooperate with the French government on addressing the global terrorist threat?

Answer. The United States and France exchange information and share best practices on countering violent extremist threats, and France leads on countering terrorism in the Sahel, where it has eliminated leaders of ISIS, Al-Qa’ida, and their

affiliates. If confirmed, I will not only ensure our cooperation continues, but will look for ways to reinforce that partnership. Of course, if confirmed, I will consider it my primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Embassy community and all Americans in France and Monaco.

*Question.* In your opinion, how might our existing cooperation with France be enhanced?

Answer. France is the United States' oldest Ally and is among our most capable and reliable military Allies. Our relationship is built on shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. There are also extensive cultural and economic ties between our nations. If confirmed, I will work with French leaders to promote close transatlantic coordination on the development of a policy agenda based on our shared values.

*Question.* Do you agree with President Macron's assessment of cooperation with China?

Answer. Along with the European Union (EU), France publicly characterizes the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a partner, competitor, and systemic rival, an understanding the United States shares. France agrees on the need for joint U.S.-European Union efforts to address the PRC's human rights abuses, coercive trade practices, and aggressive foreign policy. France seeks to cooperate with China when possible in multilateral fora, like the UN Security Council. In addition, France identifies China as a key partner for combatting climate change and addressing global public health concerns. If confirmed, I will work with French leaders to promote close transatlantic coordination on the development of a policy agenda based on our shared values.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you use your position to encourage France to increase its vigilance over Chinese attempts to influence its political and economic systems, such as the EU's Comprehensive Agreement on Investment?

Answer. France and the United States are fundamentally aligned in ways that the PRC and France are not. France recognizes that aspects of PRC governance and economic philosophy are fundamentally at odds with international norms. At the same time, France and China have significant economic ties. French Officials have repeatedly called China a "partner, competitor, and systemic rival." If confirmed, I will work closely with France to address the significant challenges the PRC poses.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. DENISE CAMPBELL BAUER BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support greater U.S.-French military collaboration to support greater capacity development for a key NATO ally?

Answer. France is among our most capable and reliable military allies and I look forward to working together to strengthen our cooperation through NATO. Our bilateral relationship is important for our larger goal of increasing cooperation and raising the level of ambition of our relationship with all of our NATO Allies. France contributes to NATO activities, such as air policing and the enhanced Forward Presence to ensure deterrence and defense on the Alliance's eastern flank. The U.S. and France exchange information and share best practices on countering violent extremist threats, and France leads on countering terrorism in the Sahel. If confirmed, I will not only ensure our cooperation continues, but will look for ways to strengthen our partnership, and will be forthright when we do not see eye-to-eye.

*Question.* What is the Biden administration doing to encourage France and our NATO allies to maintain and strengthen defense capabilities in the face of continued aggression by Russia in Eastern Europe?

Answer. The Biden administration works in coordination with France and other NATO allies and partners to hold Russia accountable for their destabilizing activities, human rights abuses, and violations of international norms. France contributes to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence on the Alliance's eastern flank. France is an active member of both the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism and the EU's Rapid Alert System efforts to counter Russian disinformation and malign influence.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the French Government so that the NATO Alliance continues to improve its deterrence and defense posture. I will also work closely to ensure continued close cooperation with France as part of our broader effort with other Allies and partners to hold Russia accountable for its actions, and

maintain pressure on the Kremlin to adhere to its international commitments and obligations.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* NATO is going through a planning process to identify strategic priorities for the coming years. What are your views on this process and how it can be used to advance U.S. interests?

*Answer.* The process of drafting and adopting a new Strategic Concept is critical to the future of NATO. It provides a clear roadmap for the work Allies must take to ensure our collective security. If confirmed, I will work hard with Allies in Brussels to make sure the Strategic Concept reflects the changing security environment of today, especially Russian aggression, threats we face in cyberspace, and the People's Republic of China's malign activities. I will also work to ensure that actions we take to address new challenges do not detract from the Alliance's core task of ensuring a strong deterrence and defense for all Allies.

*Question.* How do you think the Alliance can best and appropriately respond to the challenge posed by China?

*Answer.* In recent years, Allies have devoted substantial effort to better understanding and addressing PRC policies and activities that affect Allied security since 2019, culminating in the thorough treatment of PRC issues in the 2021 Summit Communiqué. Allies agreed in 2021 that PRC policies and actions pose a systemic challenge to the international rules-based order and identified, *inter alia*, the PRC's nuclear and conventional military expansion, non-transparency, and influence over Allied critical infrastructure as key areas of concern. If confirmed, I will consult closely with Allies to build consensus on effective approaches to the PRC through the work of the North Atlantic Council and its committees, and in policy documents, including the Strategic Concept.

*Question.* Are you at all concerned that this could divert attention from the threat posed by Russia to NATO members or the threat posed by terrorism to those countries in southern Europe?

*Answer.* Russia is the pre-eminent nuclear and conventional military threat to the Alliance, just as terrorism is one of the greatest asymmetric challenges to Alliance security. Without losing sight of these threats, NATO must be alert and responsive to the problems posed by the PRC. Fortunately, the Alliance has a strong history of addressing multiple threats simultaneously through its "360-degree approach" to security. Although the PRC is not presently an imminent military threat to Europe in the way Russia is, if confirmed, I would strongly support efforts to ensure NATO addresses the challenges PRC's international behavior and military expansion pose to Transatlantic security. If confirmed, I will continue our close collaboration with Allies to address these challenges realistically, strategically, and systematically.

*Question.* Beyond the commitment by all NATO members to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, how should we assess the other contributions that NATO members can make?

*Answer.* Allies have committed, as recently as the June 2021 NATO Summit, to continue to share the responsibility of our collective security against new and existing threats, both conventional and non-conventional. If confirmed, I will urge those Allies that are not on track to meet the Wales Pledge by 2024 to continue making progress toward that shared and important goal. In addition, I will urge allies to focus on other important aspects of their national defense, including readiness, force generation, and capability gaps. I will also work with Allies, and with Congress, if confirmed, on a shared understanding of NATO burden sharing that captures the wide range of tasks—including cyber security—that the Alliance is now undertaking. We must ensure the Alliance has the sufficient, capable, and ready integrated defense posture required to maintain a credible defense and deterrence in the 21st century threat environment.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Should expansion of NATO be a priority of the alliance going forward?

Answer. Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty states Allies “may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede.” Membership decisions are based on shared values, capacity to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security, and Allied consensus to invite them to join. NATO’s newest member, North Macedonia, joined in 2020 and has already proven itself a valuable Ally, including by contributing to NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. If confirmed, I will consider any possible enlargement from the perspective of U.S. interests and the good of the Alliance as a whole.

*Question.* Do you believe NATO allies are apprehensive of further NATO expansion due to the emerging shortcomings of some members, or because of other concerns?

Answer. Allied perspectives vary regarding NATO enlargement. Membership decisions are based on shared values, capacity to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security, and Allied consensus to invite them to join. This is described in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, to which all Allies have agreed. If confirmed, my approach to issues of NATO enlargement will be based on these criteria, U.S. interests, and the good of the Alliance. I look forward to dialogue with this committee on these issues.

*Question.* What do you see as the greatest current threat to NATO unity and cohesion?

Answer. For over 70 years, Allies have maintained cohesion to provide collective defense and prosperity to member nations. NATO has adapted to new threats and challenges during past inflection points such as 1989, 2001, and 2014. Today, NATO is again adapting to new and emerging threats and challenges. The key to NATO’s success is its ability to maintain unity, and the NATO 2030 agenda adopted at the June 2021 Summit affirmed the importance of consultation to the Alliance’s success. If confirmed, I look forward to increasing our engagement with Allies, including having difficult but necessary conversations. I will also work to maintain bipartisan support for NATO and look forward to consulting with Congress and welcoming congressional delegations to Brussels.

*Question.* What are the advantages of Strategic Autonomy for European nations themselves? What are the disadvantages?

Answer. The Biden administration is committed to re-engaging European allies and revitalizing our alliances. If confirmed, I would welcome European efforts to spend more on defense and build capacity, which responds to a long-standing U.S. call for more burden-sharing. However, we must ensure that those efforts do not risk undermining the primacy of NATO in ensuring Europe’s defense by avoiding unnecessary duplication and waste. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Allies and collaborating with this committee to reinforce to all Allies the importance of European defense efforts being complementary with NATO.

*Question.* What are the advantages of Strategic Autonomy for United States security interests? What are the disadvantages?

Answer. The Biden administration is committed to re-engaging European allies and revitalizing our alliances. If confirmed, I would welcome European efforts to spend more on defense and build capacity, which responds to a long-standing U.S. call for more burden-sharing. However, we must ensure that those efforts do not risk undermining the primacy of NATO in ensuring Europe’s defense by avoid unnecessary duplication and waste. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Allies and collaborating with this committee to reinforce to all Allies the importance of European defense efforts being complementary with NATO.

*Question.* What are the advantages of Strategic Autonomy for security interests across the NATO alliance as a whole? What are the disadvantages?

Answer. The Biden administration is committed to re-engaging European allies and revitalizing our alliances. If confirmed, I would welcome European efforts to spend more on defense and build capacity, which responds to a long-standing U.S. call for more burden-sharing. However, we must ensure that those efforts do not risk undermining the primacy of NATO in ensuring Europe’s defense by avoid unnecessary duplication and waste. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Allies and

collaborating with this committee to reinforce to all Allies the importance of European defense efforts being complementary with NATO.

*Question.* Do you believe that the U.S.' execution of the withdrawal and evacuation mission from Afghanistan makes a continental separation of European defense from NATO more likely?

*Answer.* NATO is the foundation of Euro-Atlantic collective defense. It guarantees the security, freedom, and values of one billion citizens in North America and Europe. The Alliance has experienced and overcome divisive issues in the past because of the strength of our approach based on consultation and consensus. As the Secretary General has said, the United States consulted with the Allies throughout the process of ending NATO's military presence in Afghanistan and this was a decision taken together by all Allies. NATO benefits from European Allies developing greater defense capabilities. If confirmed, I will continue this tradition of close consultation that prevents any issue from detracting from NATO accomplishing its core tasks.

*Question.* Do you believe that the recent defense agreement between the U.S., U.K., and Australia, which has greatly angered France, and irked the European Union, makes a continental separation of European defense from NATO more likely?

*Answer.* A stronger, more capable Europe is in our shared interest, and our longstanding ties with NATO Allies and the EU are essential to deal effectively with 21st century challenges, as are complementary EU and NATO capabilities. Ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific is a shared interest between the United States and Europe, and if confirmed, I will continue to work to deepen transatlantic cooperation regarding the Indo-Pacific and around the world. We will not succeed without enhanced NATO-EU cooperation, something I will strongly support, if confirmed. Such cooperation should uphold NATO's role as the premier Transatlantic security and defense forum, and EU defense efforts must not detract from or duplicate NATO efforts.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the reason that Turkey decided to purchase S-400s from Russia instead of Patriot Missiles from the United States?

*Answer.* Turkey had the opportunity to purchase Patriot surface-to-air missile systems, and other NATO-interoperable air defense systems, but chose to purchase the Russian S-400. Ankara's acquisition and testing of an S-400 surface-to-air missile system from Russia undermine Allied interoperability and threaten Alliance systems. If confirmed, I will continue to urge Turkey not to retain the S-400 system and to refrain from purchasing any additional Russian military equipment. As the Biden administration has made clear to Turkey, any major new Russian arms purchases would risk triggering CAATSA Section 231 sanctions separate from and in addition to those already imposed.

*Question.* The U.S. has removed Turkey from the F-35 program and sanctioned it for its purchase of the S-400. What further actions, if any, do you believe the U.S. should take to urge Turkey to divest the S-400s?

*Answer.* Turkey knows what it needs to do to secure relief from existing CAATSA Section 231 sanctions. Ankara's acquisition and testing of an S-400 surface-to-air missile system from Russia undermine Allied interoperability and threaten Alliance systems. The United States continues to urge Turkey at every level not to retain the S-400 system and to refrain from purchasing any additional Russian materiel. As the Biden administration has made clear to Turkey, any major new Russian arms purchases would risk triggering CAATSA sanctions separate from and in addition to those imposed in December 2020.

*Question.* How would you work with NATO partners to discourage Turkey from moving forward with its S-400 Air Defense integration?

*Answer.* The Biden administration has clearly expressed that Russian S-400s are incompatible with NATO equipment and its NATO commitments. If confirmed, I will join administration colleagues in continuing to urge Turkey not to retain S-400 and not to purchase additional Russian materiel. As the Biden administration has made clear to Turkey, any new purchase of Russian military equipment would risk triggering CAATSA sanctions separate from and in addition to those imposed in December 2020. Our Allies, including Turkey share interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and ensuring regional stability. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and our Allies to convince Turkey to change course.

*Question.* NATO's last strategic concept was written in 2010. In that time, new threats have emerged: Russia's expansionism in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, and Syria, China's emergence as a military and strategic power, democratic backsliding

within NATO countries, the advent of new technologies and threats like cyberwarfare. Which elements do you believe that any new Strategic Concept should focus on the most?

*Answer.* The process of drafting and adopting a new Strategic Concept is critical to the future of NATO. It provides a clear roadmap for the work Allies must take to ensure our collective security. If confirmed, I will work hard with Allies in Brussels to make sure the Strategic Concept reflects the changing security environment of today, especially Russian aggression, threats we face in cyberspace, and the People's Republic of China's malign activities. I will also work to ensure that actions we take to address these new challenges do not detract from the Alliance's core task of ensuring a strong deterrence and defense for all Allies. I look forward to dialogue with this committee on the Strategic Concept.

*Question.* NATO's Black Sea littoral allies are increasingly vocal about their concerns of growing Russian threats in the region. What more do you believe NATO should do to help deter further Russian aggression in the Black Sea and help augment the military capabilities of the littoral nations?

*Answer.* The Biden administration has expressed clear support for our Black Sea Allies, and through cooperation with NATO Allies and partners is bolstering collective security in the Black Sea region. As the Biden administration has made clear to Russia, further aggression is unacceptable in the territory and territorial waters of its sovereign neighbors. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and our Allies to develop and implement a Black Sea security strategy that bolsters cooperation among our littoral state Allies and partners.

*Question.* What do you see as the largest obstacles to NATO's military mobility throughout the European continent?

*Answer.* NATO must be able to flow combat power across the Euro-Atlantic area to be effective, not only from the United States to Europe but in Europe, across borders, and utilizing Allies' infrastructure. The current level of investment into capabilities varies across the spectrum of different Allies. If confirmed, I would work with our NATO Allies on the way ahead to ensure infrastructure and other mobility challenges are never limiting factors for deterrence and defense.

*Question.* If Russia were to put military presence in Belarus, how do you think the U.S. should respond? How should NATO respond?

*Answer.* Respectfully, I'm unable to provide a complete answer to a hypothetical. If confirmed, I would work with Congress as well as the Departments of State and Defense to maximize benefit to Alliance strength and security.

*Question.* In such a scenario, would putting more troops in Poland and the Baltics be a useful response or a harmful one?

*Answer.* Respectfully, I'm unable to provide a complete answer to a hypothetical. If confirmed, I would work with Congress as well as the Departments of State and Defense to maximize benefit to Alliance strength and security.

*Question.* Do you believe that nuclear weapons are inherent to NATO's strength in deterring and defending against enemies of the alliance?

*Answer.* NATO utilizes an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities for its deterrence and defense. As Allies reiterated in their June 2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué, "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance." If confirmed, I commit to work with Allies to provide for our collective security, including maintaining a safe, effective, and credible nuclear deterrence.

*Question.* Do you commit to maintaining NATO's nuclear arsenal?

*Answer.* As Allies reiterated in the June 2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué, "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance." If confirmed, I will coordinate with Allies to support NATO's deterrence and defense posture, including NATO's nuclear deterrence posture, which relies on U.S. nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and the capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned.

*Question.* What role do U.S. military exercises with NATO Allies play in strengthening U.S. and Allied warfighting capabilities, building interoperability between NATO members, and signaling resolve both to other Allies and adversaries like Russia?

*Answer.* NATO conducts a variety of posture management activities, which are critical to maintaining NATO's deterrence and defense posture. NATO's exercises

credibly demonstrate its ability to deliver warfighting capabilities where and when needed. United States military exercises with Allies test and improve interoperability and are a concrete manifestation of NATO's resolve. If confirmed, I commit to work with Congress, the Department of Defense, and our Allies and partners to continue to build capabilities, increase readiness, and signal resolve to our adversaries.

*Question.* Do you believe the current scope, scale, and frequency of U.S. military exercises in Europe is sufficient to fulfill these objectives? If confirmed, do you commit to working with Allies to expand or at least maintain the current scope, scale, and frequency of U.S. military exercises in Europe?

