

# NOMINATION HEARINGS OF THE 114TH CONGRESS

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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FIRST SESSION—MARCH 10 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2015

SECOND SESSION—FEBRUARY 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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## NOMINATIONS

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2015

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

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Gregory T. Delawie, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo  
Ian C. Kelly, of Illinois, to be Ambassador to Georgia  
Nancy Bikoff Pettit, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia  
Julieta Valls Noyes, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia  
Azita Raji, of California, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Sweden

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:20 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Johnson, presiding.

Present: Senators Johnson, Gardner, Shaheen, Kaine, and Murphy.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RON JOHNSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Senator JOHNSON. This hearing is called to order.

I would like to first recognize—the Ambassador from Georgia who is here in the audience today. Welcome.

I am pleased to be holding this hearing to confirm some very qualified individuals who are willing to serve this Nation in the capacity of Ambassadors to Kosovo, to Georgia, to Latvia, to Sweden, and to Croatia.

I have been in the Senate now for 4 years, on Senator Foreign Relations for 2½, and I just have to say that I have always been very impressed with the quality of career Foreign Service individuals and people who serve this Nation in the capacity of Ambassadors. From my standpoint, it is such an important position, in terms of being able to convey our values around the world. I hope you all take that responsibility—I am sure you will—very seriously, conveying that America, although we are not perfect, has been a phenomenal force for good in the world. I certainly always ask our Ambassadors to think of how you can utilize this committee, whether it is holding hearings or potentially passing resolutions to reinforce the work you are doing in those countries that you are representing America for. I also point out to our Ambassadors that

you are representing those countries back to America. It is really a two-way street. I certainly appreciate your willingness to serve.

I know Senator Shaheen has a tight schedule, so I will not say anything further until I introduce the nominees.

Senator Shaheen.

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

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

Welcome. I want to congratulate each of you on your nominations, and express my appreciation to you for your willingness to serve this country and take on these new responsibilities at such a critical time.

I also want to welcome all of your families who are here today. And I hope that you will introduce them as you are starting your statements.

You have all been named for ambassadorial posts in important countries in strategic areas of Europe. We are considering your nominations and our relations with these countries against the backdrop of an aggressive Russia in Europe's east and growing instability in its south, in the Middle East and in North Africa. I look forward to discussing a wide range of issues regarding the countries that you are going to serve, and other challenges facing Europe today, and hope that you will be confirmed to these very important posts.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator JOHNSON. Senator Kaine, would you like to make a comment, or—

Senator KAINE. No, thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay.

With that, I will just introduce you one at a time before your testimony. And we will start from my right, going left, with Mr. Delawie. Mr. Greg Delawie is currently the Deputy Assistant Secretary within the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance at the State Department. He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, and he is the nominee for Ambassador to Kosovo.

Mr. Delawie.

**STATEMENT OF GREGORY T. DELAWIE, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO**

Mr. DELAWIE. Thank you very much, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Shaheen, Senator Kaine.

It is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo. I deeply appreciate the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me.

I am accompanied today by my wife, Vonda Delawie, a retired Foreign Service officer, and, further back, my daughter, Torrence, and my son, Fred, all of whom have shared with me the joys and challenges of bouncing from one country to the next. For all of us, it has been an honor to work for the American people and to represent them to the rest of the world.

The United States relationship with Europe's youngest democracy is based on a shared vision of Kosovo's legitimate place in a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Indeed, Kosovo has made remarkable progress since declaring independence. It has drafted and implemented modern laws, economic growth has been steady, and security throughout the country has improved, creating an atmosphere that allows the EU-led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia to flourish.

Despite these significant achievements, Kosovo continues to face many obstacles. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will lead a whole-of-government U.S. effort to help it surmount the remaining challenges to its becoming a fully democratic, multiethnic, sovereign nation.

If confirmed, I will focus on three central and highly interdependent areas: strengthening the rule of law, increasing regional security, and promoting economic reforms. I would like to share what I see as our priorities, beginning with the rule of law.

First, corruption hampers Kosovo's democratic and economic development. The Government of Kosovo must develop a coordinated approach to addressing it. If confirmed, I will intensify interagency support for Kosovo's anticorruption efforts and help restore citizens' faith in their government.

Next, Kosovo must respond appropriately to allegations of serious crimes committed between 1998 and 2000. Kosovo must uphold its commitments by adopting, soon, the necessary legal measures to set up a special court to handle any potential indictments stemming from the ongoing investigation into the alleged crimes committed during this period. I will, if confirmed, encourage the Government of Kosovo to diligently support the court's judicial proceedings.

Third, Kosovo confronts a significant human trafficking problem, despite having good antitrafficking and victim-protection laws. If confirmed, I will work with Kosovo to implement these laws and intensify the fight against this modern form of slavery.

In terms of regional security, normalization of the Kosovo-Serbia relationship is a fundamental requirement for lasting stability in the Balkans. We continue to fully support the EU-led dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, and full implementation of all elements of the April 2013 Agreement on Normalization. If confirmed, I will champion minority rights and promote integration throughout Kosovo. We must also find durable solutions for thousands of displaced persons.

I applaud Kosovo for its robust efforts to confront the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters heading to Syria and Iraq, and Kosovo's participation in the counter-ISIL coalition. With U.S. assistance, the Government of Kosovo is improving its capacity to prosecute terrorism cases and developing a national plan for countering violent extremism. If confirmed, I will continue backing this important work.

Kosovo is in the process of transitioning from the Kosovo Security Force to the Kosovo Armed Forces. If confirmed, I will ensure that the United States guides this transition in a way that increases regional stability, strengthens democratic institutions in Kosovo, and positions it to qualify for eventual NATO membership.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, encouraging Kosovo's economic reform and development will be one of my highest priorities. This will be key to reducing high rates of poverty and unemployment, to promoting regional ties, and to expanding opportunities for U.S. firms. The lack of dependable electrical power is widely considered Kosovo's greatest obstacle to sustained economic growth. If confirmed, I will work with Kosovo to implement its energy strategy, including promoting significant growth in renewable energy.

This is a daunting agenda, but I know from my 30-plus years in the Foreign Service that I will not have to pursue it alone. I will be able to draw on the experience of the talented team of Americans and local staff in Embassy Pristina, as well as on partners from multiple agencies in Washington, and on so many others who want to see Kosovo succeed. I look forward to remaining in close consultation with the legislative branch and this committee to advance U.S. interests in the Balkans.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will do my utmost to promote a democratic Kosovo whose citizens trust its institutions, which is at peace with its neighbors, and which is making a sustainable contribution to the global economy.

Thank you very much for your attention. I hope you will place your trust in me and confirm me as Ambassador to Kosovo. I am happy to take any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Delawie follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG T. DELAWIE

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo. I deeply appreciate the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. I hope the committee and the Senate will share that confidence and confirm me. I am accompanied today by my wife, Vonda Delawie, a retired Foreign Service officer, my daughter, Torrence, and my son, Fred, all of whom have shared with me the joys and challenges of a lifetime bouncing from one country to the next. Wherever we have served, we have always remembered what an honor it is to work for the American people and to represent them to the rest of the world.

Our relationship with Europe's youngest democracy is based on a shared vision of Kosovo's legitimate place in a Europe whole, free, and at peace. The government and people of Kosovo deeply respect the United States, and are grateful for our role in ending the ethnic cleansing of the late 1990s. Over the past 16 years, with our strong support, Kosovo has made remarkable progress. Concrete examples of that progress include Kosovo's 2008 Declaration of Independence and the end of international supervision in 2012.

A democratic, fully sovereign, and multiethnic Kosovo must become an integral part of the international community. The United States has worked and continues to work closely with Kosovo toward that end. Although Kosovo faces enormous challenges in the interconnected areas of rule of law, regional security, and economic development, it has made progress. I would like to highlight some successes:

- ◆ With U.S. and international support, Kosovo has drafted and implemented modern laws to bring Kosovo's criminal legislation in line with international standards, to establish the rules of criminal procedure mandatory for court proceedings, and to reform the judicial system. The European Rule of Law Mission, EULEX, is building capacity in the judicial system, with the vital help of U.S. police, prosecutors, and judges.
- ◆ The NATO Kosovo Force, or KFOR, makes a multinational contribution to regional security. KFOR is uniquely trusted by Albanians and Serbs alike and its presence creates an atmosphere that allows the EU-led Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia to flourish. The United States provides some 700 troops to KFOR.
- ◆ With U.S. guidance, Kosovo has moved up 42 places on the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" ranking, from 117th in 2011 to 75th in 2014. We have



helped Kosovo privatize its national airport management and energy distribution companies. U.S. technical assistance helped Kosovo conclude a landmark \$460 million public-private partnership deal for the Brezovica ski resort complex. Our USAID economic programs in the last 5 years alone have generated 17,500 new jobs, \$330 million in increased sales, and \$37.6 million in new revenues across multiple sectors.

As impressive as these recent achievements are, Kosovo continues to face many obstacles. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will devote my time and energy to leading a whole-of-government U.S. effort to help Kosovo surmount these obstacles. We will focus on measurable improvement in three central and highly interdependent areas [the three "R's"]: strengthening the rule of law, increasing regional security, and promoting economic reforms to reduce poverty, unemployment, and energy insecurity. I'd like to share just a bit about what I see as our priorities, beginning with the rule of law.

#### *Rule of law*

Corruption hampers Kosovo's democratic and economic development. It deters investment, spurs emigration, and weakens confidence in public institutions. This in turn can create fertile ground for the growth of violent extremism. The Government of Kosovo must develop a more coordinated approach to addressing corruption, engaging all government agencies in the effort. If confirmed, I will intensify inter-agency support for Kosovo's efforts to combat corruption and restore citizens' faith in their government.

Kosovo must respond appropriately to allegations of serious crimes committed between 1998 and 2000. Under the auspices of the EU-established Special Investigative Task Force (SITF), an American prosecutor found evidence that indictable offenses were committed by a small number of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) senior leaders. Kosovo must resolve these serious allegations if it is to close this chapter of its history and move forward with democratic development and Euro-Atlantic integration. The government is currently adopting the necessary constitutional amendments, legislation, and agreements to establish a Special Court to adjudicate SITF cases in line with international standards. While I hope that these measures will soon be in place, I will, if confirmed, encourage the Government of Kosovo to maintain a high level of support and cooperation throughout the judicial proceedings.

Kosovo confronts a significant human trafficking problem. It has antitrafficking and victim-protection laws, as well as a shelter for victims, but does not yet meet minimum standards for enforcement of antitrafficking laws or victim protection. To improve enforcement, the U.S. Embassy has provided antitrafficking training to Kosovo Government officials, and successfully encouraged the foreign ministry to include training on human trafficking as part of the standard preparation for all of Kosovo's diplomatic personnel. Kosovo's fight against trafficking is also supported more generally by U.S.-organized training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges in Kosovo. If confirmed, I will continue the Embassy's work with Kosovo to implement these laws and intensify the fight against this modern form of slavery.

#### *Regional security*

Normalization of the Kosovo-Serbia relationship is a fundamental requirement for enduring regional security and is effectively a precondition for Kosovo to be able to thrive over the long term. We continue to support the EU-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia High-Level Dialogue and full implementation of all elements of the April 2013 agreement on normalization, which have been a landmark joint achievement of U.S. and European Union diplomacy in the Balkans. This Dialogue success reflects great credit on the political leaders of Kosovo and Serbia alike for making tough compromises for the good of their two countries. Dismantling parallel structures and integrating the predominantly Kosovo Serb northern municipalities into Kosovo's legal and institutional framework are key to full normalization of relations. Kosovo has made significant progress: voters of all ethnicities participated in recent municipal and parliamentary elections; municipal governments in northern Kosovo are now elected and constituted under Kosovo law; the main Serb political group, Srpska List, is part of the governing coalition. Outside the Dialogue context, bilateral contacts increasingly take place at all levels, from interministerial dialogue to joint training for customs officers. Some aspects of normalization remain difficult to achieve, such as the planned creation of an Association of Serb Majority Municipalities.

If confirmed, I will champion minority rights and promote integration throughout Kosovo, including more proportional minority representation in the national and municipal civil services. Kosovo must find durable solutions for the thousands of

vulnerable persons displaced from Kosovo, many of whom now live in Serbia. U.S. programs assist some of those displaced in Serbia as well as returnees to Kosovo, but additional political and programmatic efforts are needed. Kosovo must also do more to protect the rights of Kosovo's other minorities, including the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian population, and promote their societal inclusion.

I applaud Kosovo for its robust efforts to confront the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters heading to Syria and Iraq, and its participation in the Counter-ISIL Coalition. Kosovo passed legislation making it illegal for Kosovo citizens to join foreign terrorist organizations. Since November 2013, Kosovo authorities have arrested over 80 suspects for participation in, or recruitment for, terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. With U.S. assistance, the Government of Kosovo is improving its capacity to prosecute terrorism cases. The U.S. is also supporting Kosovo's effort to develop a "whole of government" approach to countering violent extremism. If confirmed, I will continue our backing for this important work.

As recommended in its U.S.-facilitated Strategic Security Sector Review, Kosovo is in the process of transitioning from the Kosovo Security Force to the Kosovo Armed Forces, with the stated mission of protecting the nation's territorial integrity, providing military support to civil authorities in disaster situations, and participating in international peacekeeping operations. The KAF is expected to develop capabilities in line with EU and NATO standards. If confirmed, I will ensure that the United States continues to guide and support this transition in a manner that is consistent with increasing regional stability, strengthens democratic institutions in Kosovo, and positions Kosovo to qualify for eventual NATO membership.

#### *Energy security and economic development*

Mr. Chairman, I can guarantee that one of my highest priorities, if confirmed, will be to continue to press for the reforms needed to develop Kosovo's economy. This is key to reducing high rates of poverty and unemployment, to promoting regional ties, and to expanding opportunities for U.S. exporters and investors. The government's reform agenda includes strengthening the legal environment necessary to attract and retain foreign investors, who are already drawn by Kosovo's relatively young population, low labor costs, and abundant natural resources. Anticorruption efforts are also vitally important.

The lack of dependable electrical power is widely considered Kosovo's greatest obstacle to achieving sustained economic growth. The government has made it a priority to modernize and improve the energy sector through a comprehensive energy development and security plan. If confirmed, I will work with Kosovo to implement its energy strategy, help meet its commitment to join the EU's common energy market, and to have a substantial share of its energy come from renewable energy sources by 2020.

#### *Conclusion*

This is a daunting agenda. But I know from my 30-plus years in the Foreign Service that I will not have to pursue it alone. I will be able to draw on the experience of the talented team of Americans and locally employed staff at Embassy Pristina, the experienced partners from multiple agencies in Washington, support from the legislative branch, and the contributions of private Americans and citizens of so many other nations who also want to see Kosovo succeed.

Mr. Chairman, for the past seven decades, the United States has been committed to building a Europe whole, free, and at peace. The work is not complete, but we know that we can achieve success because we have already accomplished so much. The history of the last 25 years has demonstrated how important it is for the United States to be involved in the Balkans. If confirmed, I will do my utmost to promote our mutual goal: a democratic Kosovo whose citizens trust its institutions, which is at peace with its neighbors, and which is making a sustainable contribution to the global economy.

Thank you very much for your attention. I hope you will place your trust in me and confirm me as Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo. I am happy to take any questions.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Delawie.

Our next nominee is Ambassador Ian Kelly. He is the nominee for the Ambassador to Georgia. Ambassador Ian Kelly is a career member of the Foreign Service and currently serves as the Department of State's Diplomat in Residence at the University of Illinois—Chicago. Prior to that, he served as U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Kelly.

**STATEMENT OF HON. IAN C. KELLY, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO GEORGIA**

Ambassador KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Shaheen, Senator Kaine. I am deeply honored to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to Georgia. It is a particular privilege for me to have a second opportunity to be considered by this committee and serve the American people in this way.

If confirmed, I pledge to devote all of my efforts to advancing U.S. interests and promoting the security of the American people.

For all 30 years of my government service, my wife, Francesca, has been by my side, and I am pleased that she is behind me right now.

Nearly 40 years ago, after spending several months studying in the U.S.S.R., I visited Tbilisi and was immediately struck by the vitality and independent spirit of the Georgian people. A few years later, the Georgian people were in the forefront of the movement to free the captive nations of the Soviet Union. We supported their desire for independence then, and we support it now.

The United States stands firm in its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. We condemn the ongoing occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions by Russian forces. Furthermore, Russia's so-called "treaties" with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have absolutely no legitimacy.

In Georgia, an important principle is at stake: the right of all sovereign nations to choose their own alliances and associations. The United States and our allies support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, including NATO membership and EU integration. No third party has the right to veto those aspirations.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Georgian Government and my Embassy colleagues in realizing these aspirations. I will also urge all Georgians who believe in their country's Euro-Atlantic goals to unite in supporting them and move their country forward.

On the road to Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia has made substantial progress toward becoming a fully democratic state. Its 2012 and 2013 elections resulted in the first constitutional changes of government in post-Soviet Georgia. While progress has been real and substantial, more work needs to be done for Georgia to realize its goal of an environment fully conducive to political pluralism. We will work with all parties in Georgia to help ensure the next parliamentary elections are the freest and fairest in Georgia's history. The United States has been a partner in this effort, with a robust assistance program to help Georgia strengthen accountable government and consolidate its democratic institutions.

If Georgia's quest to integrate with the West is to succeed, it is critical that we improve the climate for trade and investment. This is an area where the government and opposition should be able to come together. Georgia needs to take advantage of the great opportunity that its association agreement with the European Union rep-

resents, particularly increased trade between Georgia and Europe through the agreement's deep and comprehensive free trade area.

The United States appreciates Georgia's growing role as a regional business, trade, and logistics hub, and its contributions to the revitalization of East-West trade routes along the New Silk Road connecting European and Asian markets. If confirmed, I will support Georgia's focus on the future, particularly economic development, to create jobs and contribute to the long-term stability of the country and the region.

Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of work to do. And if the Senate confirms my nomination, I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and getting down to it, advancing the mutual interests of the American and Georgian peoples.

Thank you. And I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Kelly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF IAN C. KELLY

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to Georgia. It is a particular privilege for me to have a second opportunity to be considered by this committee, and serve the American people in this way. If confirmed, I pledge to devote all my efforts to advancing U.S. interests and promoting the security of the American people. For all 30 years of my government service, my wife Francesca has been by my side, and I am pleased to introduce her to you today.

Nearly 40 years ago, after spending several months studying in the U.S.S.R., I visited Tbilisi, and was immediately struck by the vitality and independent spirit of the Georgian people. A few years later, the Georgian people were in the forefront of the movement to free the captive nations of the Soviet Union. We supported their desire for independence then, and we continue to support it today.