*Answer.* NATO is the most successful Alliance in history, preventing the outbreak of war between major powers in Europe for over 70 years. U.S. and NATO's exercises are essential to maintain deterrence, readiness, and interoperability and reassure our Allies. If confirmed, I will work with our Allies to strengthen NATO's credible deterrence and defense posture, including through exercises.

*Question.* Do you believe U.S./NATO military exercises are provocative to Russia? If confirmed, how will you reconcile Russian concerns with the need to enhance NATO's warfighting capabilities and strengthen Allies?

*Answer.* Russian accusations that the United States and NATO demonstrate hostile intent through exercises are disingenuous. NATO's activities are predictable, transparent, defensive, and designed to improve readiness and demonstrate the Alliance's capability and resolve to repulse armed attack. U.S. and NATO's exercises are essential to maintain deterrence, readiness, and interoperability and reassure our Allies. If confirmed, I will work with our Allies to strengthen NATO's credible deterrence and defense posture, including through exercises.

*Question.* Do you believe it is accurate or fair to equate U.S. multinational exercises like Defender with large-scale Russian exercises like Zapad?

*Answer.* The United States is transparent about its activities; Russia is not. We are transparent about our exercises, conduct them safely, and notify Russia appropriately. U.S. and NATO exercises help reassure our Allies, and transparency is undertaken by the United States and NATO contribute to stability and predictability with Russia. Russia misuses the Vienna Document notification system to thwart transparency of its exercises and conducts large-scale snap exercises, such as its buildup along the border with Ukraine in spring 2021. If confirmed, I pledge to work with Allies to ensure that false Russian narratives about U.S. and NATO posture management activities do not undermine Allies' determination to signal Allied resolve and build readiness and interoperability through planned, challenging exercises.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* What do you view as the key challenges to alliance cohesion within NATO? What role do you see for the U.S. administration and the U.S. Congress in addressing these challenges?

*Answer.* For over 70 years, Allies have maintained cohesion to provide collective security and prosperity to member nations. Today, however, the weakening of democratic values in some member states is tearing at Alliance cohesion. As the recent NATO 2030 report stressed, the key to NATO's success is its ability to maintain unity and resolve. If confirmed, I look forward to increasing our engagement with Allies, including having sometimes difficult but necessary conversations about both our shared values and our shared challenges. I will also work to maintain bipartisan support for NATO and look forward to consulting with Congress and welcoming congressional delegations to Brussels.

*Question.* How should NATO respond to political developments in NATO member states, such as Turkey, that run counter to the democratic principles on which the alliance was founded?

*Answer.* NATO is a defensive Alliance. Simultaneously, NATO is an Alliance of values, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. NATO takes decisions on the basis of consensus, and Allies must find ways forward on common priorities. Allies must also be ready to voice—either privately or publicly—concern about actions inconsistent with Allies' commitments, including



concerns about democratic backsliding in Allied member states. If confirmed I look forward to working with Congress to foster a constructive dialogue in the Alliance about these issues.

*Question.* Should NATO consider monitoring or sanctioning member states that violate NATO's foundational principles?

*Answer.* The North Atlantic Treaty states in Article 2 that "all Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being." For over 70 years, Allies have maintained cohesion to provide collective security and prosperity to member nations. The key to NATO's success is its ability to maintain unity and resolve, and, if confirmed, I will ensure we hold Allies accountable to the same set of values.

*Question.* Will you, as Ambassador, continue to press for increased allied defense spending?

*Answer.* Allies have committed, as recently as the June 2021 NATO Summit, to continue to share the responsibility of our collective security against new and existing threats, both conventional and non-conventional. If confirmed, I will urge those Allies that are not on track to meet the Wales Pledge by 2024 to continue making progress toward that shared and important goal. In addition, I will urge allies to focus on other important aspects of their national defense, including readiness, force generation, and capability gaps. I will also work with Allies, and with Congress, if confirmed, on a shared understanding of NATO burden sharing that captures the wide range of tasks—including cyber security—that the Alliance is now undertaking. We must ensure the Alliance has the sufficient, capable, and ready integrated defense posture required to maintain a credible defense and deterrence in the 21st century threat environment.

*Question.* How do you view the potential for burden-sharing that looks beyond national defense budgets to include available military capabilities, contributions to allied missions, and efforts to counter hybrid threats?

*Answer.* Allies have committed, as recently as the June 2021 NATO Summit, to continue to share the responsibility of our collective security against new and existing threats, both conventional and non-conventional. If confirmed, I will urge those Allies that are not on track to meet the Wales Pledge by 2024 to continue making progress toward that shared and important goal. In addition, I will urge allies to focus on other important aspects of their national defense, including readiness, force generation, and capability gaps. I will also work with Allies, and with Congress, if confirmed, on a shared understanding of NATO burden sharing that captures the wide range of tasks—including cyber security—that the Alliance is now undertaking. We must ensure the Alliance has the sufficient, capable, and ready integrated defense posture required to maintain a credible defense and deterrence in the 21st century threat environment.

*Question.* How adequately is NATO addressing the defense and security implications of increased Chinese investment and political influence in Europe?

*Answer.* This administration is deeply concerned about the dangers posed to Transatlantic security by the PRC's investments in critical infrastructure, advanced technologies, and modern military capabilities, including missiles that can target all NATO Allied countries. At the June 2021 NATO Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government declared that the PRC's "stated ambitions and assertive behavior present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to Alliance security." If confirmed, I will continue our close collaboration with Allies to address the challenge from Beijing realistically, strategically, and systematically.

*Question.* To what extent is there consensus within the alliance on how best to respond to security challenges from the Chinese Government?

*Answer.* Decision-making by consensus is never easy, especially with 30 Allies with individual opinions and threat perceptions. However, Allies have come together and found common ground to chart a path to the future throughout the past 70 years, on many global challenges. Today is no different. If confirmed, I commit to consult closely with Allies to build consensus on approaches that advance U.S. policy objectives on the PRC. Allies showed the ability to find common ground on complicated policy issues like how to address the PRC in the recent NATO Summit Communiqué, and I am confident we can find a way to address the security environment in the next Strategic Concept as well as other venues.

*Question.* How effective are current U.S. and NATO efforts to deter Russian aggression in Europe, and what more can be done?

*Answer.* The United States has worked with Allies at NATO to maintain a firm message to Russia that there can be no return to “business as usual” until there is a clear, constructive change in Russia’s behavior. The NATO Alliance pursues a dual track approach to Russia, balancing openness to political discussion—on the basis of reciprocity—with strong and credible deterrence and defense, including on NATO’s eastern flank. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our Allies to ensure NATO continues to bolster its deterrence and defense posture, increases focus on capabilities, readiness, and force generation, and maintains unity in the face of Russian aggression.

*Question.* To what extent do you expect sustained political support in Europe for NATO’s firm stance on Russia?

*Answer.* Allies agree Russia is the primary geopolitical threat in the Euro-Atlantic area. At the June 2021 NATO Summit, Allies publicly affirmed that NATO has suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, while remaining open to political dialogue. Until Russia makes clear and constructive changes to its behavior, there can be no return to “business as usual”. Allies also affirmed that NATO will respond to the deteriorating security environment by enhancing its deterrence and defense posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Allied unity in the face of Russian aggression.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* What are the implications for the security of NATO’s Baltic members from Belarus’ planned installation of Russia’s S-400 Air Defense systems?

*Answer.* Since Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine, NATO has implemented the most significant reinforcement of its eastern flank in the post-Cold War era, including the Baltic Air Policing mission. President Lukashenka’s comments that Belarus may procure new systems from Russia, including the S-400, is of concern. NATO is committed to the security of the entire Alliance, including Baltic Allies, and will respond appropriately to the deployment of additional Russian military capability in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with the Departments of State and Defense, Congress, and NATO Allies on appropriate measures of support for Baltic Allies and NATO’s regional partners.

*Question.* How will you engage with NATO to counter the growing belligerence of Russia and its encroachment into Belarus?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with Allies at NATO to maintain a firm message to Russia that there can be no return to “business as usual” until there is a clear, constructive change in Russia’s behavior. I will also ensure NATO continues to bolster its deterrence and defense posture. The Alliance has taken several steps to express deep concern over the situation in Belarus, from restricting Belarusian access to NATO HQ to condemning Lukashenka’s actions in the June 2021 Summit Communiqué. If confirmed I will seek ways to continue to hold both Russia and Belarus accountable for destabilizing activity.

*Question.* How does the situation in Afghanistan affect our relationship with NATO allies?

*Answer.* U.S. standing within NATO remains strong. After twenty years, Allies agreed to end our military engagement in Afghanistan. This reflects our success delivering justice to those who attacked us on September 11th and disrupting terrorists seeking to use Afghanistan as a safe haven to attack us. Allies decided to reassess where it made the most sense to position our militaries based on the global threat picture as it exists today, not two decades ago. The United States worked side by side with Allies and partners in Afghanistan, strengthening the ability of our military and civilian personnel to work effectively together. If confirmed, I will continue the close consultations with Allies, as we have done since before the withdrawal, when all Allies decided to leave with us. I will also look forward to consulting with the Allies on the “lessons learned” process they are currently conducting on the broader mission in Afghanistan.

*Question.* Message to NATO allies about the U.S. commitment to coordinated operations in defense of the alliance?

Answer. NATO remains history's strongest military alliance, and the United States will continue our leadership role within it. The U.S. commitment to the Alliance and to Article 5 is ironclad. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to support NATO defensive operations, as well as operations that enhance regional security in other ways. For example, NATO Mission Iraq is expanding to broaden the capacity of the Iraqi Government's security institutions. Kosovo Force (KFOR) has bolstered the regional security environment in the Balkans for twenty years.

*Question.* How would you work with NATO partners to discourage Turkey from moving forward with its S-400 Air Defense integration?

Answer. The Biden administration has clearly expressed that Russian S-400s are incompatible with NATO equipment and Turkey's NATO commitments. It is a policy priority for the United States to prevail on Turkey not to retain S-400 and not to purchase additional Russian materiel. As the Biden administration has made clear to Turkey, any new purchase of Russian military equipment would risk triggering CAATSA sanctions separate from and in addition to those imposed in December 2020. At the same time, Turkey is our Ally, and the United States and Turkey share interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and ensuring regional stability. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and engaging Turkey.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* I recently had a call with 26 Ambassadors from NATO-allied countries, and all were unanimous in their calls for NATO coordination on Afghanistan. Many of our allies in NATO and others in Europe have also publicly expressed their frustrations regarding how the United States handled the withdrawal and the lack of coordination with them. I am concerned with how this may affect the strength of the Alliance in the immediate future.

- How do you see the current state of relations with our NATO allies following our withdrawal from Afghanistan? What will you do to reassure our allies of our commitment to coordination through NATO, if confirmed?

Answer. Since Allies invoked Article 5 and went into Afghanistan after al-Qaeda, we have adhered to the "in together, consult together, leave together" approach. Indeed, as the Secretary General confirmed in recent days, the United States consulted with the Allies throughout the process of ending NATO's military presence in Afghanistan. NATO is the foundation of Euro-Atlantic collective defense. The Alliance has experienced and overcome divisive issues in the past because of the strength of our approach based on consultation and consensus. If confirmed, I will continue this tradition of close consultation that prevents any issue from detracting from NATO accomplishing its core tasks.

*Question.* How do you think the United States should respond to the calls for greater European security independent of NATO and the United States?

Answer. The Biden administration is committed to re-engaging European allies and partners and revitalizing our alliances. If confirmed, I would welcome European efforts to strengthen European defense including by spending more on defense, insofar as this contributes to Allies' fulfillment of their Wales Pledge commitments. However, the notion of European strategic autonomy risks undermining the primacy of NATO in ensuring Europe's defense, duplicating effort between the EU and NATO, and weakening Transatlantic relations. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Allies and partners to reinforce to all Allies the unparalleled value of the Transatlantic Alliance, rooted in the sacrosanct Article 5 commitment.

*Question.* The Taliban has tried to tell the world that it is different than it was in 1996. But their approach and perspective on women has clearly not evolved and as such, we must continue to hold the Taliban to account, in partnership with our allies.

- If confirmed, how will you work through NATO to find ways to support the rights of Afghan women and girls under Taliban rule? What specific actions should NATO take as a bloc?

Answer. NATO has been clear that it will continue to hold the Taliban to its commitments, especially on counterterrorism and with respect to the rights of all Afghans. The Taliban has said many things, but we have told them in no uncertain

terms we are watching their actions to assess our possible future direction with them. The United States and NATO Allies are considering how to use our full diplomatic, economic, and assistance toolkits to support the peaceful, stable future the Afghan people deserve. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with you on ensuring the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, in particular, remain in the Alliance's focus.

*Question.* If confirmed, what will you do to reassure our allies in NATO of the strong U.S. commitment? What specific steps will you take to strengthen coordination with and within the Alliance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will reassure Allies our commitment to collective defense under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is ironclad. For over 70 years, Allies have maintained cohesion to provide collective security and prosperity to member nations. The key to NATO's success is its ability to maintain unity, and the NATO 2030 agenda affirmed the importance of consultation to the Alliance's success. If confirmed, I look forward to increasing our engagement with Allies, including having difficult but necessary conversations. I will also work to maintain bipartisan support for NATO and look forward to consulting with Congress and welcoming congressional delegations to Brussels.

*Question.* I am concerned by the actions of an emboldened Russia in the Black Sea region, following several recent aggressive incidents by the Russians.

- What more can be done to support freedom of navigation in the Black Sea?

*Answer.* The Biden administration attaches high importance to security and stability in the Black Sea littoral. Through cooperation with NATO Allies and partners, including presence and exercises, the United States is bolstering collective security in the Black Sea region. As the Biden administration has made clear to Russia, aggression is unacceptable in the territory and territorial waters of its sovereign neighbors, as well as in international waters and airspace. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and our Allies to develop and implement a Black Sea security strategy that bolsters cooperation among our littoral state Allies and partners.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO JULIANNE SMITH BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Nord Stream 2*

*Question.* If Nord Stream 2 is brought online it will provide Russia with energy hegemony over our NATO allies. Those allies have conveyed in public that they will be significantly more vulnerable not just to energy coercion but to military aggression, across NATO's Eastern flank.

- Please assess the security risks to NATO, and especially NATO's eastern flank, that would be created if Nord Stream 2 was completed.

*Answer.* The Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a Russian geopolitical project that undercuts the energy security of a significant part of the Euro-Atlantic community. U.S. opposition to Nord Stream 2 centers around the Kremlin's malign activities, including its aggression against Ukraine and past use of energy as a weapon through gas supply cut-offs and disruptions. The administration continues to work with Germany, Ukraine, and other Allies and partners to reduce the risks of an operational Nord Stream 2 pipeline, including through the package of measures detailed in the July 21, 2021 U.S.-Germany Joint Statement on support for Ukraine, European Energy Security, and our Climate Goals. If confirmed, I will work with our NATO Allies and partners to both address the repercussions of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and strengthen European energy security.

*Question.* If Nord Stream 2 is brought online it will provide Russia with energy hegemony over our NATO allies. Those allies have conveyed in public that they will be significantly more vulnerable not just to energy coercion but to military aggression, across NATO's Eastern flank.

- In your understanding, what can the United States still do to stop Nord Stream 2 from being completed, in order to avert these risks?

*Answer.* The Biden administration opposes Nord Stream 2 and believes that this Russian geopolitical project is a bad deal for both Ukraine and Europe. That said, the pipeline was over 90 percent complete when this administration came into office, and sanctions could not stop its construction. Gazprom announced on September 10,

2021 that construction on the pipeline was complete. Throughout the process of testing, inspecting, and certifying, and otherwise operationalizing the pipeline, the United States will continue to oppose Nord Stream 2 and work with Allies and partners to reduce the risks of an operational Nord Stream 2 pipeline, including through the package of measures detailed in the July 21, 2021 U.S.-Germany Joint Statement on Support for Ukraine, European Energy Security, and our Climate Goals. The administration remains committed to implementing PEESA, as amended; it has sanctioned seven persons related to Nord Stream 2 and identified 16 of the vessels as blocked property and continues to examine entities involved in potentially sanctionable activity.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Israel*

*Question.* This week marks the one year anniversary of the historic Abraham Accords, normalizing relations between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain, which have the potential to increase security and prosperity for Israel and other countries in the Middle East.

- Will you commit to fully supporting Israel's right to self-defense and Qualitative Military Edge, including through U.S. military assistance?

*Answer.* Yes. The United States has a long-standing, unshakable commitment to Israel's security, one important component of which is substantial security assistance to preserve Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over potential regional threats. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue this legacy.

*Iraq*

*Question.* The U.S. remains committed to a sovereign, stable and democratic Iraq. The recent agreement on July 26 between President Biden and Prime Minister Kadhimi to end U.S. combat operations signals a hopeful new phase in the U.S.-Iraqi partnership. However, Iran continues to exercise malign influence in the country and its militias continue to target U.S. facilities while extorting and murdering ordinary Iraqis.

- What should the U.S.'s assistance priorities be in Iraq? What further steps can the U.S. take to boost Iraq's ties with its Arab neighbors and make the country less dependent on Iranian energy?