The United States stands firm in its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. We condemn the ongoing occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions by Russian forces. Furthermore, Russia's so-called "treaties" of alliance with the de facto authorities Abkhazia and South Ossetia have absolutely no legitimacy.

An important principle is at stake here—the right of all sovereign nations to choose their own alliances and associations. The United States and our allies support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, including NATO membership and EU integration. No third party has the right to veto those aspirations. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Georgian Government and my Embassy colleagues in realizing these aspirations. I will also urge all Georgians who believe in their country's Euro-Atlantic goals to unite in supporting them and moving their country forward.

On its road toward Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia has made substantial progress toward becoming a fully democratic state. Its 2012 and 2013 elections resulted in the first constitutional changes of government in post-Soviet Georgia. While progress has been real and substantial, more work needs to be done for Georgia to realize its goal of an environment fully conducive to political pluralism. We will work with all parties in Georgia to help ensure the next parliamentary elections are the freest and fairest in Georgia's history. The U.S. has been a partner in this effort, with a robust assistance program to help Georgia strengthen accountable government, and consolidate its democratic institutions.

If Georgia's quest to integrate with the West is to succeed, it is critical that it improve the climate for trade and investment. This is an area where the government and the opposition should be able to come together. Georgia needs to take advantage of the great opportunity that its Association Agreement with the European Union represents—particularly increased trade between Georgia and Europe through the Agreement's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. The United States appreciates Georgia's growing role as a regional business, trade and logistics hub, and its contributions to the revitalization of East-West trade routes along the New Silk Road, connecting European and Asian markets. If confirmed, I will support Georgia's focus on the future, particularly economic development, to create jobs and contribute to the long term stability of the country and the region.

Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of work to do, and if the Senate confirms my nomination, I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and getting down to it, advancing the mutual interests of the American and Georgian peoples. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ambassador Kelly.

Our next nominee is Mrs. Nancy Pettit. Am I pronouncing that right? Good. I am generally bad about that 30 percent of the time. [Laughter.]

Mrs. Pettit is our nominee for Ambassador to Latvia. She is currently the Director of the Western European Affairs Office within the State Department and is a career Foreign Service officer. Mrs. Pettit's past positions include the Director of Policy Planning and Coordination of the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and positions at posts in Kiev, Moscow, and Vienna.

Mrs. Pettit.

**STATEMENT OF NANCY BIKOFF PETTIT, NOMINATED TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA**

Ms. PETTIT. Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia.

I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they have placed in me. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to devote my time, energy, and expertise to advancing America's interests in Latvia and strengthening relations between our two countries. I commit myself to working closely with the committee, your staffs, and your congressional colleagues to build on our shared interest in a strong and vibrant U.S.-Latvian partnership.

I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for providing encouragement and support throughout my career. In particular, special thanks to my husband, Jim, the current Ambassador to Moldova; daughters, Sarah and Liz Pettit; and son-in-law, Josh Katzenstein, who are watching this online. I would like to introduce my sisters, Ellen Phipps and Barbara Bikoff, and brother, Russ Bikoff, who are here with me today. Thank you for coming.

I have spent the bulk of my 33-year career as a public servant working on issues related to Europe and Transatlantic relations. From my early days as a desk officer in the Office of Soviet Union Affairs to my most recent position as Director of the Office of Western European Affairs, I have devoted my professional life to advancing our shared vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. I believe these experiences have prepared me well to lead our mission in Riga, and, if confirmed, continue our work with the Republic of Latvia on a forward-looking, ambitious global agenda.

The United States and Latvia share a long history of friendship and cooperation. From the darkest days of the Soviet occupation through the end of the cold war, the United States commitment to the Latvian people never wavered. Following the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, the country embarked on an ambitious path toward Euro-Atlantic integration, joining NATO and the EU

in 2004, adopting the Euro in 2014, and setting a powerful example for other countries aspiring to be free.

As allies, United States and Latvian troops have fought together and died together in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through our cooperation in Afghanistan, Latvia has become one of only seven countries certified as Joint Terminal Attack Controllers who provide essential targeting expertise for NATO combat missions. With U.S. support, Latvia has also increased its development assistance to countries around the world. Whether it is contributing humanitarian assistance to fight the spread of ebola or supporting international efforts to combat ISIL, Latvia has always stepped up to the plate.

Without a doubt, Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine has challenged the vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace, threatening the security of Latvia and all of our regional allies. This is why the United States has deployed company-sized units to Poland and the three Baltic States since April 2014 under Operation Atlantic Resolve. Through President Obama's \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative, we will maintain this rotational presence for as long as necessary, and fund military infrastructure improvement projects. These efforts embody the United States commitment to Latvia's security under NATO's article 5.

Meanwhile, Latvia has enacted legislation to meet its NATO defense spending commitment of 2 percent of GDP by 2020, and is using its role as the current EU-presidency country to maintain international pressure on Russia while also offering Moscow a diplomatic off-ramp, should it choose peace over further escalation. Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I will continue to grow our partnership with Latvia to the benefit of our shared security and prosperity.

Latvia has made advancing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP, a top priority. If confirmed, I will work with my Latvian counterparts to build Latvian support for a comprehensive TTIP agreement that boosts economic growth, creates jobs, and sets a new standard for trade that reflects our shared values.

While Latvia has made great strides over the past 20 years implementing democratic reforms and rule of law, I believe more work needs to be done in the areas of combating corruption, addressing Holocaust-era legacies, such as Jewish communal property restitution, and taking advantage of Latvia's rich cultural diversity.

Almost 25 years ago, Latvia emerged from captivity seeking the democracy, prosperity, and security that we in the transatlantic community have enjoyed for nearly seven decades. Through sheer determination, sacrifice, and an enduring commitment to the principles of freedom, the Latvian people persevered and succeeded in building a vibrant, flourishing democracy. If confirmed, I promise to further enrich the bonds between our countries and continue confronting global challenges together as close partners and NATO allies.

Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pettit follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF NANCY BIKOFF PETTIT

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they have placed in me in this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to devote my time, energy, and expertise to advancing America's interests in Latvia and strengthening the relations between our two countries. I also commit myself to working closely with the committee, your staffs, and your congressional colleagues to build on our shared interest in a strong and vibrant U.S.-Latvian partnership.

I have spent the bulk of my 33-year career as a public servant working on issues related to Europe and trans-Atlantic relations. From my early days as a desk officer in the Office of Soviet Union Affairs to my most recent position as Director of the Office of Western European Affairs, I have devoted a considerable amount of my life to advancing our shared vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. I believe these experiences have prepared me well to lead our mission in Riga and—if confirmed—continue our work with the Republic of Latvia on a forward-looking and ambitious global agenda.

The United States and Latvia share a long history of unbroken friendship and cooperation. From the darkest days of the Soviet occupation through the end of the cold war, the United States commitment to the Latvian people never wavered. Following the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, Latvia embarked on an ambitious path toward euro-Atlantic integration: joining NATO and the EU in 2004; adopting the euro in 2014; and setting a powerful example for other countries aspiring to be free.

Today, Latvia is one of our most reliable and valued partners. As allies, U.S. and Latvian troops have fought together and died together in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through our cooperation in Afghanistan, Latvia has become one of only seven countries that are certified as Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC), providing essential targeting expertise for NATO combat missions. With U.S. support, Latvia has also increased its development assistance to countries around the world. For example, through the State Department's Emerging Donors Challenge Fund, the United States and Latvia are cofinancing a project in Uzbekistan to enhance export control and border security capabilities. Whether it is contributing humanitarian assistance to fight the spread of Ebola or supporting international efforts to combat ISIL, Latvia has always stepped up to the plate. In short, Latvia is a global partner of first resort.

Without a doubt, Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine has challenged the vision I referenced earlier of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, threatening the security of Latvia and all of our allies in the region. This is why the United States has deployed company-sized units to Poland and the three Baltic States since April 2014 under Operation Atlantic Resolve. Through President Obama's \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), we will sustain this persistent, rotational presence for as long as necessary. ERI will also fund military infrastructure improvement projects, including at Latvia's Lielvarde airbase and Adazi training grounds. These efforts embody the United States commitment to Latvia's security under NATO's Article 5. Meanwhile, Latvia has enacted legislation to meet its NATO defense spending commitment of 2 percent of GDP by 2020 and is using its role as the current rotating EU Presidency country to maintain international pressure on Russia, while also offering Moscow a diplomatic off-ramp should it choose peace over further escalation.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I will continue to grow our partnership with Latvia to the benefit of our shared security and prosperity. Latvia has made advancing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) a top priority of its EU Presidency. If confirmed, I will work hand in hand with my Latvian counterparts to build Latvian support for a comprehensive TTIP agreement that boosts economic growth, creates jobs, and sets the global gold standard for trade that reflects our shared values. In 2014, bilateral trade in goods between the United States and Latvia totaled \$702 million. While significant, I think there is a tremendous potential to further cultivate our economic ties. If confirmed, I will work to increase our bilateral trade and investment. While Latvia has made great strides over the past 20 years implementing democratic reforms and rule of law, I believe more work needs to be done in the areas of combating corruption, addressing Holocaust-era legacies such as Jewish communal property restitution, and taking advantage of Latvia's rich cultural diversity.

Almost 25 years ago, Latvia reemerged from captivity seeking the democracy, prosperity, and security that we in the transatlantic community have enjoyed for

almost seven decades. Through sheer determination, sacrifice, and an enduring commitment to the principles of freedom, the Latvian people persevered and succeeded in building a vibrant, flourishing democracy. If confirmed, I promise to further enrich the bonds between our countries and to continue confronting global challenges together, as close partners and NATO allies. Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mrs. Pettit.

Our next nominee is Ms. Azita Raji. She is our nominee for Ambassador to Sweden. Ms. Raji has served as a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships since 2013. She is also trustee of Barnard College and a member of the advisory board of the Social Enterprise Program at Columbia Business School. As a former investment banker, Ms. Raji specialized in European emerging markets.

Ms. Raji.

**STATEMENT OF AZITA RAJI, NOMINATED TO BE  
AMBASSADOR TO THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN**

Ms. RAJI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Shaheen, and Senator Kaine.

I would like to begin by recognizing my parents for their wisdom, strength, and encouragement — which are fundamental to my being here today. I am deeply grateful to my husband, Gary Syman, who is here. And four out of our five daughters are here, and I am grateful to all of them. Our son-in-law, and especially our grandson, Theo—7-year-old Theo is here. And I have to admit that I am a little bit nervous today, because I really have not had a chance to prepare for his questions, which will undoubtedly come afterward. [Laughter.]

Ms. RAJI. I am here as a woman whose family endured the life-altering upheaval of the Iranian Revolution and found new hope and new life in the United States of America. Throughout my life, while working or studying in countries as different as Iran, Switzerland, Japan, and the United States, I arrived at the realization that I had been, in principle and sensibility, quintessentially American all along. So, I have never taken for granted the freedom to speak my mind, the protection of the rule of law, or our belief in unity within diversity, which is expressed in our country's *de facto* motto, *E Pluribus Unum*. That is the belief that has made me effective in what I have chosen to do in business, in philanthropy, in the political arena, and even in my own family life.

So, it is specially meaningful for me to find myself here before this distinguished committee, trusted by President Obama and Secretary Kerry to represent the United States of America, and to be asked to do so in Sweden, a valued partner and close friend of the United States, but also a country where respect for the rule of law, individual freedoms, human dignity, and gender equality are hallmarks of national identity and defining pillars of government policy.

So, if confirmed, I pledge and look forward to working closely with you to enhance our cooperation with Sweden by focusing on four priorities:

First, Sweden is an engaged and effective partner of the United States and NATO in promoting global peace and security. Our close cooperation in Ukraine as it fights against Russian aggression and



seeks to implement ambitious reforms is vital and greatly appreciated. Elsewhere, whether in Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Kosovo, or in fighting ISIL, corruption, and global terrorism, Sweden is a valued and reliable partner. So, if confirmed, I will work to further strengthen our bilateral partnership with Sweden in security, as well as supporting their cooperation with NATO.

Second, as a strong and long-standing economic partner of the United States—Sweden is the 11th-largest direct foreign investor and one of the fastest growing and largest investors per capita in the United States. Our economic partnership with Sweden supports over 190,000 American jobs. And, if confirmed, I will continue our focus on promoting bilateral trade and investment, specially focusing on emerging industries like clean energy, biotech, and information technologies.

Third, we have a very strong cooperation on environmental issues with Sweden, including our cooperation in the increasingly important Arctic region. If confirmed, I will continue our focus on addressing environmental challenges with Sweden, stewardship of the Arctic region, and scientific research. I also look forward to engaging with our Swedish partners both in the private sector and the government, to explore opportunities to leverage Sweden's energy leadership in the EU and its global leadership in environmental and clean energy technologies to advance our shared interest in an energy secure Europe.

Fourth, our friendship with Sweden is anchored in the close affinity between our peoples and the shared commitment that we have to democratic ideals and institutions around the world. That is manifested through our development cooperation, where Sweden is a strong and global leader, and we advance our interests in democracy promotion, human rights, gender equality, governance, and transparency around the world. There are—today there are 4 million Americans in the United States who claim a Swedish descent. They contribute to our culture and society and have been part of our economic development and success from the beginning by building successful companies, such as Nordstrom, Walgreens, and Greyhound. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to advance this enduring friendship by taking a multistakeholder approach to developing partnerships outside of the government between our peoples and institutions and leveraging technology and public-private partnerships to reach new audiences.

Finally, we have an excellent, strong, dedicated, and talented Embassy team in Stockholm. And, if confirmed, I look forward to working with them and facilitating their continued success and being their biggest advocate. Their safety, as well as that of all Americans, will be my first priority, and most important priority.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Raji follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AZITA RAJI

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee.

I would like to begin by recognizing my parents for their wisdom, strength, and encouragement, which are fundamental to my being here today. I am grateful to my husband, Gary Syman, for his unwavering support, and to our five daughters and seven grandchildren, for the joy and inspiration they bring me.

I appear before you as a woman whose family endured the life-altering upheaval of the Iranian Revolution, and found new hope and new life in the United States of America. Throughout my life, while living, studying or working in countries as different as Iran, Switzerland, Japan, Italy, France, and the United States, I arrived at the realization that I had been, in principle and sensibility, quintessentially American all along. And so, I have never taken for granted the freedom to speak my mind, the protection of the rule of law, and the opportunities to benefit from the similarities and differences that create the transformative mosaic that is America. Our country's de facto motto, E Pluribus Unum, speaks to our belief in unity within diversity, a belief that has made me effective in what I have chosen to do in business, in philanthropy, in the political arena, and even in my own family life. And it also speaks to a world that in its differing views has never been in greater need of commonality, kinship, and partnership.

Which is why it is an especially meaningful honor for me to find myself here, before this distinguished committee, and to have the trust of President Obama and Secretary Kerry to represent and serve the United States of America, and to be asked to do so in Sweden, an important partner and close friend of the United States and a country where respect for the rule of law, individual freedoms, human dignity and gender equality are hallmarks of national identity and defining pillars of government policy.

If confirmed, I pledge to serve our country to the best of my ability and to work closely with you to deepen the friendship and expand the cooperation between the United States and Sweden. I will focus on four priorities.

First, security challenges. Sweden is an engaged and effective strategic partner of the United States and NATO in promoting global peace and security. Our close cooperation with Sweden in support of Ukraine, as it fights against Russian aggression and seeks to implement ambitious reforms, is vital and greatly appreciated. Elsewhere, whether in Afghanistan (where Sweden made significant contributions to the ISAF mission, and currently provides assistance to Resolute Support Mission and support to Afghan democracy), or Africa (where Sweden is one of the largest contributors to Power Africa and to the global fight against Ebola), or Syria, Iraq, and Kosovo, or in fighting ISIL, global terrorism and corruption, Sweden is valued and respected as a reliable partner in advancing peace. If confirmed, I will seek to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation in addressing regional and global security challenges, and to support Sweden's partnership with NATO.

Second, economic prosperity. As a strong and long-standing economic and trading partner since 1783, Sweden is the 11th-largest direct investor and one of the fastest growing and largest investors per capita in the United States. Our economic partnership supports over 190,000 American jobs across 50 States. If confirmed, I will continue our focus on promoting bilateral trade and investment opportunities, particularly in emerging industries, such as information technology, biotech, and clean energy.

Today our economic focus must not just be bilateral, but also multilateral. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is an important building block of the wider trade policy agenda between the EU and the United States and will be an important focus of our work in the coming months. Sweden is a strong supporter of TTIP and a logical partner in this effort, having relied on free trade to become one of the world's most globalized, competitive, and innovative modern industrial economies. If confirmed, I will encourage Sweden to highlight and leverage its economic success in creating prosperity through trade to promote our shared objective of a comprehensive TTIP agreement.

Third, environmental challenges. The United States and Sweden have an active partnership on environmental and climate change issues, including our close cooperation in the increasingly important Arctic region. Sweden chaired the Arctic Council from 2011 to 2013, and its accomplishments included a historic marine oil pollution preparedness and response agreement. The United States assumed chairmanship of the Arctic Council in April 2015. If confirmed, I will prioritize our continued bilateral cooperation on environmental and climate change issues, stewardship of the Arctic region, and scientific research. As a global leader in environmental sustainability and clean energy technologies, Sweden derives more than half of its energy from renewable sources, making it less dependent on energy imports than most EU countries. If confirmed, I will engage with our partners in Swedish government and private sector to explore innovative ways to leverage Sweden's energy leadership in the EU to advance our shared priorities in addressing climate change and European energy security.

Fourth, shared values. Our growing friendship with Sweden remains anchored in the genuine affinity between our peoples and our strong commitment to democratic values and institutions, a commitment expressed in our global partnership to pro-

tect and advance human rights and civil society. It is a friendship based on a shared heritage that dates back to 1638, when the first generation of Swedish immigrants arrived on the shores of what is now the State of Delaware. Today over 4 million Americans claim Swedish descent. They continue to enrich our culture and society and have been part of our economic success from the beginning, by building such successful companies as Walgreens, Greyhound, and Nordstrom. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to deepen this enduring friendship, by encouraging understanding of our similarities and respectful debating of our differences, and by taking a multi-stakeholder approach to building innovative partnerships outside the government between our peoples and institutions and leveraging technology and public-private partnerships to connect with new audiences.

Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to meeting the talented and dedicated professionals of our Embassy in Stockholm. I will support their continued success and be their biggest advocate, as we work side by side to advance our vision of a deeper friendship and stronger partnership between the United States and Sweden. The safety and security of our team, and that of all Americans in Sweden, will always remain my top priority.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Raji.