*Answer.* U.S. assistance in Iraq should focus on democratic and economic reforms to reduce corruption, facilitate investment, develop a domestic private sector that can generate badly-needed employment for Iraq's youthful population, and improve the lives of the Iraqi people.

The United States continues to press Iraq to do more in terms of generating and delivering electricity for the public, reducing its reliance on Iranian electricity and gas. This requires Iraq to capture flared gas, employ grid modernization to reduce transmission losses, develop renewable energy potential, and to import power from other neighbors. The United States is ready to help develop Iraq's renewable energy sector.

With regard to electricity grid interconnections, the United States has championed the work to connect Iraq's grid to that of the GCC Interconnection Authority. This interconnection would allow Gulf countries to sell 500 megawatts of power to Iraq. The United States also supports an interconnection between the Iraqi and Jordanian grids. While Iraq is contracting out its portion of the transmission lines, USAID is supporting the Jordanian side. Iraq has moved slowly on implementing its side.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the current U.S. diplomatic footprint in Iraq? Should the U.S. boost that footprint to better counter Iranian influence? What resources would be required to do that safely and do you commit to working to swiftly restore consular operations at Embassy Baghdad?

*Answer.* U.S. policies. In Summer 2021, the Embassy conducted a fresh staffing review given changing circumstances, and Department leadership is currently considering the results. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring all of our posts, including Baghdad, are secure and appropriately staffed for their mission.

If confirmed, I commit to working to restore consular operations at Embassy Baghdad. Several Compound Access Control (CAC) points sustained damage in the December 2019/January 2020 attack, leading to a suspension of consular operations.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) worked with Diplomatic Security to establish an interim consular screening facility for use by U.S. citizens. OBO is currently in the process of awarding a design and construction contract for the repair of the Main CAC to allow full consular services to be restarted.

*Question.* How important is it to reopen the U.S. Consulate in Basra? If confirmed, what conditions will you need to see before moving to reopen it?

*Answer.* I view it as vitally important that the United States engage with all segments of Iraqi society, including Basrawis and others in southern Iraq. Basrah remains one of the key economic engines of Iraq given its vast oil and gas resources, but also remains one of the poorest provinces and suffers from climate change and a lack of potable water. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues at the State Department and throughout the Administration to expand our diplomatic outreach across Iraq. There are many issues that would have to be taken into consideration before resuming operations at the consulate in Basrah, such as the necessary security measures, as well as congressional and legal requirements.

#### *Lebanon*

*Question.* Lebanon's economic crisis has pushed middle class Lebanese into poverty but the country's political elite still show no appetite for needed reforms and still seem to expect a no strings attached bailout if the suffering in Lebanon gets bad enough.

- How does the US balance the need to help alleviate suffering in Lebanon which directly contributes to security and stability not only in Lebanon but in Israel and the region more broadly but also ensure our assistance is being used to incentivize reforms?

*Answer.* Current U.S. assistance programs in Lebanon are designed to directly support the Lebanese people as they weather the current economic and humanitarian crisis, as well as support key partners and institutions, such as the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, which are critical to stability in Lebanon and the region. If confirmed, I will reinforce to the Lebanese Government that concrete actions remain crucial—indeed, a condition—to unlocking longer-term structural support to Lebanon.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the new Lebanese Government? Is it capable of delivering for the Lebanese people and being a capable partner for the United States?

*Answer.* The United States welcomed the announcement that Lebanon's leaders agreed to form a new government under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Mikati. The formation of a government is just the first step to halting Lebanon's terrible downward spiral; the follow-on steps must include enacting reforms to address the economic crisis, bring more accountability and transparency to a system that is rife with political corruption, and keep elections on track for next year. The solution to Lebanon's dire problems lie in Lebanese hands. If confirmed, I stand ready to support the new government as well as hold its members accountable for the hard work ahead.

#### *Lebanon and Syrian Sanctions Liability*

*Question.* I recognize the need to import energy from Egypt and Jordan to ease the suffering of hard-hit Lebanese and to prevent Iran and Hezbollah from capitalizing on a crisis that they are in large part created. I am also aware that the infrastructure for such a project already exists and I appreciate the willingness of Jordan and Egypt to help the people of Lebanon. However, I am also concerned about such a project running afoul of U.S. sanctions on Syria the risk that such imports could normalize the Assad regime's brutality.

- What sanctions liability do you see in such an import project and how do we balance these competing needs by getting the Lebanese people the relief they need without rewarding the Assad regime for more than ten years of atrocities against its own people?

*Answer.* Lebanon is currently experiencing an acute energy crisis that is having a tremendous impact on critical infrastructure such as hospitals and the water supply. U.S. assistance programs are designed to directly support the Lebanese people; Egypt and Jordan have recently offered a set of potential bilateral and multilateral agreements that could help Lebanon begin to address its power crisis in a sustainable and transparent manner. U.S. sanctions on the Assad regime remain an important tool to press for accountability, to include for its atrocious record of human rights abuse. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of the Treasury and our

partners to ensure that any potential deal our partners reach is consistent with U.S. law, our broader policy priorities to mitigate any benefits to the Assad regime, and all relevant U.S. sanctions, and look forward to continuing to consult with Congress on this important issue.

#### *Syria*

*Question.* I am concerned that the Assad regime's apparent success in reestablishing full control of Daraa, despite prior diplomatic agreements that ensured a measure of local autonomy, will pave the way for an increased presence of Iranian backed militias, including Hezbollah, where they can continue to brutalize or displace the local population while menacing Israel and Jordan.

*Question.* Do you share these concerns and if so, what diplomatic measures can the Administration take, both bilaterally and at the United Nations, to prevent additional civilian displacements and ensure Iranian militia activity does not further threaten Israel and Jordan?

*Answer.* The United States continues to engage with partners and allies as well as the U.N. to encourage all parties to adhere to ceasefires in Syria. The United States is also strongly committed to countering Iran and the militia groups it supports in Syria and will work with allies and partners to push back against Iran's destabilizing activities. The Biden-Harris administration is concerned by the grave conditions in Dara'a that resulted in the displacement of civilians and the blockage of humanitarian aid and has raised these concerns at the U.N. and with key Security Council members. If confirmed, I will continue our support for humanitarian organizations that are trying to deliver aid and will continue to push for increased access.

#### *Syria-U.N.-led Political Process for Syria*

*Question.* It is broadly acknowledged that the U.N.-led political process for Syria under UNSCR 2254 is broken due to Russian-enabled Assad regime intransigence. There is further a push by both Russia and the Assad regime to normalize ties with other Arab states like Jordan the UAE and Bahrain.

- What alternatives does the Administration have to advancing the goal of an end to Syria's civil war in light of the gridlock in the U.N. process?

*Answer.* There is little question that unstinting Russian and Iranian military and other support have enabled the Assad regime to deflect international demands for accountability and political change for over a decade. The United States is engaged with U.N. Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, our allies, and other international partners in order to explore options and encourage all possible efforts to advance a political resolution to the conflict. The Biden - Harris Administration supports the U.N.-facilitated, Syrian-led process laid out within the parameters of UNSCR 2254, including a nationwide ceasefire, the release of arbitrarily detained Syrians, and free and fair elections monitored by the U.N. If confirmed, I will continue to engage diplomatically to press for an end to the Syrian people's suffering.

*Question.* What do you see driving our Arab partners' increasing engagement with Damascus and how can U.S. diplomacy halt this creeping normalization?

*Answer.* There appears to be a belief among some countries in the region that engagement with Assad will lead to a reduction of the latter's relationship with Iran. I am skeptical on that score. The United States will not itself reestablish or upgrade diplomatic relations with the Assad regime. If confirmed, I will urge states in the region to consider carefully what they might require of the regime on behalf of the Syrian people—whether accountability for the missing or detained, or access to humanitarian aid and security, which the regime currently denies much of the country. The United States will remain engaged with the U.N., our allies, and other international partners on the best way forward in Syria.

*Question.* Do you think we can be doing more to ensure accountability and good governance in the Autonomous Administered Areas of North East Syria?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration understands political and economic stability are key to the ability of our local partners in Syria to focus on fighting ISIS. In one of its first acts, the Administration lifted the U.S. freeze on stabilization assistance for Syria and announced in March almost \$50 million for U.S. stabilization efforts in northeast Syria and will continue these efforts with FY 21 resources; the administration's FY 22 request for Syria reflects further robust support. U.S. assistance in northeast Syria prioritizes stabilization activities that contribute to the restoration of daily life by closing gaps in local authority capacities; supporting transi-

tional justice, justice and accountability, and civil society programs; and addressing vulnerabilities previously exploited by ISIS.

#### *Egypt*

*Question.* What do you see as the largest priorities for security assistance to Egypt? How can U.S. engagement promote further energy development and security cooperation between Egypt and its neighbors, especially in the realm of clean and renewable energy?

*Answer.* I see the highest priority security challenges for Egypt as being the threat stemming from extremist groups in Libya and the Sahel, border security and maritime security. U.S. security assistance is appropriately focused on helping Egypt develop and maintain the capacity to address those priorities while emphasizing professionalization of its forces and support for human rights and international humanitarian law. Egypt has enormous solar and wind potential, and has made significant investments in the past decade to increase the share of renewables in its energy production. I am eager to work with Egypt to fulfill its aspirations to export clean energy to its neighbors, which will require significant investments in upgrading regional energy connectivity.

*Question.* Egypt faces the very real prospect of reduced flow from the Nile River. What more can the US do to help Egypt cope with such a future?

*Answer.* I well appreciate the singular importance of the Nile flow to Egypt's economy, especially its agriculture. I am pleased to see that Egypt is taking steps to modernize its agricultural systems and increase efficiencies in water use to better manage the growing demands for this critical resource in the future. U.S. assistance has brought improved education, clean water, better health, economic growth, and other benefits to the Egyptian people. The Department is working with Egypt to promote economic growth that underpins stability, and to advance our commercial and environmental goals.

*Question.* If confirmed, what message will you send to Egypt regarding its purchase of Russian Su-35's?

*Answer.* Dissuading Egypt from acquiring Su-35 fighter aircraft or any other major new military equipment from Russia is a key priority for the United States. The U.S. Government has consistently warned Egypt at the highest levels that accepting delivery of Su-35s or any new major military acquisitions from Russia risks triggering mandatory CAATSA Section 231 sanctions and negatively affecting our defense relationship and security cooperation. If confirmed, I will reinforce this message to the Government of Egypt.

*Question.* If confirmed, what message will you send to Egypt regarding ongoing human rights abuses, including the harassment and detention of the family members of U.S.-based activists? What leverage does the U.S. retain in this regard?

*Answer.* I share your concerns about the human rights situation in Egypt. If confirmed, I will communicate U.S. expectations to the Government of Egypt of tangible and sustained progress on improving its human rights record. The Biden-Harris administration supports greater space for Egyptian civil society and human rights organizations, as well as respect for freedom of expression. Secretary Blinken's recent decision on Foreign Military Financing showed that the Biden-Harris administration considers human rights to be a national security interest. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Government of Egypt to address these human rights concerns. Promoting a stable, prosperous Egypt, where the Government protects the human rights of all individuals and fulfills the aspirations of the Egyptian people, is a core objective of U.S. policy.

#### *Peace Agreement in Libya*

*Question.* The peace agreement in Libya and the national unity government that it brought about present an important opportunity for Libyans and their neighbors in Africa and around the Mediterranean to turn the page on ten years of violence and chaos. However, challenges remain, most notably the continuing presence of Russian and Turkish-backed mercenaries, which represent, in my mind, the biggest threat to stability in Libya and the elections scheduled there for December.

- What steps can be taken, with the Libyan Government, along with the international community to get foreign fighters out of Libya?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is in discussions with European and regional allies and partners, the interim Libyan Government, and others on how progress can be made towards the full withdrawal of all foreign military forces, foreign fighters, and mercenaries consistent with the October 23, 2020 Libyan ceasefire



agreement. To that end, if confirmed, I am committed to charting a path forward toward national elections with the interim Libyan Government, regional partners, and the U.N. Those elections will themselves be a critical point along the way of getting foreign forces out of Libya. If confirmed, I am also committed to supporting the October 23, 2020, Libyan ceasefire agreement and its full implementation as called for in UNSCR 2570.

*Question.* What further steps should the US take to ensure that presidential and parliamentary elections are held on schedule in Libya?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is in discussions with Libyan political leaders on the urgent need for them to agree on a constitutional and legal framework for elections. The Biden-Harris administration is also coordinating with European and regional allies and partners to ensure a united position from the international community on the importance of holding on-time elections. USAID has helped the Libyan High National Election Commission advance technical preparations for the elections so that they are prepared to hold the elections quickly once a legal basis is agreed. Ultimately, it will be up to Libyan political officials to forge compromises to ensure elections take place on December 24, and the administration has vigorously pressed the parties to do so.

#### *Turkey and Libya's Maritime Border Agreement*

*Question.* I have been vocal in my criticism of the maritime border agreement between Turkey and Libya's previous Government of National Accord, which I believe was based on a flawed understanding of international maritime law and a complete disregard for the legitimate claims of neighboring Mediterranean countries, including Greece and the Republic of Cyprus.

- What steps can the U.S. take to ensure that any such agreement is coordinated with Libya and Turkey's Mediterranean neighbors and takes into account their legitimate claims in the Mediterranean?

*Answer.* The Memorandum of Understanding on maritime boundaries between Turkey and Libya's former Government of National Accord has raised tensions in the region and has been unhelpful to efforts to negotiate a solution to the conflict. The United States has called on all parties to refrain from actions that risk heightening tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a longstanding policy, the United States encourages states to resolve their disputes peacefully in accordance with international law.

#### *U.S. Influence in Libya*

*Question.* If confirmed, what facts would you need to see on the ground to move forward with a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence inside Libya? What further resources would you need?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration's intent is to resume regular diplomatic activities in Libya when the security situation permits and the necessary security measures are in place. The process for resumption of diplomatic operations entails a thorough Department analysis and review, careful logistical and security planning, interagency coordination to meet security, policy, and legal requirements, and congressional notification procedures. The Administration will keep Congress informed with regard to any resources it would need.

*Question.* In the meantime, what further steps can be taken to maintain U.S. influence in the country?

*Answer.* Since the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli suspended operations in July 2014, officers with the Libya External Office in Tunis have conducted periodic day-trips into Libya for diplomatic engagement and frequently engaged with Libyan interlocutors in third-country locations. The Administration, including Special Envoy Ambassador Richard Norland, also coordinates closely with European allies, countries in the region, and the United Nations. The United States co-chairs the Berlin Process Economic Working Group through which international partners help Libya make crucial economic reforms. Foreign assistance also boosts U.S. influence in the areas of the economy, access to water, and combatting climate change.

#### *Tunisia*

*Question.* How can U.S. engagement most effectively help Tunisia reach a sound economic footing?

*Answer.* The United States shares the Tunisian people's goal of a democratic government that can address the immediate economic and health crises facing the country. In that connection, our assistance promotes sustainable, inclusive economic

growth and mitigates the effects of COVID-19. If confirmed, I will urge President Saied to designate a Prime Minister without further delay and enable formation of a government so that the United States and our partners can more effectively assist Tunisia in economic growth and development, particularly via the IMF.

*Question.* What more can the U.S. do to bolster both Tunisian civil society and the successful and productive security relationship between our two countries?

*Answer.* U.S. assistance, consistent messaging, and diplomatic engagement will continue to support civil society and civic engagement, which will be key to the success of any political and economic reforms. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening our bilateral security relationship, through which the U.S. Government has provided over \$928 million since 2011. This aid has improved the ability of the Tunisian military and civilian law enforcement agencies to conduct counter terrorism operations, secure the country's borders, provide citizen-oriented policing, and protect human rights while operating within the rule of law.

#### *Yemen*

*Question.* The administration's renewal of assistance to northern Yemen and insistence that the Houthis allow further humanitarian access there has helped to hold off a drastic worsening of an already terrible humanitarian crisis. However, the Houthis ongoing advance on Marib threatens to displace hundreds of thousands of already desperate Yemenis and shows a lack of interest by the Houthis in a peaceful end to the fighting, especially when coupled with their ongoing attacks against Saudi Arabia using Iranian missiles and drones.

- What is behind the Houthis determination to press on with a costly and destructive offensive? What steps can the U.S. take to bring them back to the negotiating table?

*Answer.* The Houthis remain intransigent and focused on their military offensive against Marib, which is the single biggest impediment to a national ceasefire and follow-on political negotiations. Apparently determined to take the oil-rich province, the Houthis are demonstrating wholesale indifference to the humanitarian cost. The offensive is exacerbating Yemen's humanitarian crisis, puts at immediate risk some one million IDPs and other civilians and is triggering broader instability. There is an international consensus on the urgency of resolving this conflict; if confirmed, I will work with U.S. Special Envoy Tim Lenderking and our international partners to push the Houthis to engage with the new U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg in good faith and without preconditions. The United States continues to work with our international partners to apply pressure on the Houthis, to include via domestic and U.N. sanctions, and, if confirmed, I will continue that critical work.