Now, our next nominee is Ms. Julieta Noyes. She is our nominee to become Ambassador to Croatia. Ms. Noyes currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary within the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department, and is a career member of the Foreign Service. Her past positions include Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and Director of the Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs at the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Ms. Noyes.

**STATEMENT OF JULIETA VALLS NOYES, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

Ms. NOYES. Mr. Chairman, Senator Shaheen, Senator Kaine, it is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

I am honored by the confidence placed in me by the President and by Secretary Kerry. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and with the Congress to advance United States-Croatian relations.

I am a first-generation American, the daughter of Cuban refugees who had to come to this country to build a new life. And I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to repay that debt with service to our great Nation.

It is a personal pleasure for me to be here with my husband, Nick, a recently retired Foreign Service officer, and our children, Alexandra, Nicholas, and Matthew. With 30 years as a Foreign Service family, we have many happy memories of times spent together overseas and here at home.

For the last 2 years, I have managed U.S. relations with the European Union and worked on trade, energy, security, and other issues with the EU. I have also overseen the work of U.S. Embassies in 15 Western European countries, managing a broad range of political, economic, security, and consular issues, and doing broad outreach. My work with nine NATO countries on security issues and defense sales has provided valuable lessons that I would apply, if confirmed, as the Ambassador in Croatia.

As Deputy Chief of Mission to the Holy See, I learned how to engage the Catholic leadership, which is important in Croatia. And

in all my assignments, I have worked hard to develop and empower my teams to foster high performance and high morale. I would do the same in Zagreb.

Mr. Chairman, our bilateral relationship with Croatia is strong and productive. Just last week, Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland met with Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic to discuss how our partnership can advance our many common interests. In April, Embassy Zagreb and private-sector partners hosted the fifth Brown Forum in Croatia, a regional conference convened to focus on how to spur entrepreneurship and increase trade and investment between our countries and with the region.

Croatia has come a long way since its hard-won independence, becoming a NATO member in 2009 and the European Union's 28th and newest member in 2013. The citizens of Croatia deserve warm congratulations for all that they have achieved.

And Croatia has generously shared the lessons that it has learned assisting its western Balkan partners and neighbors in their aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration. We encourage the Government of Croatia to press forward and, in so doing, help address the remaining bilateral and regional legacies of the Balkans conflict.

Croatia is an active and committed EU member. A Croatian commissioner leads the EU's work on international cooperation and development. Croatian members of the European Parliament serve on the critical budget, economic, foreign affairs, and other committees. Croatia's leaders have endorsed a U.S./EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

As a reliable NATO ally, Croatia makes valued contributions to global security. We appreciate its commitment, first, to the international Security Assistance Force and now the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, as well as to the Kosovo Force, where Croatia provides valuable helicopter lift support. Croatia is a member of the global coalition to fight ISIL, and it was among the first countries to send observers into Crimea, and continues to provide monitors in eastern Ukraine for the OSCE mission. Brave Croatian men and women are serving in 11 peacekeeping missions around the world.

Croatia now enjoys a mature democratic society, yet there is more to be done. It continues to be challenged by sluggish growth and far too high unemployment. The Croatian Government has recognized the urgent need for reforms to welcome business investment, eradicate excessive redtape, and increase transparency and predictability for businesses.

If confirmed, I will seek to further solidify our partnership with Croatia, building on the exemplary work of our outgoing Ambassador and my good friend Ken Merten and our terrific country team in Zagreb.

As Ambassador, I will promote several interconnected priorities in Croatia: fostering economic growth and prosperity, helping Croatia realize its potential to become a regional energy hub, strengthening the capabilities of a willing security partner, and advancing regional stability. If confirmed, I will encourage Croatia's contributions to U.S.-EU relations in pivotal areas, such as transatlantic trade, energy security, and collaboration in the digital sphere. I

will also actively uphold our strategic alliance in NATO, the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, the Counter-ISIL Coalition, and more.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Shaheen, Senator Kaine, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I would welcome any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Noyes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JULIETA VALLS NOYES

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I am honored by the confidence placed in me by the President and Secretary Kerry. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Congress in advancing U.S. interests in Croatia.

I am a first generation American, the daughter of Cuban refugees who built a new home in the United States, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to repay that debt with service to our great country. It is a personal pleasure to be accompanied today by my husband, Nick, a recently retired Foreign Service officer, and our children, Alexandra, Nicholas, and Matthew. As a Foreign Service family of 30 years we treasure many happy memories from our time living in Italy, Panama, Spain, Guatemala, and Mexico, as well as here at home.

For the last 2 years, I have managed U.S. relations with the European Union and have worked on trade, energy, security, and other issues in the EU. I also have overseen the work of 12 U.S. embassies and 19 consulates, covering 15 Western European countries, managing a broad range of political, economic, security, and consular issues, and carrying out outreach to publics and governments. My work with nine NATO members on security issues, defense sales, and participation in the Pentagon's review of force realignment in Europe has provided me useful lessons for directing the mission in Croatia. As Deputy Chief of Mission at our Embassy to the Holy See, I learned how to engage the Catholic leadership, which is important in Croatia. In all my assignments, I have worked hard to develop and empower my teams, and to foster high performance and strong morale; I would do the same in Zagreb.

Our bilateral relationship with Croatia is strong and productive. Just last week, Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland met with Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic to discuss how our partnership can advance our many common interests. In April, the United States Embassy and private sector partners hosted the fifth Brown Forum in Croatia, a regional conference convened to focus on how to spur entrepreneurship and increase trade and investment between the United States, Croatia, and the region.

Croatia has come a long way since its hard-won independence, becoming a NATO member in 2009 and the European Union's 28th and newest member in 2013. The citizens of Croatia deserve warm congratulations for all they have accomplished. And Croatia has generously shared the lessons it has learned, assisting its western Balkan neighbors in their aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration. The United States supports the strides Croatia has made toward nurturing regional cooperation. We encourage the Croatian Government to continue to press forward and, in so doing, help address the remaining bilateral and regional legacies of the Balkans conflict.

Croatia is an active and committed EU member. A Croatian Commissioner leads the EU's important work on international cooperation and development. Croatian members of the European Parliament participate on the critical Budget, Economic, Foreign Affairs and other committees. Croatia's leaders have endorsed a U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP.

As a reliable NATO ally, Croatia makes valued contributions to global security. We appreciate its commitment to the former International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and now in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, and in the Kosovo Force (KFOR), where Croatia provides vital helicopter lift support. Croatia is a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. It was among the first countries to send OSCE observers into Crimea, and continues to provide monitors for eastern Ukraine. Brave Croatian men and women are participating in 11 peacekeeping missions around the world.

Croatia now enjoys a mature democratic society, yet there is more to be done. It continues to be challenged by sluggish growth and far-too-high unemployment. The Croatian Government has recognized the urgent need for reforms to welcome busi-

ness investment, eradicate excessive redtape, and increase transparency and predictability for businesses. The United States will support Croatian reforms that lead to sustainable economic growth and prosperity. We want to strengthen the foundation for mutual economic expansion and trade relations.

If confirmed, I will seek to further solidify our partnership with Croatia, building on the exemplary work of our outgoing Ambassador and my good friend, Ken Merten, and our country team in Zagreb. As Ambassador, I will promote several interconnected priorities in Croatia: championing economic growth and prosperity, helping Croatia realize its potential to become a regional energy hub, strengthening the capabilities of a willing security partner, and fostering regional stability. My experience working directly with the European Union and its western European members has afforded me insights into our highest objectives with Europe. If confirmed, I will foster Croatia's contributions to U.S.-EU relations in pivotal areas such as the transatlantic trade deal, energy security, and collaboration between our countries in the digital sphere. I will also actively uphold our strategic alliance in NATO, the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, the Counter-ISIL Coalition, the State Partnership Program with the Minnesota National Guard, and more.

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

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Noyes.

Again, thank you all for your testimony and your willingness to serve our Nation. I would also like to join our ranking member, Senator Shaheen, in welcoming all of the family members here in the committee room, as well as those watching online.

So much of a country's success, whether it is for peace and stability or otherwise, really relies on economic prosperity. What I would like to do is go right down the panel, starting with you, Mr. Delawie. I would like each nominee to talk about the economic opportunities in the countries that you are going to represent the United States to, as well as the economic challenges. What is the greatest opportunity for cooperation between your country and the United States?

Mr. Delawie.

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

Right now, the economic situation in Kosovo is improving. It is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Gross domestic product is about \$7 billion a year. It has significant challenges, as I outlined in my testimony, but it also has significant opportunities. It has a very young population. It has significant natural resources that remain largely untapped. And it has a very, very talented population, which is demonstrated by the fact that the biggest export of Kosovo is its talented population that is elsewhere in—mostly in Western Europe, and that is sending billions of dollars in remittances home every year.

The opportunities for cooperation are, at present, limited by corruption, which I addressed in my testimony. And that is something that we have to work with the Kosovar Government to address. And I will do so, certainly vigorously, if confirmed.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Delawie.

Ambassador Kelly.

Ambassador KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that question.

Our bilateral assistance program is very much focused on trade and investment and enhancing opportunities for American businesses to invest in Georgia. And we very much see a growing economy as very much a part of our foreign policy priority promoting stability and security in the region.

I think, in terms of the greatest opportunities for Georgia, I think it is—I mentioned, already, its recent agreement with the EU, to increase trade with the EU. And I think that is a tremendous opportunity for Georgia. And also, I think the—Georgia's strategic position as—between Asia and Europe—and I think that it can really gain a lot from being this East-West corridor for energy, in particular, but also for transporting goods from Central Asia to Europe. And, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and with the Congress in identifying more opportunities.

Thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ambassador Kelly.

Mrs. Pettit.

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

Deepening trade and investment with Latvia is one of the highest priorities in our relationship. Last year, our total bilateral trade investment was about \$700 million. If I am confirmed, I will work to expand that.

In terms of opportunities, I think the Northern Distribution Network, where Riga served as a hub for materiel going to Afghanistan, could possibly be developed into a new economic opportunity for Latvia. That is an area I would explore with them, if confirmed.

Thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mrs. Pettit.

Ms. Raji.

Ms. RAJI. Thank you.

In many ways, we already have a very strong and long-lasting trade and investment partnership with Sweden that goes back to 1783. We have a robust—as I mentioned earlier, they are a strong foreign investor in the United States, and we have a—strong trade relationships.

Bilaterally, the opportunities lie in looking at industries where there is potential. For example, in the smart-grid industry in the United States, we are one of the leaders—export leaders—I think, the third-leading export leader of transmission and distribution equipment, electrical equipment. It is an area that was identified by the National Export Initiative as an area of high growth and potential for the United States to grow. Because of the interest, internationally, in investing in dated electricity infrastructure, that is an area that we can explore with Sweden that they possibly could be interested, as well as energy efficiency in the built environment. So, that is just to pick one sector.

Sweden presents a successful example in building prosperity through trade. It has managed to transform its once agricultural society over the last 150 years into one of the world's most prosperous, competitive, and innovative modern industrial economies, largely relying on trade, where it is now over 50 percent of its GDP.

So, we will explore the bilateral opportunities. But, I think there is also a multilateral opportunity. Because of Sweden's strong example in building prosperity through trade, I will look for opportunities to explore with our Swedish partners to see how we can highlight and leverage that strong example in Europe in reaching our shared objective of a Transatlantic and Pacific partnership.

And finally, I want to just say that my background in business and finance, especially in emerging markets, have made me realize the important connection between economic prosperity and political stability and civil society. So, I share Secretary Kerry's view that foreign policy is—economic policy is foreign policy. And if confirmed, I will use my skills in business and finance towards economic statecraft to open new markets for the United States, encourage foreign investment in the United States, and increase exports.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Raji.

Ms. Noyes.

Ms. NOYES. Thank you, Senator

Croatia has suffered from recession for the last 6 years, and is only barely now coming to a position of positive growth. Its unemployment rate ranges from about 18½ percent for the general population to about 48 percent for youth. Its deficit is 5.7 percent of GDP, and its debt-to-GDP ratio is about 85 percent. Clearly it has a lot of economic issues that it needs to address in addition to its difficult investment climate.

But, Croatia also has some real advantages. It is breathtakingly beautiful country, very attractive to tourists. If confirmed, I hope that you will come to visit. [Laughter.]

Ms. NOYES. But, it is also—it has an enormously motivated, educated population. Its recent admission into the European Union has given it additional resources and expertise that it can draw upon. And Croatia also has energy resources of its own. It is these energy resources that the Croatian government is trying to expand on, in creating and making itself into a regional energy hub.

If confirmed, I would seek to work with the Croatian Government to tackle some of these very difficult economic issues, working with our government here, but also with the European Union and with Brussels and with other countries in the neighborhood, because a number of these are issues that need to be tackled regionally.

Thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Noyes.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Delawie, I had the opportunity to visit Kosovo in February of 2010 on their Independence Day—their second Independence Day. And I remember the people on the streets waving flags from Kosovo and from America, thanking Americans. It was very moving to see that.

I was very encouraged when I heard that there had been an agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia to lessen tensions between the two countries. Can you give us an update on how the relationship with Serbia is going and what additional progress has been made since that accord was signed?

Mr. DELAWIE. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen. And, if confirmed, I certainly hope you will come back and see what has changed since February of 2010.

The relationship between Kosovo and Serbia is going pretty well. We are firm supporters of the EU-sponsored dialogue. There was an agreement in 2013 that lead—is on a path toward normalization



of relations between the two countries. There has been a lot of progress in the last couple of years. The police are integrated now. The Serbs and Albanians are integrated in the same police department. Judicial structures are merged. The Serbian parallel courts in the northern chunk of the country are no longer taking new cases. There are liaison offices between the two countries. And the EU has been very enthusiastic in helping to promote this, using the idea of a potential path for both countries ultimately into EU integration.

The new EU High Rep. Mogherini was in Kosovo, actually, in March. She helped initiate some additional progress on judicial issues. So, progress is going pretty well, and I think we can all be happy of the role that the United States has played in promoting that progress.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. I agree, I think we should be very proud of that.

Can you also talk about the Serbian church? Because, as I remember, one of the concerns was the fact that many of the churches—Serbian churches were a concern, in terms of potential protection in the future.

Mr. DELAWIE. That is certainly one of the issues the Embassy in Pristina pays close attention to. They are talking about it. Protecting the Serbian orthodox heritage in Kosovo is certainly one of the key elements of this normalization dialogue, something our Embassy pays close attention to. And, as far as I know, that has been going relatively well. And I believe the Embassy has even put some money from the Ambassador's fund into remodeling and protecting some of the Serbian orthodox churches in Kosovo.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. That is very encouraging.

Ms. Noyes, can you—you mentioned the importance of Croatia in the region, in the Balkans, in terms of its future economic prosperity. Can you talk about what you, as Ambassador, would be able to do to encourage economic prosperity with the region, and also what the United States is doing to promote economic prosperity?

Ms. NOYES. Thank you, Senator.

Yes. One of the things that Croatia is seeking to do is to become a regional energy hub. It has resources of its own. It provides about 60 percent of its own gas for domestic use, but it also has a great geographic location and some infrastructure that already exists that would allow it, if it could build an LNG import terminal—and they are looking at building one on the Krk Island—that would allow it to be a hub for the exportation—or the importation of LNG, and then the exportation to other countries in the region. This would not only help with regional needs, but it would also reduce reliance on Russian gas.

And Croatia has also been very engaged and active within the EU and in NATO in advancing the Euro-Atlantic integration of its partners, and seeking to have greater relations between the EU and other countries in the Balkans.

So, if confirmed, I would certainly seek to promote both of those objectives—the LNG terminal, the creation of the regional energy hub—but also to support Croatia's advocacy and its emphasis on making all of the countries of the Balkans oriented toward the

West, both in terms of their democratic behavior, and their economic growth and their free-market orientation.

Senator SHAHEEN. And to what extent has Croatia been affected, or has it been affected, by the financial difficulties in Greece?

Ms. NOYES. Well, Senator, Croatia and Greece are the only two countries in the EU that have suffered from a recession for the last 6 years. In each case—and I know this a bit on Greece because of my current job, working with the European Union—there are factors in each country that are specific to the country, but there is no doubt that both countries were also affected by the greater economic downturn in Europe. As we see now with dropping energy prices—frankly, the drop in the value of the Euro—we are starting to see growth turning around in Europe. And, in fact, we are now seeing Croatia coming out of the recession and doing better.

So, they are not necessarily linked to each other, but they both have been affected by greater trends, as well as by macroeconomic issues that they need to tackle independently, both in Zagreb and in Athens.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Kelly, one of the issues that I have had the opportunity to raise with Georgian officials when they have been here is concern about the perception that arrests of some former political leaders raise questions about the rule of law and the judicial system in Georgia. And to what extent do you think it is—what can we do, in the United States, to encourage Georgia to continue to move forward with democracy and to address the potential to see former political opponents as subject to arrest, as opposed to what they are, which is former political opponents?

Ambassador KELLY. Well, thank you very much for that question.

Our top foreign policy priority for Georgia is helping it attain its aspirations, join Euro-Atlantic institutions. And, of course, we would not want to see anything degrade that trajectory toward Euro-Atlantic integration. And in our bilateral contacts, I know that Ambassador Norland has had many good consultations with the Georgian Government, and we have stressed the importance of not even having the perception of any kind of political use of any kind of judicial levers.

Having said that, we also have a very strong cooperation with Georgia to ensure that the judicial process, in all cases, is transparent and accountable. And I think Georgia has made great strides in ensuring the independence of the judiciary.

But, you have put your finger on one of the issues, that, if you do confirm me, that I am going to keep a very close eye on. So, thank you very much for raising that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. And my time is up, but let me just say how much I appreciate the close relationship that America and Georgia have had, and their contributions to our efforts in Afghanistan have been significant. So, I think they have made tremendous progress, and want to see them continue to succeed.

Ambassador KELLY. I second that. Thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Noyes, you talked a little bit about the security cooperation between the U.S. and Croatia. And I not—have not been to Croatia, so, when my staff and I were digging—it is pretty impressive. Croatia participates in U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Golan Heights, Cyprus, Sudan, Liberia, Lebanon, Western Sahara, and the Kashmir, supports NATO-led Kosovo Force, and also the ISAF in Afghanistan. Kind of feel funny saying that and saying, Are there things we can do to even strengthen the relationship? I am very impressed with the commitment of Croatia to peacekeeping through U.N. and other multinational organizations. But, are there remaining opportunities for us to deepen that tie?

Ms. NOYES. Thank you, Senator.

Yes, Croatia definitely punches above its weight on the security front. It participates in 11 peacekeeping operations. It is been with us in Afghanistan since 2003. It provided ammunition and weapons to both Iraqi forces and the peshmerga. It assisted with the removal of Syrian chemical weapons. And it is absolutely a critical support to KFOR through its provision of lift support.