*Question.* The lack of fuel imports remains a major humanitarian concern. What more can the U.S. do to push Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Government to allow more fuel imports to be allowed into Yemen?

*Answer.* The United States remains committed to addressing the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We closely monitor and consistently raise the need for unrestricted fuel imports at Hudaydah with the highest levels of the Yemeni and Saudi Governments. In response to continued U.S. advocacy, the Republic of Yemen Government has cleared 17 fuel ships to enter the port of Hudaydah since March 2021. Food and other commodities for commercial and humanitarian purposes continue to flow through Hudaydah at normal rates, according to the U.N. Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM). Fuel imports through other Yemeni ports have increased, such that nationwide fuel imports are actually higher than average. That said, it is time for a different approach by the Hadi Government and the Saudi Government.

#### *Jordan*

*Question.* As you know, the current assistance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. and Jordan is set to expire next year.

- What should be the U.S.'s priorities for the next MOU?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure U.S. assistance to Jordan through the next MOU is targeted to bolster the economic stability of this critical ally. A stable and secure Jordan allows us to jointly pursue shared regional security and economic goals. Economic Support Funds should foster self-reliance and capacity development of government and private sector counterparts towards implementing critical economic reform. To the degree the U.S. Government can incentivize needed structural reforms, Jordan can more rapidly open new pathways to economic growth. Foreign Military Financing should help ensure Jordan can continue to act as a close partner

on a variety of shared security goals, including as a contributing member in the Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

*Question.* What further political and economic reforms do you think are needed to help Jordan get on to a more secure and sustainable footing?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will promote private-sector-led and inclusive economic growth in Jordan. The country requires reforms to enable the private sector to grow more rapidly, to attract foreign investment, increase the capacity of firms to compete on the global market, and significantly expand current employment levels. Other important reforms include improving public sector effectiveness; improving the business climate; deepening electricity and water sector sustainability; and including more women and youth in the formal economy.

*Question.* What further ways can the U.S. support sustainable water sources in Jordan?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will encourage Jordan to complete its national water desalination project, the Aqaba-Amman-Conveyance Project, in a timely and effective manner so that it addresses Jordan's water needs. On July 8, Jordan and Israel announced an agreement to allow Jordan to purchase an additional and much needed 50 million cubic meters of water this year. If confirmed, I will encourage Jordan and Israel to finalize the agreement and continue to look for additional ways to increase water cooperation in the coming years. Expanding cooperation on the water issue will present additional opportunities to foster a healthier political relationship between the two countries.

*Question.* What is the potential for further cooperation between Israel and Jordan on the Red Sea-Dead Sea water project?

*Answer.* Both Israel and Jordan have indicated they no longer plan to pursue the Red Sea-Dead Sea water project. If confirmed, I will encourage Jordan to move out expeditiously on its national water desalination project, the Aqaba-Amman Conveyance Project, in a timely and effective manner so that it addresses Jordan's water needs.

#### *Gulf*

*Question.* Saudi Arabia's direct diplomatic engagement with Iran, facilitated by Baghdad, has been widely reported and is broadly considered an indicator that the Gulf states are not comfortable relying on JCPOA negotiations as a guarantor of their security against Iran's regional meddling. As a former US Ambassador to the UAE, I am confident you are very familiar with these sentiments.

- How do you perceive the utility of these ongoing talks and if confirmed, how will you work to ensure our regional partners, including the Gulf States as well as Israel, are integrated into Iran's nuclear talks?

*Answer.* I am aware of reports of multiple rounds of Saudi-Iranian talks facilitated by Iraq. Direct contacts and discussions between countries in the Gulf and Iran can be constructive in reducing tensions in the region; for the Gulf countries, these channels are also useful for making clear their requirements of Iran, including non-interference in their affairs. The UAE started such discussions in the summer of 2019, at a time of severely heightened tensions in the Gulf, and those exchanges continue today. Diplomacy is not a reward in this sense, but a vital means for securing their interests. Our Gulf partners and Israel have valid security concerns over Iran's destabilizing activity in the region. If confirmed, I will work with the Special Envoy for Iran, Rob Malley, to ensure our partners are consulted in the course of the JCPOA negotiations, as well as coordinate on U.S. efforts to deal with Iran's regional activities and to help our partners do the same.

#### *Red Sea/Horn of Africa*

*Question.* From the GERD dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia, to competition between Gulf States in the Horn of Africa, to maritime security along both sides of the Red Sea, there is significant overlap between NEA and the Africa Bureau, especially along the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.

- What aspects of cooperation between the two bureaus do you think are going well? What areas need improvement?

*Answer.* Bureaus in the department, including Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) and African Affairs (AF), must work closely together to ensure full coordination and cooperation on the full range of shared and overlapping issues, and across the geographical/bureaucratic seam. Sustained communication at the leadership level in Washington and in the field ensures that both Bureaus can overcome these seams, and if confirmed I will promote mechanisms to encourage such communication. If

confirmed, I will provide the leadership and model the kind of close cooperation with AF that is critical for the success of our respective work. I will also work closely with the Department's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffery Feltman, and ensure that NEA missions work collaboratively with AFRICOM.

If confirmed, I will also ensure that Red Sea and African issues are part of our regular conversations with key NEA Governments.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to improve cooperation with the Africa Bureau on issues that span this divide and to ensure that such issues facing sub-Saharan Africa are raised with governments in the Middle East?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead by example, and ensure that NEA staff coordinate closely with colleagues in the AF Bureau and with the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffery Feltman, as well as with AFRICOM. If confirmed, I will ensure that Red Sea and African issues are part of our regular conversation with key NEA Governments. If confirmed, I will also continue to ensure diplomacy, defense and development tools are brought together to address cross-cutting issues through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

#### *Eastern Mediterranean Energy and Security*

*Question.* Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have all joined the EastMed Gas Forum alongside Greece, Cyprus and Israel, greatly increasing the potential for cooperation among the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean on energy development and security, especially for clean and renewable energy sources.

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to coordinate with both the European Affairs Bureau and the Bureau of Energy Resources to promote increased cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead by example, and ensure that NEA staff coordinate closely with colleagues in the European Affairs and AF Bureaus and with the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffery Feltman, as well as with AFRICOM. If confirmed, I will ensure that Red Sea and African issues are part of our regular conversation with key NEA Governments. If confirmed, I will also continue to ensure diplomacy, defense and development tools are brought together to address cross-cutting issues through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

#### *Great Power Competition in the Middle East*

*Question.* The administration has repeatedly insisted that it is pivoting away from the Middle East to focus on great power competition with Russia and China.

- How do you see your job unfolding within this new paradigm?

*Answer.* Global power competition happens around the globe, including in the Middle East. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to rebuilding and restoring U.S. partnerships across the region. If confirmed, I will energetically promote the value of a sustained and strategic partnership with the United States, a partnership that stands in stark contrast to the transactional relationships offered by the People's Republic of China and Russia. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in the Bureaus of European Affairs (EUR) and East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) to ensure that strategic priorities with respect to Russia and the People's Republic of China are regular agenda items in discussions with regional partners.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take as Assistance Secretary to counter Russian and Chinese influence in the Middle East and North Africa?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in the Bureau of European Affairs (EUR) and the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) to ensure that strategic priorities with respect to Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are regular agenda items in discussions with regional partners. This will include empowering the three Regional China Officers deployed at embassies across the region to increase reporting, analysis, and engagement on PRC-related issues. If confirmed, I will also work with our Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as our Bureau of Political Military Affairs, to ensure an approach that maintains our position as the premier partner in the region while elevating our values, including respect for human rights.

The administration's commitment to reducing regional tensions, banking the fires of conflict, building deep partnerships based on an affirmative agenda, and demonstrating the value of a sustained partnership with the United States remains the best approach to countering Russian and PRC influence across the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Great power competition often occurs outside of the Pacific. How do you plan to compete with Russia and China given the administration's apparent retreat from the Middle East?

*Answer.* The President's vision for a collaborative partnership with the countries of the Middle East comes in the wider context of a growing global challenge to our values of open societies and open economies. This challenge comes primarily from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia. Our strength as a nation resides in the very commitment the U.S. Government has demonstrated over decades to our partners, and to the values the United States brings to those relationships.

The administration seeks to deepen diplomatic, security, cultural, and economic engagements through an affirmative agenda grounded in our democratic values. If confirmed, I will work to demonstrate that partnership with the United States remains our best strategy for addressing global competition in the Middle East, now and into the future.

*Question.* The Iranian regime received an approximately \$4-5 billion windfall in sanctions relief as a result of the JCPOA. In 2017, Sec. Blinken indicated that the "few billion dollars that have wound up in Iran's coffers that had huge debts to pay and the money that was freed up as a result of the deal has mostly gone to pay those debts and to bolster the economy." However, a vast body of follow-on reporting indicates that a majority of sanctions relief was instead funneled to the regime's proxies in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. As the Biden administration pursues sanctions relief as a part of its return to the JCPOA, what tools and safeguards exist that would prevent Iran from directing future sanctions relief to malign activities?

*Answer.* As the U.S. Government acknowledged at the time, although Iran devoted most of the resources it obtained through sanctions relief under the JCPOA toward bolstering its economy, it did use some of it for its military and its regional activities. Iran and its proxies and partners engaged in these activities prior to the JCPOA, after the conclusion of the JCPOA, and with increased aggressiveness after the U.S. exit from the JCPOA in 2018. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would present a threat of a far greater magnitude. The U.S. Government maintains a range of tools to combat terrorist financing and will continue to use these to counter Iran's destabilizing activities and support for terrorism. The administration will continue to use its considerable leverage—including sanctions that would remain in place in the event of a U.S. return to the JCPOA, the threat of sanctions re-imposition, and other joint action with our allies and partners—to protect U.S. interests.

*Question.* Both the Israelis and our partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council, who sit much closer to the Iranian threat, bemoaned a lack of consultations prior to the U.S. entry into the JCPOA. Further, many have characterized Special Envoy Malley's consultations as "one-way" and not responsive to their concerns. Do you commit to extensive consultations with Israel and our regional partners prior to making concessions to Iran? Will you seek Israel's concurrence before finalizing any proposed agreement or arrangement related to Iran's nuclear program?

*Answer.* Department officials, and in particular Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley, have been in close contact with partners in Israel and among the Gulf Arab states and will continue consulting closely with these key partners as this process proceeds. Every one of us shares a common interest: seeing to it that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

*Question.* How do you address criticisms that the Biden administration re-engagement with Iran has only served to isolate Israel and our Gulf partners?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration has an ironclad commitment to Israel's security. Alongside that commitment, the administration is focused on de-escalating tensions, banking the fires of conflict in Yemen, Libya and Syria, and enhancing stability throughout the Middle East. The Department has updated Israeli and Gulf counterparts regularly before and after negotiation rounds and is regularly engaged in discussions on our work to constrain and contain Iran's destabilizing regional activities. All of the Gulf countries have opened diplomatic channels with Tehran and are using them energetically for de-escalation; most of the channels pre-date the Biden-Harris administration.

*Question.* The JCPOA confronted the international community with several problematic sunset provisions on Iran's ability to receive and transfer conventional weapons (expired in 2020) and nuclear-related ballistic missile activity (expires in

2023). How will the Biden administration address re-imposing these restrictions in a more lasting manner—particularly given Russian and Chinese objections?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration remains concerned about Iran's nuclear capabilities as well as its ability to receive and transfer conventional weapons. The Department is working with its partners to address these, and the many other issues of concern with Iran. The administration believes that diplomacy is the best path forward on the nuclear challenge at this time, but is prepared to leverage all applicable authorities, including sanctions, against Iran for its provocative and destabilizing activities, including its ballistic missile development and provision of weapons to armed groups and other violent partners and proxies.

*Question.* Explain your strategic approach to promote sovereignty, diminish Iranian influence, and separate Iranian-backed proxies from legitimate security guarantors in Iraq and Lebanon.

Answer. I am committed to working closely with regional and European allies to diminish Iran's destabilizing activities across the region, including in Iraq and Lebanon.

The administration will continue to use its considerable leverage—including sanctions that would remain in place, the threat of sanctions re-imposition, and other joint action with our allies and partners—to protect U.S. interests and to promote wider security and stability in the region. If confirmed, I will deepen the good work led by our missions in the field, supporting and empowering moderates—whether in government or civil society—who support rule of law and the sovereignty of the state.

*Question.* How does the October 2020 expiration of the conventional weapons embargo affect Iran's ability to exert influence in the region?

Answer. The expiration of the U.N. conventional weapons arms embargo has not resulted in any discernable change in Iran's ability to exert influence in the region. For decades, Iran has taken actions that destabilize the region, including support for terrorism, developing its ballistic missile program, and providing weapons and materiel to proxy groups. The Biden-Harris administration will continue to use domestic authorities to dissuade countries from providing arms to Iran or buying them from Iran.

*Question.* In recent years, China has become Iran's preeminent oil and trading partner, providing Iran with crucial technological support to help develop its energy resources and other forms of infrastructure. In June 2020, China and Iran allegedly entered into a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', which includes a maximum investment of \$400 billion to improve Iran's oil, gas, and transportation infrastructure. What impact does Chinese economic investment have on the efficacy of the international sanction regimes against Iran? What gains does China receive from such investment? How would the Chinese Government, or Chinese-based companies, benefit from the lifting of U.S. sanctions against Iran?

Answer. In March 2021, the PRC and Iran signed a 25-year strategic cooperation agreement, building on a bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in 2016. Such PRC partnerships are not unique. The PRC has Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships with a number of other countries in the region, which often include investment proposals that never materialize. The PRC's recently concluded agreement with Iran also likely includes such proposals.

Nevertheless, the Department is watching Iran's economic activities closely, including its economic engagement with China. The administration's current Iran-related sanctions remain in effect unless and until they are lifted, and the U.S. Government will of course continue to address efforts at sanctions evasion.

*Question.* How does the United States drive a wedge between or shape CCP-Iranian relations?

Answer. While competition defines the U.S. relationship with the People's Republic of China, there are other areas of cooperation; one of those is the effort to constrain Iran's nuclear program. Beijing has no interest in seeing Iran develop a nuclear weapon, given the profoundly destabilizing impact that would have in a region upon which China depends for its oil and other energy imports.

The Department will continue to engage with the PRC on this common interest and discourage Beijing from taking steps vis-à-vis Iran that threaten our interests.

*Question.* Please provide your view of the Abraham Accords and their impacts for regional security, economic cooperation, and prosperity in the region.

Answer. The Abraham Accords of 2020 between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan represent an important new dynamic and a key opportunity to en-

hance peaceful co-existence and economic integration. The Accords have already proven to be a vehicle for economic growth, having spurred new trade and investment deals that previously would have been unthinkable. Over time, these unfolding relationships and the new economic partnerships they are fostering will create opportunities for the young and marginalized communities across the region.

*Question.* How do you plan to expand on the Abraham Accords to broker additional normalization agreements and ensure that existing agreements reap tangible economic and security benefits?

*Answer.* I very much welcome the Abraham Accords. If confirmed, I am committed to working with countries across the region to deepen both the new relationships as well as the historical relationships with Egypt and Jordan, and foster new ones. I will do this by engaging our missions throughout the region, highlighting the economic and security benefits of relations with Israel and leveraging the wide range of diplomatic tools at our disposal. If confirmed, I also look forward to learning from Israel's new partners in the region to better understand how we can work together to advance new normalization agreements and strengthen the existing ones.

*Question.* In 2016 John Kerry argued that there would be no "separate peace" between Israel and Arabs without first solving the issue of Palestinian statehood. What are your views on Palestinian statehood and its ties to additional normalization agreements? Doesn't re-inserting Palestinian statehood back into the peace process hinder prospects of further normalizations with Israel?

*Answer.* I believe that a two-state solution is the best way to ensure equal measures of freedom, security and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians. By making Israel more secure and opening new channels for constructive dialogue and diplomacy between Israel and the Arab world, normalization agreements also bring with them the potential to create new opportunities to advance a negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Similarly, making progress towards a two-state solution may hasten new normalization agreements. If confirmed, I will work to capitalize on all opportunities to advance peaceful co-existence between Israel and its Arab neighbors, as well as help create the conditions for direct negotiations of a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

*Question.* What is your assessment of Palestinian leadership and its ability to reach consensus between Gaza and the West Bank on issues of statehood and support for terrorism?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to restore calm in the West Bank and Gaza and keep flash point issues from flaring into violence. There are issues of good governance and accountability that affect the standing of the Palestinian Authority in the eyes of the Palestinian public, and that lie within the PA's hands to advance; there are at the same time steps that the Israeli Government can consider for enhancing the role of the PA in delivering services and economic opportunities. It is incumbent upon both sides to adopt an affirmative and practical approach to the conflict that encourages constructive, positive steps for providing the Palestinian people—whether in Gaza or the West Bank—greater economic opportunities while restoring the conditions that will make possible eventual direct negotiations of a two-state solution.

*Question.* In your view, how do Israeli-Arab normalization agreements affect the prospects for Israel-Palestinian peace negotiations?

*Answer.* All such agreements—whether the Abraham Accords, the historical peace agreements between Jordan and Egypt and Israel, or additional normalization agreements—contribute to diminishing the deep antipathy that has characterized Arab-Israeli perspectives for decades. In opening new channels for constructive dialogue and diplomacy, and for unprecedented people-to-people engagement between Israel and the Arab world, these normalization agreements have the potential to create new opportunities to advance a negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Similarly, progress towards a negotiated two-state solution may encourage other states in the region to take steps towards normalization. If confirmed, I will work to capitalize on all opportunities to advance normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors, as well as advance the conditions for direct negotiation of a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

*Question.* Provide your views on the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and United States recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. What is your view on the reversibility of these U.S. policies?

Answer. This administration recognizes that Jerusalem is central to the national visions of both Israelis and Palestinians. The administration also recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; the U.S. Embassy will remain in Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself is a final status issue to be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. In considering the U.S. position on the Golan Heights, the administration above all gives great weight to Israel's security. As long as Bashar al-Assad is in control of Syria and Iran remains active in Syria, it would be irresponsible to urge Israel to part with the Golan Heights. Control of the strategic Golan Heights provides Israel an added measure of security from the turmoil next door.

This administration has not reversed U.S. policy on these important issues. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring that all issues related to Jerusalem and Israel's security are handled with the care and sensitivity that they deserve.

*Question.* Despite opening the aperture of ESF and INCLE to the Palestinians, the State Department has achieved no progress on the pay-to-kill policy. Please provide your roadmap for addressing this egregious practice.

Answer. I believe the Palestinian practice of prisoner and martyr payments is abhorrent. I, and this administration, are absolutely committed to working to end the practice of Palestinian prisoner and "martyr" payments in a manner that addresses longstanding U.S. and international concerns. If confirmed, I would build on the work thus far, through sustained diplomatic engagement and pressure, underscoring that part of resetting the U.S.-Palestinian relationship is seeing reform on this heinous practice.

*Question.* At great cost, the United States has worked to support a sovereign independent Iraq, reframe the U.S.-Iraq bilateral relationship, and foster regional stability. How do you plan to continue to further U.S. interests in Iraq? What are your priority lines of effort linked to U.S. national security interests? What role will institutional reform and anti-corruption efforts play in this strategy? What role will countering Iranian influence play in this strategy?

Answer. A sovereign, stable, democratic, and prosperous Iraq is in the national interest of the United States as well as our partners in the Middle East. U.S. policies and programs are focused on that strategic objective. With Iraq's parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10, the Department's efforts are focused on increasing political participation by increasing trust in the elections' credibility, including by leading international efforts to fund the U.N. Assistance Mission to Iraq's electoral monitoring and technical assistance programs. U.S. assistance and engagements in support of institutional reform and anti-corruption efforts also contribute to more responsive, transparent, and inclusive democratic governance and institutions.

Since 2014, the United States has led international efforts to enable the return of displaced people to their homes and consolidate the Iraqi Government's control over areas liberated from ISIS. These initiatives and others are hampered by Iran's malign influence, including its support for militias operating outside state control, and their repeated efforts to target civil society activists and protestors for assassination. Iran-backed militias are a continuing threat to the Iraqi state. To effectively counter this, it is essential that the United States continue its efforts to build the capacity of the Iraqi Government and its democratic institutions.

*Question.* How do you plan to address the presence of Iranian-backed militias?

Answer. The administration shares your concern about Iran's destabilizing activities, including its support for proxies and militias. Iran's unacceptable support for terrorism threatens our forces, diplomatic personnel, and partners in the region. The President is committed to countering any Iranian threat to our personnel and our vital interests and has and will continue to respond to any such threats using all appropriate means. If confirmed I will work within the Department and inter-agency, using the full spectrum of tools available, to address the threat Iranian-backed militia groups pose to United States personnel, interests, and partners.

*Question.* Critics point to President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 as one of the biggest errors of his presidency. The Obama administration departed without securing a Status of Forces Agreement, allowed the Iraqi Security Forces to atrophy, did not adequately address the abuses of the Maliki Government, and failed to address Sunni disenfranchisement that ultimately set conditions for the Islamic State's unchecked movement across the Iraqi border in 2014. Please provide your perspectives on the root causes of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq as they related to U.S. policies, views on current troop levels as they relate to State Depart-



ment objectives, and recommendations on key State Department initiatives for preventing an Islamic State resurgence.

*Answer.* There were many factors that contributed to ISIS' rise. The Syrian civil war opened a battleground that attracted terrorists from across the world to Iraq's doorstep. ISIS has roots in Iraq, but in Syria it became a conventional force, asserting control over territory and capable of attacking a sovereign state. At the same time, Iraq's Government ruled in a sectarian manner and failed to adequately address the needs of minority communities, creating a permissive environment for a brutal offensive that captured significant Iraqi territory in 2014-2015. The United States then led a Coalition to assist the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga, in taking back their territory. At the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue held in July, the two delegations decided that the U.S. military presence would remain in Iraq, transitioning fully to advising and assisting the Iraqi forces. U.S. troop levels reflect the current stage of the Defeat-ISIS mission and the increased capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces.

*Question.* How important is continued U.S. troop presence to Iraq's stability?

*Answer.* U.S. forces are in Iraq at the request of and in coordination with the Government of Iraq. The Biden-Harris administration supports maintaining a small number of military service members to coordinate intelligence-sharing and to advise and assist Iraqi counterterrorism forces as they lead the ground fight against the continuing threat of ISIS, so it cannot re-emerge to again threaten Iraq, the American people, or our partners.

*Question.* How appropriate are current bilateral diplomatic agreements (exchange of notes) for a sustained diplomatic and security cooperation mission?

*Answer.* The administration assesses that we have sufficient arrangements with the Government of Iraq to continue the fight against ISIS and to develop the long-term capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces.

*Question.* Iraq's security apparatus remains dependent on DoD-administered Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) and congressionally-appropriated foreign military financing (FMF). Additionally, nearly 50% of Iraq's FMF expenditures are consumed with maintaining existing contracts. Please provide your thoughts on transitioning Iraq from CTEF to more traditional forms of Title 22 security cooperation, and 'right sizing' the Iraqi Security Forces in a manner that the Government of Iraq can sustain given current budget shortfalls.

*Answer.* Iraqi officials tell us at every opportunity that U.S. and Coalition support are necessary to maintain our military gains, as ISIS remains a threat in Iraq. While anticipating that Iraq will continue to receive substantial assistance from DoD in the short term via the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), DoD's future spending in Iraq is still to be determined. The Biden-Harris administration is focusing FMF on long-term security priorities in Iraq. The Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I) continues to pursue opportunities that will make Iraq more self-sufficient, especially in terms of maintenance. The U.S. Government wants to be Iraq's partner of choice and will work to wean Iraq off expensive contract maintenance as part of the maturation of the Iraqi Security Forces. The Department's efforts are focused on leveraging FMF as a vital instrument for developing Iraq's long-term capability and capacity to defeat threats to Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

*Question.* Lack of United States engagement and enforcement of chemical weapons 'redlines' during the Obama administration opened the door to increased Russian involvement and allowed the civil war and abuses against the Syrian people to continue unabated. Current progress towards a political reconciliation under UNSCR 2254 have similarly stalled. Please provide your views on the United States' role in Syria and accelerating progress on UNSCR 2254.

*Answer.* The United States is engaged with the U.N., including Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, our allies, and other international partners, in order to explore options and encourage all possible efforts to advance a political resolution to the conflict. While this has been the least kinetic year in a decade of conflict in Syria, it has proven to be the most disastrous one in economic terms, with 90 percent of the Syrian people falling below the poverty line. The immediate focus of the administration has thus been: ensuring the robust provision of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people; sustaining ceasefire lines to prevent further violence; and providing the necessary resources to support and demonstrate our continued commitment to the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I commit to working to advance efforts to promote progress toward a political resolution within the parameters of UNSCR 2254.

*Question.* U.S. Syria policy is broadly governed by UNSCR 2254 and associated sanctions regimes. Does Bashar al Assad's expanded military control and the de facto ceasefire change alter the prospects of a political settlement under UNSCR 2254? Do we need a new construct apart from UNSCR 2254 for Syria policy?

*Answer.* The Assad regime controls some 70 percent of Syrian territory, but that increased exercise of control has not provided the regime any greater legitimacy, given the terrible record of the past decade. The United States remains focused on three priorities: ensuring the robust provision of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people; sustaining ceasefire lines to prevent further violence; and providing the necessary resources to support and demonstrate our continued commitment to the enduring defeat of ISIS (); these priorities fall within the larger framework of advancing a political settlement to secure the future stability of the Syrian people, however remote that settlement appears at this time. If confirmed, I will continue to engage diplomatically to mitigate the Syrian people's suffering and press for accountability for the crimes against humanity committed by the regime. The United States will remain engaged with the U.N., our allies, and other international partners to encourage all efforts to advance the political track. To this end, the United States has been working with our partners and allies to support U.N. Special Envoy Geir Pedersen's efforts to advance the political process in Geneva.

*Question.* What is the linkage between U.S. troop levels in Syria, countering the Islamic State, blunting Iranian designs, influencing Turk and Russian Syria calculus, and associated impacts on political UNSCR 2254 discussions?

*Answer.* The U.S. military mission in Syria is there for one mission: preventing an ISIS resurgence. The mission requires demonstrated U.S. commitment and continued U.S. stabilization assistance to our partners. The Syrian Democratic Forces cannot continue to take on ISIS without U.S. support. The administration will continue to work with Turkey on our shared objectives in Syria, while addressing areas of disagreement. The United States has always been open to dialogue with Russia on Syria as long as the dialogue contributes to protecting civilians and to credibly advancing a political resolution to the conflict, as laid out in UNSCR 2254. If confirmed, I will use all diplomatic tools available to ensure that the political process moves forward.

*Question.* What relative effect would a U.S. troop withdrawal have on U.S. influence over future negotiations?

*Answer.* The United States continues to retain a limited military presence in NE Syria for the campaign against ISIS in partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and is deeply committed to this partnership. The SDF cannot continue to root out ISIS terrorists on its own or guard the tens of thousands of ISIS detainees who are still in their custody, without U.S. support. Furthermore, preventing a resurgence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as its branches and networks beyond the Middle East, demands revitalized U.S. engagement, along with our 82 partners and allies within the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

*Question.* The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act is intended to prevent rehabilitation of the Assad regime, seek accountability for the regime's atrocities, and advance a political solution to the conflict. Please provide your views on the role of Caesar legislation in furthering U.S. objectives in Syria.

*Answer.* The State Department is committed to advancing accountability for atrocities committed by the Assad regime, as well as for abuses by terrorist organizations and other parties in Syria. The Caesar Act, and our other Syria and Syria-related or applicable sanctions authorities, are important tools to press for accountability and limit the ability of the Assad regime and others to fuel or profit from the ongoing conflict. Members of Congress spoke clearly on this issue when they voted for the Caesar Act. On July 28, the Biden-Harris administration imposed sanctions in the spirit of the Caesar Act on Assad regime institutions and officials implicated in human rights abuses, illustrating the administration's push for accountability and justice for victims. If confirmed, I will continue to use all available tools and authorities to target persons perpetrating human rights abuses in Syria on behalf of the Assad regime.

*Question.* Turkey's objectives in northeast Syria run counter to U.S. interests while we tacitly support their activities in the northwest. How do we reconcile and balance Syria and Turkey policy? Can you balance Syria-Turkey policy without finding a Kurdish solution?

*Answer.* Turkey is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and we share an interest in sustainably ending the conflict in Syria. The United States will continue to work together with Turkey toward our shared objectives in Syria and to

address areas of disagreement. Turkey has remained an important partner in ensuring Syrians have access to life-saving assistance, as demonstrated by Ankara's advocacy for the adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2585 to reauthorize the provision of cross-border humanitarian assistance through Turkey into northwest Syria. The United States will work together with Turkey and our local Syrian partners for the safety and security of U.S. forces, partner forces, and civilians.

*Question.* The U.N. experts report on Libya accused the warring parties and their international backers—the United Arab Emirates, Russia, and Egypt on one side and Turkey and Qatar on the other—of violating the arms embargo with total impunity. Similarly, the issue of foreign mercenaries has plagued the run-up to Libya's December elections. How do you plan to address reported violations of the U.N. arms embargo? How do you impose costs on arms embargo violators without harming U.S. objectives in other areas? How do you impose costs on mercenaries and their sponsors?

*Answer.* Ensuring the rights of all Libyans to choose their leaders is critical as Libyans seek to regain their sovereignty after years of destructive foreign interventions. The October 23, 2020, ceasefire agreement calls for respecting the U.N. arms embargo and for the removal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya. For the first time in many years, there is a broad international consensus on both the ceasefire agreement and the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum's roadmap for presidential and parliamentary elections in December. This consensus includes some, if not all, of those who previously engaged in supporting Libyan factions against each other. I am committed to working with the interim Libyan Government, regional partners, and the U.N. to support the ceasefire agreement and its full implementation as called for in UNSCR 2570, including the immediate withdrawal of all foreign military forces, foreign fighters, proxy groups, and mercenaries. Holding the December elections is a U.S. priority, as a new national government will be able to make informed, sovereign decisions, including on defense issues.

*Question.* While current policy has been to publicize Russian adventurism in Libya, how does the United States impose real costs for Russia's use of private military contractors, i.e. Wagner, in Libya?

*Answer.* Russia has increased its use of private military companies like the Wagner Group in disparate parts of the globe, to destructive and destabilizing effect; their use represents an attempt to increase Russian influence while providing the Kremlin with a thin veil of deniability. The United States has sanctioned PMC Wagner and its personnel, including its president, Yevgeniy Prigozhin, and has publicized Wagner activities in Libya and sub-Saharan Africa. The U.S. Government also supports the work of the U.N. Panel of Experts to identify violations of the arms embargo. The U.S. Government continues to support the Libyan-defined path towards elections, which could pave the way for a new government to establish control over its territory, an essential step for removing foreign forces.

*Question.* Egypt is located at a strategic crossroads between the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa, remains an important U.S. partner in the region, and is important to Israel's security. However, in light of Egypt's growing cooperation with Russia and reports of potential Su-35 sales, is Egypt pivoting irrevocably towards Russia?

*Answer.* Egypt is a strategic partner for the United States and the bilateral defense relationship—more than four decades old—advances important U.S. national interests. Egypt's recent decision to apply a billion dollars of its own national funds towards refurbishment of its Apache helicopters, the largest ever nationally funded procurement of U.S. defense articles, underlines that Egypt, too, recognizes the strategic nature of the bilateral relationship. Cairo still views the United States as its security partner of choice, but we unquestionably face intensified competition in the defense procurement arena. Over the last decade, Egypt has been diversifying its arms purchases, including with French, German, and Italian procurements. The administration continues to reinforce the advantages of purchasing U.S. systems, including in terms of quality and interoperability with U.S. and regional partners. In the case of the potential acquisition of Su-35 fighter aircraft or other major new military equipment from Russia, the administration has emphasized the serious risk of triggering mandatory sanctions under CAATSA Section 231. We have by no means lost the battle for influence and primacy of position. That said, the U.S. Government must continue to focus energy on dissuading Egypt from potential significant Russian arms purchases.

*Question.* The Egyptians cite holds under the Obama administration for their outreach to Russia. Similarly, the Biden administration recently held \$170M in FMF

conditioned on political prisoners. Please provide details of the cases associated with the administration's FMF hold and the implications of holding FMF over non-American imprisonments.

Answer. Secretary Blinken recently decided to condition the use of \$130 million in FMF on the Government of Egypt fulfilling specific human rights-related requests, which have been the subject of a private dialogue. The Biden-Harris administration has engaged with the Government of Egypt privately to communicate these requests, and believes this approach affords the best prospects for making serious progress on this important set of issues.

*Question.* Would you characterize a potential Egyptian purchase of Su-35s from Russia as a significant transaction as described under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the relevant State Department offices and U.S. Government agencies to closely review any delivery of Su-35 aircraft from Russia as potentially a significant transaction under Section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act.

*Question.* Have the Abraham Accords set conditions for a renewed Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) or a derivative? What multilateral structures you suggest to maintain stability in the Middle East while simultaneously reducing U.S. commitment?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to helping Israel build partnerships that further integrate it into the region. Any sustainable regional economic and security dialogue will need to include Israel, and normalization efforts have opened that door. If confirmed, I will use diplomacy to press for a structured regional dialogue—with support from other members of the United Nations Security Council—that explores ways to reduce tensions, create pathways to de-escalation, and manage mistrust, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

*Question.* Would these multilateral structures force the United States to rely on imperfect partners with imperfect human rights records? How does the United States strike the appropriate balance between U.S. presence and reliance on imperfect partners to maintain security and accomplish U.S. national security interests?