That said, there is always more that can be done. And, if confirmed, I would look forward to working further with the forces in Croatia. One of the biggest priorities that we have there is to help Croatia modernize its equipment. It still has too much reliance on Soviet-era equipment, and still relies on Russia for spare parts and, in some cases, servicing of that equipment. So, one of my priorities, if confirmed, would be to help Croatia modernize its forces and its equipment to make them more interoperable with NATO forces, and to continue to support the efforts of this very willing ally.

Senator Kaine. Great.

Ms. Raji, I look forward to working with you on the economic issues. Virginia has a huge amount of direct investment from Swedish companies. The only vehicle manufacturing plant in Virginia is a Volvo truck plant in Dublin, VA.

But, I want to ask you about something else. You talked a little bit about the Arctic Council. I—this is something that I was not too aware of before I came to the Senate, but the United States has just taken on the chairmanship of the Arctic Council for the coming year. Talk a little bit about initiatives that you think the United States and Sweden can do together as the Arctic really changes in its strategic importance.

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

The Arctic region, in fact, is an area of increasing importance. With the melting of the Arctic ice, there are new opportunities and challenges in shipping, commerce, trade, environmental protection, fishing, hunting, and the livelihood and the living conditions of the 4 million indigenous Arctic people that live there.

Correctly stated, we just took over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council. We have a very strong partnership with Sweden in the Arctic region and other environmental issues that I mentioned. But, focusing on the Arctic Council, we have a scientific cooperation with Sweden. We were cofounders of the Clean Air and—Climate and Clean Air Coalition, which focuses on reducing so-called short-lived climate pollutants, or black carbon, which is a concern in the Arctic. And Sweden has particular expertise and knowledge in that

area. We cooperate with them on that, and on that Council. Scientific research is another area.

And, broadly speaking, I would say that we share the values that the Arctic Council is the preeminent intergovernmental forum for cooperation. The Arctic has always been a region of no conflict and cooperation on scientific research and environmental issues. And all of the members are interested in maintaining that practical cooperation in our mutual goals.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you so much for that.

Ms. Pettit, I am interested in Latvia, with all of the challenges we deal with on this committee with Russian influence and their sort of more bellicose recent posture. Latvia—I guess, 38 percent of Latvians claim Russian as their mother tongue, and there are strong Russian cultural ties. What is the view of the, kind of, Latvian population about Russian expansionism in the Baltic region and elsewhere in Europe?

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

As you said, there are a large number of Russian speakers in Latvia. However, those Russian speakers are very supportive of Latvia's participation in Euro-Atlantic institutions. For example, the political party that represents these Russian speakers believes that Latvia should be a member of the EU. And there are many advantages to Latvia and all Latvians being members of the EU.

I think one of the areas of concern is Russian propaganda. The Latvian Government is addressing this issue. They are addressing it by increasing the number of Russian-language TV programs. They have a new television studio for their Russian-language programs. The United States is working closely with Latvia on this. VOA and RFE/RL now have a nightly Russian language program that is available online for Russian speakers who are looking for objective, truth-based media. And I—if confirmed—will continue to work with Latvia to address these issues.

I think the message we have to share is—as Azita mentioned and Julieta mentioned—is our strength through diversity. And we have a great message to share with Latvia.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Mr. Kelly, talk a little bit about the delicate situation that Georgia's in with Russia in the—a posture that they are in, contrary to international law, on the two areas of Georgia that you described. Georgia still has been a participant with NATO in missions. I think there is one underway, or recently, Noble Partner, on the borders of Russia, 300 American soldiers accompanied by 14 Bradley tanks transported across the Black Sea from Romania. NATO is scheduled to open a training center in Georgia later this year. How does Georgia manage this with the challenge with Russia now? And what can we do to shore them up?

Ambassador KELLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Senator.

I think you actually identified one of the most tangible examples of the way we are shoring up their aspirations to join NATO, and that is the training exercises going on right now, Noble Partner, where we have hundreds of American troops from 173rd Brigade who are helping the Georgians become interoperable with the NATO Response Force. And that is a—it is a real token of our sup-

port for this bedrock principle that every nation has the right to choose its own alliances. And Georgia has overwhelmingly chosen to join NATO.

So, much of our bilateral assistance, of course, is designed to help Georgia become interoperable with NATO. You also, I think, very sensitively pointed out the very difficult position they are in, with 20 percent of their territory under occupation and with the Russian troops there, digging in, showing no signs of living up to the terms of the cease-fire agreement in 2008 which called for Russian troops to return to their previous positions. They are actually hardening the border, putting up fences and surveillance cameras. They are denying monitors from—the international community, like the EU monitoring mission, from coming in, which was also agreed to in the 2008 cease-fire.

And I think, in general, we have to keep saying, over and over again, that we support their aspirations to integrate with Europe—to join NATO, to integrate with the EU. And, of course, we need to have tangible support, as well. And we are doing it. The Congress has made Georgia one of the largest recipients of foreign military financing. It is also one of the largest recipients of IMET, the International Military Education and Training. So, we really are, I think, you know, walking the walk as well as talking the talk. And, if confirmed, I will, as I say, continue to make this our priority, to support their Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, could I ask Mr. Delawie just one brief question? Thank you. I am over my time, but—

Mr. Delawie, I am curious about Kosovo, the number of foreign fighters that go from Kosovo into the ISIL theater in Syria and Iraq—per capita, among the highest in the world. I am puzzled by that. Could you educate the committee about why that is? What is it about Kosovo—it is geographic or sort of ideological positioning that leads that to be the case?

Mr. DELAWIE. I do not think there is one easy answer, Senator Kaine. They are—Kosovo is the poorest country in Europe. Unemployment, around 40 percent; among youth, it is probably in the neighborhood of 60 percent. So, there is this economic factor. There are some—some people are going for ideological reasons. Some people are going for excitement and adventure, unfortunately. So, there are a variety of challenges that Kosovo faces.

Fortunately, Kosovo passed a law, just 2 months ago, in March, that would criminalize many of the aspects of going to Syria and Iraq to join with ISIL. And we are working with the Embassy in Pristina very hard with the justice authorities, the police authorities, to train prosecutors, and to help the government get a grip on the problem.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Appreciate all of your testimony.

Senator JOHNSON. Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you in the Chair's spot. I enjoyed our 2 years sitting at the head of this subcommittee.

And we have got a really fantastic group of nominees here today, all going to very interesting countries, many of them in transition. So, a few questions.

Maybe, Mr. Kelly, I will start with you to extend this conversation about Georgia's future. So, I am a believer that we are starting to compromise NATO's open-door policy without a real, tangible plan for enlargement that includes Georgia, understanding that it is a very difficult nut to crack with respect to the occupied and contested territories. But, that does not seem impossible. And so, I want to ask you, sort of, What are the preconditions from our standpoint right now, from the U.S.'s standpoint, as to what has to happen in order for Georgia to get NATO membership? And do you foresee a circumstance in which you could give the portion of Georgia that is not contested, is not occupied, membership, or give a type of membership with reservations concerning the extent of the occupied and contested territories?

Ambassador KELLY. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Of course, you know NATO is a consensus organization with all 28 members. I think, you know, the United States has a good story to tell, in terms of our support for Georgia's desire to join NATO. And I think that we really are doing a lot to help them prepare for membership. And so, I think a lot of what we have to do, and what we have to continue to do, because I think the Embassy is already doing it, is highlighting what the United States is doing, in terms of training Georgians, of integrating them into NATO missions. But, you have—you know, you have put your finger on the really hard part of it, of course, which is the fact that Russia occupies 20 percent of Georgia and has compromised its territorial integrity. And so, I think that we just have to stay focused on the overall goal of supporting Georgia in becoming more interoperable with NATO, in reforming its defense institutions—and we have multiple programs through State and through the Defense Department to do that—and also be very steadfast in rejecting Russia's illegal occupation of 20 percent of Georgia's territory.

Senator MURPHY. But, does that not effectively result in Russia having veto power over Georgia's accession to NATO? If we do not hold out the possibility that there is a pathway for them to join while the occupation continues, do we not essentially put the decision in Russia's hands?

Ambassador KELLY. I do not think that Russia or any other country has a veto on a country's desire to join NATO. We do have good—I think, a good dialogue through NATO with Georgia, through the NATO-Georgia Commission. I think that the path is clear to any aspirant to join NATO. Obviously, the occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is a very difficult issue. But, this overarching principle, that all countries should be able to choose their own alliances and associations, is something that has to be really defended, and the United States has to do everything it can—and, of course, is doing everything it can—to help Georgia realize its aspirations.

Senator MURPHY. I think we have been halfhearted in our attempts to lead the way to Georgia's membership in NATO. I hope that we change at least the volume of our tune.

Mr. Delawie, you got big shoes to fill. Ambassador Jacobson has done really important work for us at a very critical time. I visited with her in Pristina last fall at a moment in which I think she showed immense discretion in forcing the different parties surrounding the government to make their own decisions about a coalition moving forward, resisting the temptation that sometimes comes with that position to get too involved.

I also visited the American University there, and one of the answers to the question about the roots of extremism is a real sense of hopelessness amongst young people in Kosovo, you know, large numbers of youth unemployed and very little access to higher education. The American University there is a unique asset that provides a pathway into the middle class for young people in Kosovo. I just hope that you will support their mission, support the work that the new government is trying to do to expand opportunities for higher education. It is really a—it is really stunning, the lack of opportunities to get advanced degrees in Kosovo. AUK is, right now, their best bet to do that, but, hopefully, that experience can be modeled, moving forward.