Answer. The President has made clear that the administration will not give our partners in the Middle East a blank check to pursue policies at odds with American interests and values. If confirmed, I will have frank conversations with our partners about our elevation of human rights as a foreign policy priority. The deep and strategic relationships between the United States and our closest regional partners allows us to advance regional security and engage in a constructive dialogue on human rights that will make our relationships stronger and more sustainable. If confirmed, I will pursue both while supporting our closest partners in the face of threats to their security.

*Question.* During a November 2019 primary debate, then President-elect Biden said he would limit arms sales to Saudi Arabia and make them the "pariah that they are." President Biden has since suspended offensive arms sales to the kingdom and ceased offensive support to the Kingdom's operations in Yemen (although this was largely symbolic). Isolating Saudi Arabia would likely have negative consequences for U.S.-Saudi counterterrorism cooperation, would diminish U.S. efforts to improve Saudi Arabia's human rights record, and would eliminate Saudi Arabia's potentially helpful role in a broader Middle Eastern multilateral security construct.

- How do you frame the U.S. Saudi relationship in a manner that best promotes U.S. national security interests and doesn't push Saudi Arabia to [the People's Republic of] China ?

Answer. Saudi Arabia remains a key Middle East partner of the United States and can play a constructive role in resolving regional disputes and conflicts, as well as contribute to solutions to global challenges such as climate change. U.S.-Saudi counterterrorism cooperation over many decades has saved countless lives, and directly contributed to the fight to defeat ISIS. The U.S. commitment to support Saudi Arabia in defending its territory, home to more than 70,000 U.S. citizens, is a cornerstone of our strategic partnership and is unmatched by any potential rival to U.S. interests in the region. The United States also needs this partnership to reflect our values. If confirmed, I will support the administration's recalibration of the U.S.-Saudi relationship to bring greater transparency and accountability to it, while anchoring human rights on the bilateral agenda and preserving our underlying strategic partnership in everything from counterterrorism, to pushing back against Iranian malign activities, to higher education and climate change. This is a multi-

faceted and deep-rooted partnership that must address areas of concern and advance areas of shared opportunity.

#### United Arab Emirates Policy

##### *UAE's Role in the Middle East*

*Question.* UAE has served as an important U.S. partner in the Middle East and Afghanistan. UAE led efforts to normalize diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, and has a deep economic relationship with the United States. What is the UAE's role in the broader Middle East vis-à-vis U.S. national interests?

*Answer.* The UAE has been one of our closest economic, diplomatic, and security partners in the Middle East. It has built some of the most effective institutions and companies in the region and demonstrated that it can play a constructive role in resolving or de-escalating regional conflicts. The UAE Government provided tremendous support to Operation Allies Refuge, housing, feeding and caring for thousands of Americans and Afghans whom the U.S. Government removed from harm's way, as they made their way to the United States. The UAE has shown, in its historic agreement to establish relations with Israel, as well as its productive recent diplomatic efforts with Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, that it can contribute meaningfully to a more peaceful Middle East and broader region. That is not to say that the U.S.-UAE relationship has not faced challenges. The 2017 Gulf rift divided U.S. partners in the region; the UAE's and Qatar's animosity exacerbated conflicts in Libya and the Horn of Africa. Doha and Abu Dhabi have made significant progress in reconciling these differences since the Al Ula Declaration of January 2021, which formally brought the Gulf rift to an end. If confirmed, I will encourage continued work to repair relations between these two important U.S. partners, and will look to the UAE to continue its close and multifaceted partnership with the United States.

*Question.* How does the United States moderate UAE's often expeditionary Muslim Brotherhood-oriented foreign policy and encourage it to take a more productive role?

*Answer.* The UAE has been a capable, productive diplomatic and security partner for the United States for decades. That is the case today as well, on issues such as Libya and in the UAE's helpful efforts on the fraught issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, an issue that has threatened to bring Egypt and Sudan into outright conflict with Ethiopia. While we do not always agree with the UAE on its course of action, our history of collaborative work—including on multiple security operations, from Afghanistan to the campaign to defeat ISIS—provides the U.S. Government with ample influence. Experience in Yemen and Libya has also taught the UAE important lessons about the ease of getting into conflicts and the difficulty of exiting from them. From defense cooperation to bilateral trade to diplomatic work to deepen the regional benefits of the Abraham Accords, I see significant benefits that can be achieved via collaborative work with Abu Dhabi.

##### *UAE, Russia and China*

*Question.* Despite being a key U.S. partner in the region, and central to normalization efforts with Israel, UAE also has a history of deepening cooperation with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) that runs counter to U.S. interests. How does the department plan to address the UAE's partnership with Russia and [the People's Republic of] China?

*Answer.* Several U.S. partners in the Middle East have deepened cooperation with Russia and the PRC in recent years. The administration has been clear that the United States has no issue with normal economic relations. Some areas of cooperation with these two countries, however, run up against U.S. interests, where they pose a threat to the security of sensitive weapons systems, U.S. defense and commercial technology, and information technology. If confirmed, I plan to address these issues forthrightly with the United Arab Emirates and other partners to convey U.S. red lines. We will not compromise on these issues.

*Question.* Please provide an update on UAE's relationship with the PRC as it relates to the F-35 sale.

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration has signaled its intent to move forward with these proposed defense sales to the UAE, even as the two governments continue discussions to ensure there are unmistakably clear mutual understandings with respect to Emirati obligations and actions before, during, and after delivery. Congress and the administration are focused on the same important issues about this sale, and if confirmed I will ensure they continue to be addressed. Projected delivery dates on these sales, if implemented, would be several years in the future.

Thus, the administration anticipates a robust and sustained dialogue with the UAE to ensure that any defense transfers meet mutual strategic objectives to build a stronger, interoperable, and more capable security partnership and are employed in a manner consistent with international human rights law and the law of armed conflict.

The UAE continues to be a key regional partner for the U.S. Government, and its defense procurements help regional security. If confirmed, I will work to ensure a continued constructive U.S.-UAE relationship while ensuring the UAE understands and respects the administration's concern about the PRC's efforts to increase its strategic cooperation with the UAE.

#### *UAE and Libya*

*Question.* In your assessment, how closely are the Emiratis coordinating with the Russian state, as well as its subsidiaries like Wagner, in Libya? What forms does this coordination take? Are there instances in which it has escalated into concrete and tangible support, whether that be to the Russian state or Russian-aligned operators?

*Answer.* The United States has called on all external parties, including the UAE, to respect Libyan sovereignty and the October 23, 2020 ceasefire agreement, which called on all foreign forces and mercenaries to depart the country. The UAE has supported forces aligned with General Haftar in recent years. The Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General reported in 2020 that the UAE may have supported the Wagner Group in Libya, as well. Recently, the administration has urged the UAE, in alignment with the international community's consensus, to use its influence with any Libyan political figures to help resolve the current impasse over the electoral framework, so that presidential and parliamentary elections may be held on time in December 2021.

#### *UAE and Syria*

*Question.* There is growing concern over the prospect of the UAE normalizing ties with Bashar al-Assad. Do you share this concern? Are there tools the U.S. can employ to prevent the UAE from normalizing relations with the Assad regime, including through the provision of reconstruction funds to Syria?

*Answer.* I am concerned that any government would consider normalizing ties with the Assad regime in Damascus without any measure of progress on the myriad requirements laid out in UNSCR 2254. The United States will not reestablish or upgrade our diplomatic relations with the Assad regime, and will continue to consult closely with our partners and allies in the region on the best way to achieve progress in Syria. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the UAE and other regional partners to consider what they might require of the Assad regime—on behalf of the Syrian people—before any potential engagement with Damascus. Syrians consistently say that the issue of first priority for them is gaining an accounting for missing and detained family members, for example.

*Question.* In your assessment, is there more the U.S. can do diplomatically to end the war in Yemen? If so, what?

*Answer.* The United States welcomes the appointment of the new U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg; his appointment, and his announced intention to focus on bottom-up political work in Yemen presents additional opportunities to muster the requisite pressure on the Houthis to agree to a national ceasefire. The U.S. Government remains committed to supporting a U.N.-led peace process to achieve a durable resolution to the conflict, but a ceasefire is a necessary starting point. Sustained engagement by U.S. Special Envoy Lenderking has helped create unprecedented international consensus on ending this war through inclusive political talks. If confirmed, I will work with him and the U.N. Special Envoy to urge all parties to engage with the U.N., with each other, and with civil society, without pre-conditions. I believe there is an opportunity to achieve peace in Yemen and we must seize it.

*Question.* Do you believe UNSCR 2216 properly reflects the current context in Yemen? Will the new administration seek to modify this UNSCR?

*Answer.* The administration is committed to exploring all possible options, taking into consideration the timing, sequencing, and ramifications of any new resolution. The United States continues to work with partners in the region, U.N. Security Council members, and the U.N. Special Envoy to advance the peace process. Revitalized diplomatic engagement in support of the U.N.-led peace effort is crucial for ending the war. A new resolution may be appropriate after further progress has been made in inclusive political negotiations, which remains a key objective of the admin-

istration. If confirmed, I will continue to strongly support the targeted arms embargo and sanctions designations of UNSCR 2216 as key elements of the UNSCR 2140 Yemen sanctions regime.

*Question.* Despite the August 4 explosions and unrest that followed, Lebanon's political elites have continued to cling to power. Current policy has been to withhold broader financial assistance absent reforms targeting corruption and transparency. Please describe your policy objectives in Lebanon and how they differ from previous approaches.

*Answer.* Lebanon is facing accelerating political, economic, security, and public health crises, made worse by the failure of Lebanese political elites to form a government and institute critical economic reforms. The United States, in coordination with like-minded partners, has been pressing Lebanese leaders for the past 13 months to form a government; those efforts appear to have paid off. The formation of a government under PM-designate Najib Mikati is only the first step; the Government must take on structural reforms, and work to end endemic corruption. That is the focus of U.S. diplomatic efforts, in tandem with other like-minded regional and European partners. Given the dire humanitarian situation, the United States also continues to provide support directly to those in most need and is working to bolster key legitimate institutions that can strengthen Lebanese sovereignty in the face of the malign influence of Hizballah. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage key partners in Europe and the Gulf to assist the Lebanese people and keep up their political engagement in a united effort to push Lebanese leaders to make long-overdue reforms.

*Question.* What conditions would Lebanon need to meet in order to qualify for U.S. financial support? If confirmed, will you continue sanctions against corrupt and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) linked officials to advance these reforms?

*Answer.* The formation of a government was just the first step in Lebanon's long road to arrest the spiraling economic crisis; the next steps will necessarily include enacting reforms to address the economic crisis, bring more accountability and transparency to a system that is rife with corruption, and keep elections on track for next year. The Mikati Government must act, and act swiftly. If confirmed, I stand ready to support the new government with the hard work ahead. If confirmed, I will also support efforts to use economic tools, such as targeted sanctions, to pursue Hizballah's financial networks and hold accountable those individuals who impede a reform agenda. I will also urge other countries to take national-level action to designate, ban, or otherwise restrict the group.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to working to ensure the \$11B in CEDRE, IMF, World Bank funding earmarked for Lebanon remains contingent on key reforms, including reforms to the electricity/natural gas sector, increased transparency, and an audit of the central bank?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the international community to ensure that Lebanese leaders understand that meaningful reforms remain crucial to unlocking long-term structural support to Lebanon.

*Question.* Many in Congress see the Lebanese Armed Forces as a vital counterweight to the influence of LH and Lebanon's legitimate security guarantor. What role do you see for the LAF in Lebanon?

*Answer.* The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon, are reliable U.S. partners, and are an important counterweight to Hizballah's malign influence. The LAF also remain the only cross-confessional institution with broad support from all elements of Lebanese society, transcending sectarian and party affiliations. A strong, stable LAF undermines Hizballah's assertion that its arms are necessary to defend Lebanon from external aggression. If confirmed, I will ensure the LAF remain critical partners for the United States.

*Question.* Do you commit to continued FMF assistance to the LAF, barring information that indicates otherwise?

*Answer.* The LAF is one of our primary partners in achieving U.S. objectives in Lebanon. FMF assistance has become especially critical as the LAF has assumed responsibilities beyond its normal remit in response to the compounding crises facing the country. If confirmed, I commit to using FMF assistance to further the strong partnership between the United States and the LAF in support of our security objectives.

*Question.* Will you commit to consult with Congress before modifications to LAF assistance?

**Answer.** U.S. foreign policy is optimized when there is constant communication and collaboration between the executive and legislative branches of government. If confirmed, I pledge to continue our cooperation on these issues, and I will work through the interagency and with Congress to ensure the delivery of appropriated funds to Lebanon.

**Question.** Despite efforts to the pivot to the Pacific, competition with China must also occur outside the IndoPacific region and on a global scale. China's Belt and Road initiatives are prospering in Africa, South Asia, and are making lasting inroads in the Middle East. Given a diminished U.S. commitment to the Middle East under the Biden administration in favor of the IndoPacific, how do you plan to contend with the growth of Chinese strategic expansion?

**Answer.** The Biden-Harris administration is committed to rebuilding and restoring U.S. partnerships across the globe, including in the Middle East. This is not a diminishment of the U.S. commitment. If confirmed, I will continue to demonstrate to our partners the value of a sustained and strategic partnership with the United States through diplomacy, economic engagement, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. This stands in contrast to the transactional nature of investments by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The United States distinguishes itself from Beijing's state-led approach by promoting private-sector driven alternatives. The United States focuses on partnerships and on strengthening local capacity to promote development, innovation, and prosperity. The United States will continue to promote entrepreneurship, transparency, good governance, fair practices, and internationally recognized environmental, social, and labor standards.

**Question.** How does the United States remain the partner of choice in the Middle East given CCP encroachment and lack of Chinese focus on human rights issues?

**Answer.** U.S. values—our support for essential freedoms of expression and worship, as well as our emphasis on respect for universal human rights—offer a potent counterpoint to PRC-style autocracy. U.S. higher education and entrepreneurship, and American culture are also powerful draws for the societies of the Middle East, and if confirmed, I will continue to promote them through energetic advocacy and programming. U.S. leadership in addressing global challenges like the pandemic and climate change is also a key source of our strength as a country.

The Biden-Harris administration is leading as well on efforts to encourage de-escalation in the region, and with increasing success. The Gulf rift of 2017 is largely mended, there are encouraging signs of outreach between previously adversarial countries like Egypt and Turkey, and a re-alignment of regional countries around a common effort to resolve conflicts in Yemen and Libya. The U.S. effort resonates with countries across the region, demonstrating the value of a long-term strategic partnership with the United States.

**Question.** The U.S. has growing concerns with China's economic relationship with Israel. Given the relative weakness on Israel's committee on foreign investment and issues highlighted by the CCP's involvement in Haifa port, how do you effectively decouple the CCP from Israel?

**Answer.** The administration remains deeply concerned by attempts by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to extend influence and acquire critical and dual-use technology through acquisitions and investment in Israel. The administration welcomes efforts by all countries to enhance investment in quality infrastructure development. I believe that such an investment must be within the confines of strong regulatory structures that ensure all companies investing in Israel do so in a responsible manner, consistent with international practices, that benefits the people of Israel, and does not undermine Israeli national security. While Israel's establishment of a new investment advisory committee is a step in the right direction, I understand there are concerns as to its effectiveness, given the voluntary nature of its coverage and its lack of coverage for the high-tech sector. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Israel to strengthen its foreign investment advisory committee to minimize exposure to national security risks, including the acquisitions of critical technologies, sensitive data, and critical infrastructure.

**Question.** The Department of Defense recently disbanded the Defeat ISIS Task Force and dismissed the Task Force Director. Similarly, State Department eliminated the Special Envoy to Counter ISIS (SECI) as an independent entity and placed the office under the CT Bureau. What are your views on the threat posed by ISIS?

**Answer.** ISIS in Syria and Iraq remains a serious threat and ensuring its enduring defeat remains a central priority of the Biden-Harris administration. The dual-



hatting of the CT Coordinator and Special Envoy does not reflect a diminution of the position of the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. It instead reflects the evolving nature of the ISIS threat to encompass areas outside Iraq and Syria, and a desire to situate the enduring Defeat-ISIS mission within the established CT Bureau architecture. Doing so enables the Defeat-ISIS campaign to more effectively leverage CT Bureau civilian counterterrorism capacity-building assets to counter ISIS branches and networks globally.

*Question.* Thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and their families remain in Syrian Democratic Forces prisons or makeshift camps in Syria. Repatriation efforts to return these fighters and families to their countries of origin have been wildly unsuccessful. These fighters and their families represent a strategic vulnerability to the region. How will you address repatriation, de-radicalization, and demobilization efforts?

*Answer.* The best long-term solution for foreign terrorist fighters and their family members is repatriation, followed by prosecution, rehabilitation, and/or reintegration, as appropriate. If confirmed, I intend to deepen our diplomatic outreach to press countries of origin to repatriate their citizens from northeast Syria. I will collaborate with the U.S. interagency in their work to support countries' efforts to repatriate their nationals, including through U.S. Government assistance with logistics and planning of repatriations, such as use of U.S. government assets to transport foreign fighters and associated family members out of the region, and assistance in building partners' counterterrorism capacities for investigations, prosecutions, and rehabilitation.

*Question.* What civilian security, democracy, and human rights programs would you highlight or pursue to address the seeds of conflict that led to the Islamic State's rise and allure and have not been effectively addressed?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration understands stability and its drivers are key to enabling our local partners in Syria to focus on fighting ISIS and ensuring its enduring defeat. In one of its first acts, the administration lifted the U.S. freeze on stabilization assistance for Syria. In March, the administration announced almost \$50 million for U.S. stabilization efforts in northeast Syria and will continue these efforts with FY 2021 resources. U.S. assistance in northeast Syria prioritizes stabilization activities that contribute to the restoration of daily life by closing gaps in local authority capacities; supporting transitional justice, justice and accountability, and civil society programs; and addressing vulnerabilities previously exploited by ISIS.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

*Question.* The Israel-Gaza conflict continues to flare up, according to recent news reports that Israel's military bombed Palestinian militant weapons sites in the Gaza Strip early Sunday, August 22 in response to a violent demonstration on Saturday August 21 at the perimeter fence that left an Israeli police officer critically injured. As Assistant Secretary for NEA, what recommendations would you make to President Biden regarding next steps to help manage the tensions there?

*Answer.* The May 21 Gaza ceasefire has mostly held, but we are engaging multiple partners who have a role to play in calming the situation. The August 21 protests ended with the death of one Israeli police officer, as well as the death and injuries of a number of Palestinians. There have been Israeli airstrikes in response to incendiary balloons and rocket attacks from Gaza. The situation remains tense because many of the factors that contributed to the May violence remain unresolved. If confirmed, I will work closely with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as well as international partners, in maintaining calm in the West Bank and Gaza and keeping flashpoint issues in Jerusalem from reigniting the situation. President Biden has been clear in his conviction that a negotiated two-state solution would best secure the future of a democratic, Jewish Israel, and provide equal measures of freedom, security and prosperity to both Israelis and Palestinians. I would recommend an affirmative and practical approach that encourages constructive, positive and tangible steps by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to keep the possibility of a negotiated two-state solution alive.

*Question.* As Assistant Secretary for NEA, how are you planning on addressing the dismal human rights situation in Egypt even after the administration decided against appropriately responding to the Congressional provision?

*Answer.* I share your concerns about the human rights situation in Egypt. The Biden administration has made clear its intention to elevate the role of human rights in our foreign policy, and that includes in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. The Secretary's decision on FMF—the first time a Secretary of State has not waived the Congressionally-mandated human rights certification requirement—is only one facet of the Department's engagement on human rights. The Department supports greater space for civil society and human rights defenders, and freedom of expression. The administration's human rights dialogue with the Egyptian government is focused on seeing steady, enduring progress on such fundamental rights.

*Question.* As Assistant Secretary for NEA, how will you address these troubling reports out of Tunisia and continue to stand on the side of Tunisia's democracy?

*Answer.* The United States shares the Tunisian people's goal of a democratic government that is responsive to the country's needs. If confirmed, I will urge President Saied to appoint a new head of government to address Tunisia's immediate economic and health crises, announce concrete plans for a return to the democratic path, and pursue reforms through an inclusive process that recognizes the Tunisian people's demand for reforms that improve the functioning of their democracy. These steps must include diverse political actors and civil society as well as respect for the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY TODD YOUNG

*Question.* What is your view of the U.S.-Israel relationship? If confirmed, what will you do to maintain and strengthen this relationship?

*Answer.* Israel is a critical partner to the United States and the two are united by shared values and strategic interests; those include a commitment to democracy, economic prosperity, and regional security. Israel is a stable country in an unstable region, and the U.S. Government's closest security partner in countering a broad spectrum of threats, ranging from cyber-attacks to Iran's destabilizing proliferation of advanced weaponry to its network of proxies. With an open and free society that is largely accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals, Israel has been dedicated to the cause of women's empowerment and gender equality since the founding of the state. If confirmed, I will commit to maintaining and strengthening all aspects of this relationship.

*Question.* Israel constantly faces terrorist attacks and threats—including rocket attacks by Hamas in Gaza and attacks from Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon and Syria. Do you fully support Israel's right to defend itself from terrorist attacks?

*Answer.* Yes, I fully support Israel's right to defend itself from terrorist attacks and strongly condemn these attacks, no matter where they come from.

*Question.* What is the status of the recently notified U.S. direct commercial sale of \$735 million in U.S.-origin precision-guided munitions to Israel?

*Answer.* I understand the notification was approved and authorizes the export of precision-guided munitions, including any technical data and defense services, to Israel to support weapons integration, flight tests, and hardware delivery of Joint Direct Attack Munition variants and Small Diameter Bomb Increment I variants.

*Question.* Do you support maintaining the Palestine Affairs Unit at the Embassy in Jerusalem? How would opening a separate consulate in Jerusalem serve U.S. interests?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring that the U.S. presence in Jerusalem enables our government to carry out a full range of diplomatic activities, including engagement with the local communities and government leadership. The U.S. Government has been clear that our Embassy will remain in Jerusalem. Currently, the Palestinian Affairs Unit within the embassy is the primary point of contact with the Palestinian people. In May, Secretary Blinken stated "the United States will be moving forward with the process to reopen our consulate in Jerusalem. That's an important way for our country to engage with and provide support for the Palestinian people," I understand that this is part of the administration's renewed engagement with the Palestinian people and leadership.

*Question.* What would be your strategy for strengthening the Abraham Accords while persuading more countries to normalize relations with Israel? How would you build on the success of the Abraham Accords?

Answer. As President Biden and Secretary Blinken have said, this administration welcomes and strongly supports the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements between Israel and countries in the Arab and Muslim world. The Department is leading the U.S. Government's efforts, working with the National Security Council and U.S. Government interagency, to deepen existing agreements and urge other countries to normalize relations with Israel.

If confirmed, I am committed to working with countries across the region to build on existing relationships and develop new ones, including by highlighting the tangible benefits of relations with Israel and leveraging the wide range of diplomatic tools at our disposal. I also look forward to engaging with Israel's new partners in the region to find ways to improve the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike to help create the conditions for a durable two-state solution.

*Question.* What do you believe are the most pressing security challenges Israel faces, and what role do those threats play in convincing regional partners that Israel is the not the cause of instability in the region?

Answer. Israel believes Iran is the greatest threat to its security. As Secretary Blinken and other senior U.S. officials have said, the United States is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, and believes diplomacy, in coordination with our allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal. An Iran with a nuclear weapon is likely to act even more provocatively when it comes to these issues. The administration has fundamental problems with Iran's actions across a series of issues—including its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, and its destabilizing actions in the region. Our partners in the region share a similar concern.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you seek to use your connection and experience in the region to garner more regional support for the vital humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people?

Answer. I am proud that the United States continues to lead the humanitarian response to this crisis, with over \$4 billion worth of assistance provided to the Yemeni people since 2014. If confirmed, I will work closely with key countries in the region and around the world, as well as the United Nations, to ensure pledges are disbursed, humanitarian organizations are adequately funded, and the needs of the most vulnerable Yemenis are addressed in a coordinated and effective manner. I will also work with the U.N. and other partners to promote unfettered access for humanitarian assistance throughout Yemen to ensure aid reaches those in need.

*Question.* What would be your approach, alongside Tim Lenderking, in breaking the diplomatic stalemate that exists in Yemen?

Answer. The U.S. Government has welcomed the appointment of Hans Grundberg, the new U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen, and remains committed to supporting a U.N.-led peace process to achieve a durable resolution to the conflict. Sustained engagement by U.S. Special Envoy Lenderking has helped create unprecedented international consensus on ending this war through inclusive political talks. If confirmed, I will urge all parties to engage with the Special Envoy, the U.N., with each other, and with civil society, without pre-conditions. I will also ensure the governments of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen are taking the steps necessary to advance peace, and will work with key international and regional partners to press the Houthis to cooperate with the U.N.-led process. We have an opportunity to achieve peace in Yemen, and we must seize it.

*Question.* Do you believe that the Iranian-backed Houthis desire a political settlement? Or does Iran desire to maintain a footprint and instability from which to target Saudi Arabia? Do you believe that the Houthis have the autonomy to decide this for themselves?

Answer. The Houthis remain singularly focused on their military offensive against Marib, the greatest impediment to U.N. and U.S. peace efforts. The offensive is also exacerbating Yemen's humanitarian crisis, threatening directly some one million IDPs and other civilians in harm's way. The Houthi leadership must show they are committed to a political settlement by engaging with the new U.N. Special Envoy in good faith. In addition to continuing to prosecute the war inside Yemen, the Houthis, with Iranian support, have also launched more than 240 cross-border air attacks on Saudi Arabia this year alone, endangering the Saudi people and more than 70,000 U.S. citizens residing in the Kingdom. If Iran wants to show it can be a responsible actor in the region, Yemen is a good place to start, by ending lethal aid and training to the Houthis.

*Question.* Denying the Houthis access to key weapons and technology from Iran is critical to both reducing the threat the group poses to our regional partners and pressuring the group to cease attacks and negotiate in good faith. Do you agree? If so, how should the U.S. expand cooperation with partners and allies to expose and interdict the flow of key Iranian weapons, materiel, and equipment to the Houthis?

*Answer.* I agree. The Houthis rely on Iranian weapons, intelligence, training, and support to conduct horrific attacks impacting civilian targets as well as infrastructure in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Denying the Houthis access to this lethal support from Iran is a critical part of the Department's regional strategy. If confirmed, I will continue with this comprehensive approach using a variety of tools—from sanctions to interdiction to support for Saudi Arabia's legitimate self-defense needs—to counter Iran's lethal aid to the Houthis and other armed groups, as well as its destabilizing behavior more broadly in the region. The Department will also continue to prioritize the implementation and enforcement of U.N. Security Council resolutions barring the unauthorized transfer of weapons to the Houthis.

*Question.* What are the biggest dangers Iran poses to the international community and how would you rank them in order of urgency?

*Answer.* The most serious threat that Iran poses globally is its untrammled nuclear program. That is why the Biden administration prioritizes constraining Iran's program through measured, determined diplomacy. Iran poses additional threats through a spectrum of regional and global activities, including but not limited to its plots to kidnap our citizens, its abhorrent practice of using wrongfully detained Americans and foreign nationals as political tools, its support for terrorism, its lethal support to armed groups, proliferation of advanced weaponry to these groups, and its ballistic missile program. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would pose an even greater threat when it comes to these issues.

*Question.* Secretary Blinken has said that any replacement of JCPOA needs to be "longer and stronger." How would you define longer and stronger? What are the minimum requirements for a "longer and stronger" deal?

*Answer.* Iran's unchecked, unconstrained nuclear program poses a threat to global security. Constraining it is therefore the overriding priority for the United States and its P5+1 partners. To achieve that immediate objective, the administration is pursuing a mutual return to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. If the Department is successful in doing so, the intent is to build on that as part of a comprehensive approach using a variety of policy tools to strengthen the constraints on Iran's nuclear program and address other issues of concern.

*Question.* Do you believe the United States should learn any lessons from Hamas's heinous rocket campaign it unleashed on Israel in May, especially concerning Iran's destabilizing proxy campaign it is waging throughout the region?

*Answer.* Hamas's heinous rocket attacks on Israel in May only reinforced the Biden-Harris administration's ironclad resolve on Israel's security, including through deterring and countering Iran's destabilizing regional activities. This includes the need to work with Israel and other allies and partners to counter the flow of materiel and financial support to Hamas and other Gaza-based militant groups.

*Question.* Can you explain why it would be a prudent policy to pursue a nuclear agreement with Iran without doing anything to stop Iran's other destabilizing activities?

*Answer.* Even as the administration pursues a diplomatic effort to constrain Iran's nuclear program, it continues to address Iran's destabilizing regional activities. The Biden administration is committed to continuing to counter the threats posed by Iran using the various tools at its disposal, including sanctions, and working in close coordination with allies and partners.

*Question.* How can we look our partners in the face and tell them convincingly that we are committed to their security when we permit Iran to keep funding terrorist proxies, to keep launching attacks on international shipping and energy infrastructure, to keep testing ballistic missiles?

*Answer.* Iran's destabilizing regional activities are nothing new. Tehran has posed such threats for decades, across multiple administrations. The Biden administration is unwavering in its commitment to its allies and partners and continues to engage closely with them as part of a comprehensive approach that includes sanctions, interdiction, defense and intelligence cooperation, and support for Israel's freedom of action to counter Iran's destabilizing activities. In fact, the administration's sus-

tained diplomatic engagement with allies and partners has ensured a more united, better coordinated, and more consistent approach in countering the Iranian threat and advancing our shared goals in the region.

*Question.* In your view, are the LAF a viable counterweight to Hezbollah's influence within Lebanon?

*Answer.* The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon, a reliable U.S. partner, and an important counterweight to Hizballah's malign influence in the country. A strong, stable LAF undermines Hizballah's assertion that its arms are necessary to defend Lebanon from external aggression. The LAF remains the only cross-confessional institution with broad support from all aspects of Lebanese society, transcending sectarian and party alliances.

*Question.* Since the U.S. began funding the Lebanese Armed Forces, have they taken any meaningful steps to confront Hezbollah?

*Answer.* According to a December 2019 GAO Report, the LAF's border security and counterterrorism capabilities notably improved from 2013 to 2018. With the support of U.S. training and equipment, the LAF has defeated ISIS in Lebanon, reasserted control over territory along its border with Syria, and increased its presence in southern Lebanon in support of UNIFIL. These improvements undercut Hizballah's unfounded argument that its weapons are necessary to protect Lebanon's sovereignty. If confirmed, I will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to push back on Hizballah's terrorist activities and destabilizing influence in Lebanon and across the region.

*Question.* Given the deterioration of the Lebanese state, can you assure the committee that U.S. equipment provided to the LAF will not fall into the hands of Hezbollah?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to undertake rigorous measures to minimize the likelihood that Hizballah or any other terrorist organization will benefit from our assistance, including thorough oversight, vetting, and robust risk mitigation practices carried out by the U.S. Government and implementing partners. The LAF is a strong U.S. partner with an exemplary end-use monitoring record. The Department continues to hold the LAF accountable for its use of U.S. assistance funds and have no reason to believe that any U.S. equipment has fallen into the hands of Hizballah.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* Just last week Lebanon announced a new government formation under Prime Minister Mikati. While this is a positive step in the formation of a government, I remain concerned about the deep economic crisis in the country.

- What are U.S. priorities in engaging with the new Government? How can the U.S. help as the country's economy continues to collapse further?

*Answer.* Lebanon must implement significant reforms to address the spiraling economic crisis it faces, on an urgent basis and in a sustainable way. If confirmed, I will build on the work by the Department and our embassy, and in concert with key partners, to keep up the pressure on PM Mikati's new government to implement long-overdue economic and governance reforms; these reforms are demanded by the Lebanese people, and should be done ideally in partnership with the IMF, Lebanese civil society, and other key actors. The Mikati government should also prepare the country to hold parliamentary elections in May 2022 as scheduled. The United States and our international partners have been clear that Lebanon's leaders must act in order to unlock potential financing programs and structural support, but the hard work must start immediately. The United States stands with the Lebanese people, and will continue to support it and key institutions, to help the most vulnerable weather the crisis.

*Question.* How can we work with civil society, as well as the Lebanese Government, to support transparent and efficient parliamentary elections next spring?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue our efforts to hold PM Mikati's new Government accountable for ensuring transparent parliamentary elections are held next spring. I will also support our existing programs aimed at assisting reform-minded actors to respond to the needs of citizens through transparent and democratic processes. If confirmed, I will ensure my team works closely with Lebanese civil society,

which deserves our continued support as it both holds the new Government accountable and assists it in implementing needed reforms, as well as election monitoring initiatives. I will also work with the international community to press for a transparent electoral process to obtain credible elections that represent the will of the people, untainted by foreign malign influence.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO HON. BARBARA A. LEAF BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Question.* Please transmit copies of those emails. The Washington Free Beacon reviewed at least two of them.

*Answer.* As a nominee I am not in a position to act on behalf of the State Department with regard to its records. I take my responsibilities with respect to Congressional oversight seriously and if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to respond to your concerns.

*Question.* Please transmit any other internal guidance - emails, memos, cables, notes, decision memos, briefing papers, instructions, etc. - that instructed staffers not to use the phrase "Abraham Accords."

*Answer.* As a nominee I am not in a position to act on behalf of the State Department with regard to its records. I take my responsibilities with respect to Congressional oversight seriously and if confirmed I look forward to working with you to respond to your concerns.

*Question.* In your testimony on September 15 you indicated that you are supportive of the Abraham Accords. Can you commit to ensuring that any guidelines or policies prohibiting using the phrase "Abraham Accords" are revised and reversed?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the Biden-Harris administration refers to the agreements known as the Abraham Accords as such. I certainly do. If confirmed, I will continue to use that moniker.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel has sovereignty over the Golan Heights?

*Answer.* In considering the U.S. position on the Golan Heights, the administration gives great weight to Israel's security. As long as Bashar al-Assad is in control of Syria and Iran is present in Syria, it would be greatly irresponsible to urge Israel to part with the Golan Heights. Control of the strategic Golan Heights provides Israel an added measure of security from the turmoil next door. This administration has not changed U.S. policy on this important issue.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel has sovereignty over Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem?

*Answer.* This administration has not altered U.S. policy on this important issue. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem itself is a final status issue to be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Jerusalem is central to the national visions of both Israelis and Palestinians. If confirmed, I will handle all issues related to Jerusalem with the care and sensitivity that they deserve.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel is in illegal occupation of any part of Jerusalem?

*Answer.* Jerusalem is central to the national visions of both Israelis and Palestinians. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem itself is a final status issue to be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. If confirmed, I will handle all issues related to Jerusalem with the care and sensitivity that they deserve.

*Question.* Do you believe that Israel is in illegal occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem?

*Answer.* Jerusalem is central to the national visions of both Israelis and Palestinians. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem itself is a final status issue to be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. If confirmed, I will handle all issues related to Jerusalem with the care and sensitivity that they deserve.

*Question.* What are the regional security opportunities for the U.S. now that Israel is part of CENTCOM?

Answer. Now that Israel is part of the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, regional security opportunities for the United States range from enhanced communication between our two countries to expanded opportunities for regional multilateral engagements, such as exercises and planning conferences.

*Question.* How do you plan to maximize Israel's integration into our regional security architecture?

Answer. If confirmed, I would promote Israel's integration into our regional security architecture in close coordination with my colleagues at the Department of Defense, including CENTCOM.

*Question.* Please describe any new significant sanctions that have been imposed on Iran since the inauguration of President Biden.

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration has imposed the following Iran-related sanctions since it took office:

- On September 17, the Treasury Department sanctioned international financial networks supporting terrorism, including providing support to Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran's Qods Force;
- On September 3, Treasury sanctioned an Iranian intelligence network targeting an Iranian-American activist in the United States;
- On August 13, Treasury sanctioned an oil broker network supporting the Qods Force;
- On June 10, Treasury sanctioned an international network enriching the Houthis and Qods Force in Yemen; and
- On March 9, the State Department designated Iranian officials pursuant to Section 7031(c) of the FY2021 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Act due to involvement in gross violations of human rights.

*Question.* Please describe the details of any arrangements, deals, or agreements that are being contemplated by the Biden administration to reduce pressure on Iran other than reentry into the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Answer. There have been no such arrangements, deals, or agreements contemplated to reduce pressure on Iran.

*Question.* What measures has the Biden administration taken to insulate our diplomats from engaging with Iranian officials connected to international terrorism or who have been sanctioned?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, and diplomacy, in coordination with our allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal. However, the U.S. Government has yet to engage in any direct discussions with the Iranian Government or its officials as their Government currently bars such interactions. Additionally, State Department policy generally limits USG personnel from interacting with Iranian officials, and specifically restricts interactions with officials known or suspected to be members of terrorist organizations or subject to sanctions designations.

*Question.* To what degree was the State Department aware of Ghani's departure beforehand?

Answer. I am currently not a State Department employee and am not privy to Department knowledge on this issue.

*Question.* Did you or any State Department officials, to your knowledge, engage in conversations with any governments under NEA's purview to request that they provide Ghani with safe haven, including the governments of Qatar or the United Arab Emirates?

Answer. After President Ghani departed Kabul for Uzbekistan and the Government of Uzbekistan informed the U.S. of his presence on Uzbek soil and that he wished to travel onward to the UAE, the administration conveyed to both Governments of Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates that such arrangements would be a bilateral one between those governments and Ghani himself.

*Question.* Do you believe that it would be in America's national security interest for resources to go to the Government of Lebanon even if that government was controlled or unduly influenced by Hezbollah?

Answer. Hezbollah is a terrorist organization, and the United States undertakes rigorous measures to safeguard U.S. assistance from conferring benefits to Hezbollah or any other terrorist group, including thorough oversight, vetting, and robust risk

mitigation practices. As part of its security assistance, the U.S. government conducts End-Use Monitoring (EUM) to mitigate the risk of unauthorized transfer or use of U.S. technology and equipment. The Lebanese Armed Forces continues to comply fully with all EUM reporting and security requirements.

*Question.* On August 19, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Shea said that the Biden administration intends to waive sanctions on the Assad regime in order to provide energy to Lebanon: “There is a will to make this happen. There will be some logistical things that need to happen too, but I think that it will all fall into place fairly easily.” The waiver will facilitate the transfer of gas and resources through Assad-controlled Syria and to Lebanon and its government. Do you support waiving such sanctions?

*Answer.* Lebanon is currently experiencing an acute energy crisis that is having a terrible impact on critical lifesaving infrastructure such as hospitals and the water supply; the crisis needs a long-term solution, but shorter-term measures are also urgently needed, given the deleterious effect on the public. These potential bilateral and multilateral agreements proffered by regional states, which have been endorsed by the World Bank, could help Lebanon begin to address its power crisis in a sustainable and transparent manner. I understand that the Department of State is currently conferring with those partners to gain further detail on the proposals and is conferring with the Department of Treasury as well. U.S. sanctions remain an important tool to press for accountability for the Assad regime, to include on its atrocious record of human rights abuses. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of the Treasury and our partners to ensure that any potential deal our partners reach is consistent with our broader policy priorities and all relevant U.S. sanctions. I look forward to continuing to consult with Congress on this important issue.

*Question.* On September 15 you testified that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are an important partner in the Middle East and serve as a check against Hezbollah. Do you support calibrating support for the LAF on the degree to which it fulfills those functions? Under what conditions would you support restricting assistance to the LAF?

*Answer.* The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon, a reliable U.S. partner, and an important counterweight to Hezbollah’s malign influence in the country. The LAF is also a cross-confessional institution with broad support from all aspects of Lebanese society, transcending sectarian and party alliances. A strong, stable LAF undermines Hezbollah’s assertion that its arms are necessary to defend Lebanon from external aggression. If confirmed, I will continue to build the LAF’s capacity to serve as a counterweight to Hezbollah and act in the interests of the Lebanese people.

*Question.* What percent of U.S. assistance to Lebanon was used for activities or operations aimed at disarming Hezbollah in 2019 and 2020? A rough estimate or a range will be sufficient.

*Answer.* U.S. military assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is focused on developing the LAF’s capabilities and professionalism, as well as developing it as an institution that acts as a counterweight to Hezbollah’s influence. Since 2006, the United States has provided more than \$2.5 billion in security assistance to the LAF. This assistance has helped increase its capacity to serve as the exclusive legitimate defender of Lebanon’s sovereignty and violent extremist organizations, including ISIS.

*Question.* What percent of U.S. assistance to Lebanon was used for activities or operations aimed at disrupting Hezbollah activities short of disarming them in 2019 and 2020, e.g. through roadblocks? A rough estimate or a range will be sufficient.

*Answer.* U.S. assistance to Lebanon is one of the many tools the Department uses to support the Lebanese people, civil society, and institutions critical to building a sovereign state responsive to its people’s legitimate needs. U.S. security assistance also supports partners, such as the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, that are critical to stability and security. A government that reflects the will and is able to meet the needs of all Lebanese, and security institutions that can defend Lebanese sovereignty, undermine Hezbollah’s illegitimate and illegal actions, as well as its malign influence in Lebanon and the region.

*Question.* Please describe the degree to which, in your assessment, Hezbollah continues to influence or control over the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport or facilities located within the airport.



Answer. The U.S. Government remains concerned about Hizballah's influence at ports of entry into Lebanon, including at the airport. In PM Mikati's new cabinet, a Hizballah minister was appointed Minister of Public Works and Transport.

*Question.* Please describe the degree to which, in your assessment, Hezbollah continues to influence or control over the Port of Beirut or facilities located within the port?

Answer. The influence Hizballah exerts over ports of entry remains of considerable concern and also denies the Lebanese people the benefit of customs revenue, which is significant given the large budget deficits Lebanon continues to face. In PM Mikati's new cabinet, a Hizballah minister was appointed as Minister of Public Works and Transport. The Department will continue to evaluate the impact of this appointment and report on the situation. To combat Hizballah's influence, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated under Executive Order 13224 Hizballah security official Wafiq Safa for acting for or on behalf of Hizballah. As head of Hizballah's security apparatus, Safa exploited Lebanon's ports and border crossings to smuggle contraband, enable Hizballah travel, and facilitate the passage of illegal drugs and weapons into the seaport of Beirut, routing certain shipments to avoid scrutiny.

*Question.* Is the administration withholding \$130 million in aid from Egypt on the basis of the conditions described in the *Washington Post* report? If the report is inaccurate, what parts are inaccurate?

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration's goal with regard to this decision is to seek progress on human rights. The Administration supports further strengthening the bilateral security and defense relationship with Egypt, while also seeking sustainable improvements in the Egyptian Government's approach to human rights. The Department has focused on specific human rights issues of concern, including cases of political detention and restrictions on civil society.

As noted in Congressional Notification 20-271 (September 14), the Secretary could not certify that Egypt is taking sustained and effective steps related to the human rights-related conditions in section 7043(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. The Department will make available \$300,000,000 in FY 2020 FMF for Egypt for counterterrorism, border security, and nonproliferation programs, consistent with the exception to the certification requirement under section 7041(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. However, because serious human rights concerns remain, the Department will not move forward with the application of \$130,000,000 of these funds to Foreign Military Sales cases for Egypt unless the Government of Egypt affirmatively addresses specific human rights-related conditions. The \$130,000,000 will not be deposited into Egypt's interest-bearing Federal Reserve Bank account and may be reprogrammed if Egypt fails to meet the conditions within the prescribed timeframe. It is the Administration's goal to continue to work with Egypt as a strategic partner to encourage progress on improving respect for human rights. To this end, the Department expects that the Government of Egypt can and will meet the conditions presented to them.

While I cannot speak to the accuracy of press reports, I take seriously the authority of Congress to conduct oversight, and if confirmed I look forward to working with you on these and other important issues.

*Question.* Please provide a list of any individuals, including if relevant, the 16 referred to in the *Washington Post* story, who are the subject of conditions imposed on aid to Egypt. For each individual on the list, please list the following:

- Their names;
- Their organizational affiliations;
- The specific charges that the Egyptian Government has brought against them, which the U.S. is asking the Egyptians to dismiss; and
- Whether the individual is a U.S. citizen, or if not, whether the individual holds a Legal Permanent Resident Card, or if not, if the individual has applied for immigration or visa status and what that status is.

Answer. The Biden-Harris administration's goal with regard to this decision on FMF is to seek progress on human rights. The Administration supports further strengthening the bilateral security and defense relationship with Egypt, while also seeking sustainable improvements in the Egyptian government's approach to human rights. The Department has focused on specific human rights issues of concern, including cases of political detention and restrictions on civil society.

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rights-related conditions in section 7043(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. The Department will make available \$300,000,000 in FY 2020 FMF for Egypt for counterterrorism, border security, and nonproliferation programs, consistent with the exception to the certification requirement under section 7041(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. However, because serious human rights concerns remain, the Department will not move forward with the application of \$130,000,000 of these funds to Foreign Military Sales cases for Egypt unless the Government of Egypt affirmatively addresses specific human rights-related conditions. The \$130,000,000 will not be deposited into Egypt's interest-bearing Federal Reserve Bank account and may be reprogrammed if Egypt fails to meet the conditions within the prescribed timeframe. It is the Administration's goal to continue to work with Egypt as a strategic partner to encourage progress on improving respect for human rights. To this end, the Department expects that the Government of Egypt can and will meet the conditions presented to them.

President Biden and President al-Sisi in May agreed on the importance of a constructive dialogue on human rights. Since then, the Administration has pressed the Government of Egypt on multiple levels to address specific human rights concerns, including during Secretary Blinken's discussion with President al-Sisi in Cairo in May. Although the Department has and will continue to publicly raise concerns about Egypt's human rights record, Administration officials have also conveyed these specific requests privately, in an effort to avoid Egyptian government sensitivities about responding to foreign pressure. The Department anticipates hosting a ministerial Strategic Dialogue session with Egypt later this year to advance the U.S. - Egypt partnership and secure positive steps on human rights.

While I cannot speak to the accuracy of press reports, I take seriously the authority of Congress to conduct oversight, and if confirmed I look forward to working with you on these and other important matters.

*Question.* Additionally, for any individual on the list described above who is not a U.S. citizen, please also describe:

- The process through which the State Department or as relevant the broader interagency reviewed the cases and came to the determination that their cases should be used as conditions for aid.
- Whether they are affiliated with groups that promote Islamist ideologies, distribute anti-Semitic materials, or distribute political disinformation.
- Whether the Biden administration intends to grant U.S. visas to them should the Egyptian government release them.

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration supports further strengthening bilateral security and defense relationship with Egypt, while seeking and sustainable improvements in the Egyptian government's approach to human rights. The Department has focused on specific human rights issues of concern, including cases of political detention and restrictions on civil society.

As noted in Congressional Notification 20-271 (September 14), the Secretary could not certify that Egypt is taking sustained and effective steps related to the human rights-related conditions in section 7043(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. The Department will make available \$300,000,000 in FY 2020 FMF for Egypt for counterterrorism, border security, and nonproliferation programs, consistent with the exception to the certification requirement under section 7041(a)(3)(A) of the FY 2020 SFOAA. However, because serious human rights concerns remain, the Department will not move forward with the application of \$130,000,000 of these funds to Foreign Military Sales cases for Egypt unless the Government of Egypt affirmatively addresses specific human rights-related conditions. The \$130,000,000 will not be deposited into Egypt's interest-bearing Federal Reserve Bank account and may be reprogrammed if Egypt fails to meet the conditions within the prescribed timeframe. It is the Administration's goal to continue to work with Egypt as a strategic partner to encourage progress on improving respect for human rights. To this end, the Department expect that the Government of Egypt can and will meet the conditions presented to them.

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a ministerial Strategic Dialogue session with Egypt later this year to advance the U.S.-Egypt partnership and secure positive steps on human rights.

While I cannot speak to the accuracy of press reports, I take seriously the authority of Congress to conduct oversight, and if confirmed I look forward to working with you on these and other important matters.

*Question.* Please describe the role played by Iran and the Houthis in deepening the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

*Answer.* The Houthis, with continued Iranian support, remain intransigent and focused on their military offensive against the city of Marib. That offensive is the single biggest impediment to a national ceasefire and follow-on peace talks; it is exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis, placing at risk a million internally displaced persons who found refuge in Marib after escaping fighting in other parts of the country. The Houthis also exacerbate the humanitarian consequences of the fuel situation at Hudaydah port by stockpiling fuel and manipulating fuel prices, driving up costs far beyond the reach of most Yemenis. In addition, the Houthis continue to interfere in the delivery of humanitarian aid.

*Question.* Please assess the degree to which the Biden administration's decision to lift terrorism sanctions against the Houthis and their leaders has enhanced the ability to provide humanitarian relief to Yemeni civilians in general.

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration revoked the terrorism designations of Ansarallah, sometimes referred to as the Houthis, in recognition of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen and the adverse impact the designation immediately had on NGOs and private commercial importers of food and other basic goods. Shortly after the FTO designation announcement, the administration began to hear of de-risking—by banks, insurance firms, and transport companies—putting at risk near-term food imports. The administration listened to concerns voiced by the United Nations, humanitarian groups, and bipartisan members of Congress, among others, regarding potential impacts of the designation on Yemenis' access to basic commodities. The short time that passed between the designations and the revocations limited the impact the designations could have had on humanitarian assistance and commercial imports. According to U.N. data, food and other humanitarian assistance items are now moving through Yemeni ports at normal rates except in some areas under Houthi control.

*Question.* Please assess the degree to which the Biden administration's decision to lift terrorism sanctions against the Houthis and their leaders has enhanced the ability to provide humanitarian relief to Yemeni civilians in Marib.

*Answer.* The short time that passed between the designations and the revocations limited the adverse impact that designations could have had on humanitarian assistance and commercial imports. In Marib, the escalation of hostilities by the Houthis has caused additional needs and secondary displacement. The lifting of sanctions, however, has helped ensure the safe delivery of life-saving food, emergency shelter, water, and sanitation and hygiene supplies, as well as essential non-food items, such as blankets and water containers.

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