Mr. DELAWIE. Thank you very much, Senator.

I know Ambassador Jacobson has done an incredible job. And I am looking forward to doing my best to fill her shoes. But, it will be hard.

Fortunately, USAID has devoted a fair amount of resources to supporting the access to higher education for Kosovar citizens. You are right, there is a long way to go. And I certainly agree with you about this—the hopelessness. We have—we saw another example of that, not just in the ISIL direction, but also, in the winter, there were a fair number of Kosovo citizens who were attempting to emigrate, basically, to Germany. Another symptom of that. So—

Senator MURPHY. And I think we need to help the Kosovar Government understand that this is not just about law enforcement. They have really done some impressive things when it is come to standing up law enforcement's capabilities. But, they have, I think, got to understand the holistic strategy.

Just one question, Ms. Raji. Good to see you. I do not know if this question has been asked, but—Sweden stepped up their participation with NATO. They are obviously—have agreements with NATO through memorandums of understanding for training and military exercises. Important, given the forward positioning of Russia in and around the region, to have that dialogue continue. I assume that they are going to continue to be an active participant with NATO in whatever joint exercises are appropriate, and that we will encourage them to increase their level of military integration so that we can send a coordinated message, even with non-NATO partners, to Russia that, if they are going to continue to run submarines and jet planes over our friends' heads and to our friends' shores, that there is going to be a coordinated response.

Ms. RAJI. Great to see you, Senator Murphy, and thank you for that question.

As you know, Sweden is not an ally of NATO, but it is one of the—only five recently designated Enhanced Opportunities Partners. It has made significant contributions to the missions of

NATO, and, in fact, other multilateral institutions, such as the EU and the U.N. in peacekeeping and military exercises and so forth.

With regard to NATO, Sweden currently has troops under allied command in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and played a significant role in protecting the no-fly zone in Libya in 2011. And it continues to increase, as you said, some of its involvement with NATO in the exercises. For example, it joined the NATO Response Force in 2013, which will enhance joint capabilities. And it did sign an MOU for a Host Nation Support Agreement in 2014, which will regulate exercises and military transits on its soil, that has not been ratified, however.

We very much have a strong partnership with Sweden on NATO missions. And, if confirmed, I will continue their cooperation and partnership with NATO.

Senator MURPHY. Great.

If I—just one quick question I forgot to ask Mr. Delawie. The Riga summit starts tomorrow. There was an expectation that there might be an extension of visa liberalization for Georgia coming. It does not look like that may happen. I hope I—I ask you whether it is going to be part of your mission to continue to work with Georgia and with the Europeans to try to—I am sorry—Mr. Kelly—I am sorry—to Mr. Kelly—although you can respond to that question, as well, if you would like—

[Laughter.]

Senator MURPHY [continuing]. Mr. Delawie. Be happy to know what the Kosovar's Ambassador's position is on Georgia visa liberalization. [Laughter.]

Mr. Kelly, what is the role that we can play in trying to help them come to a better place on the question of visa liberalization, vis-a-vis the European Union, post-Riga?

Ambassador KELLY. Yes, thank you very much.

Yes, as I said before, the—our—really, our top foreign policy priority is to keep Georgia on a good trajectory. And I think that it will be important that the Euro-Atlantic community sends signals that Georgia is progressing on this path. And I think this will help address some of the concerns you mentioned before, obviously, about NATO's open door, too.

But, we—you know, a lot of our assistance program has been sort of reoriented to help Georgia implement the terms of the Association Agreement. And that is because it is really in our U.S. national interests that Georgia become integrated into the European Union and into European institutions, in general. So, we can help them bilaterally, with the EU, obviously, in pushing Georgia's case forward. But, we can also help them with our bilateral assistance program. And I know that we are doing that.

And if I am confirmed, I will make it a real priority to ensure that that trajectory stays on a nice steep path toward Euro-Atlantic integration. And, of course, that includes the EU.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to go over time.

Senator JOHNSON. Not a problem.

I am going to ask one other question before I close it out, so did you have any further questions before—

Senator MURPHY. That is okay.



Senator JOHNSON. Okay.

This question is really directed at Ambassador Kelly and Mrs. Pettit, but if any of the other nominees have anything to add, please do.

My first congressional delegation trip was in the spring of 2011, before I was on the Foreign Relations Committee, and we visited Georgia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Back in 2011, the representatives from all of those countries were talking about what Russia was trying to do to undermine those fledgling democracies.

We are seeing that, obviously, in spades today. I personally do not think Vladimir Putin is looking for off-ramps. I think Vladimir Putin is looking for on-ramps. I am highly concerned about Latvia. I am not sure what he is going to be doing in Georgia. I was up, by the way, right at the border, and I was able to look through binoculars at the Russians in the occupied areas.

The question I have is, What concerns do you have, in terms of what Russia is doing in Latvia or within the region, to undermine those democracies?

We will start with you, Mrs. Pettit.

Ms. PETTIT. Thank you, Senator.

I do not think I can say it any better than President Obama said it in Tallinn, right before the Wales summit in 2014, when he said that the defense of Tallinn and Riga and Vilnius is as important as the defense of Berlin, London, and Paris. And that is our very strong message.

Latvia is our NATO ally. And, through our bilateral security assistance and through our NATO activities—including the Baltic air policing, the IMET program, our FMF program, Section 2282, all of the Wales commitments that we are in the process of implementing, the establishment of the command-and-control unit in Latvia—each of the Baltic States will get a command-and-control unit, the Very High Readiness Task Force that is also being implemented—there is a lot going on. And I think this sends a very strong message of deterrence.

Senator JOHNSON. Again, that is what we are doing—

Ms. PETTIT. Right.

Senator JOHNSON. I am more interested, in terms of your knowledge of what Russia is doing. And I will throw out there the propaganda. I know I have gone over to Ukraine a couple of times with Senator Murphy, and with the bipartisan delegations, and it has always struck me how the Senators are shocked at how effective Vladimir Putin and Russia's propaganda is without any pushback, or virtually no pushback, on the part of the West.

Ms. PETTIT. Well, I—

Senator JOHNSON. So, again, I guess I am looking just for your knowledge of what Russia—

Ms. PETTIT. Right.

Senator JOHNSON [continuing]. Is doing—

Ms. PETTIT. There—

Senator JOHNSON [continuing]. To undermine—

Ms. PETTIT. There is—

Senator JOHNSON [continuing]. The democracy.

Ms. PETTIT. There is plenty of propaganda directed towards Latvia's Russian-language speakers. This is absolutely true. But, Latvia is addressing this issue. As I mentioned earlier, they have greatly enhanced the number of TV news programs they offer in the Russian language. Russian journalists are leaving Russia and moving to Riga. For example, a former editor of one of the biggest news platforms in Russia opened her own new platform in Riga, where there is press freedom. And she has gotten literally thousands and thousands of hits on her Russian-language Web site. The BBG, here in the United States, is working with—the Broadcasting Board of Governors—is working with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and making available new Russian-language programs online. Our goal is provide objective, truth-based media to the Russian speakers in Latvia. This is an issue of concern also within the EU. And I believe, that shortly, the EU will also be working on this matter and addressing this matter.

If I am confirmed, I will travel to the Russian-speaking areas of Latvia and engage directly with this population. And I think this is a great opportunity, again, to discuss or to present the U.S. view that there is strength in diversity.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay, again, I am concerned with the hybrid or ambiguous war. And obviously, propaganda is part of that. Maybe the first part. But, there may be other actions Russia might be taking.

Ambassador Kelly, are you aware of anything not even just in Georgia, but elsewhere in the Baltic States or—that ring of democracies around Russia? We obviously know it is happening in Ukraine.

Ambassador KELLY. Yes, I—you know, as someone who has followed Russia for many, many years, and am a bit of a Russia media junkie, I am appalled by the kind of—well, let us just—let us call it by its real name—by the lies that are being spread about what our intentions are in supporting these countries and about what Russia is actually doing in some of these countries.

And in the case of Georgia, I think that they are ramping up their outreach to Georgia, in terms of media. There are some NGOs that are active in Georgia. And I think this gets back to what Senator Murphy was talking about, about our concern about the—maintaining the level of support within Georgia. And we do not want to see that level fall. And so, we would be concerned about messages that run contrary to our values, that we are seeing in the Russian media. And we need to, as I say, ensure that Georgians appreciate that we stand behind them in supporting their desire to join NATO and to join European institutions.

And I know that Ambassador Norland has been very active in highlighting U.S. assistance for Georgia, in all of our public pronouncements, highlighting our support for their territorial integrity. And, as somebody who has dealt quite a bit in public diplomacy, I, too, will relish being able to go around Georgia and really show the Georgians that we are behind them.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay.

Any of the other nominees want to add anything on that subject? Sure. Mr. Delawie.

Mr. DELAWIE. Thank you, Senator, just very briefly.

Two of the major streets in Kosovo, in Pristina, are named George W. Bush Street and Bill Clinton Street. I do not think there will be fertile ground for any—too much Russian propaganda, in Kosovo at least.

Senator JOHNSON. We rely on you to make sure that remains that way.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Chairman, one final question that I meant to ask Ms. Noyes.

The Croatians are currently flying Russian-made helicopters and are very interested in buying American-made Black Hawk helicopters, something that I spoke to their Defense Minister about when I was there, on the same trip where I visited Pristina. Can you commit to us that you are going to work with the Croatians to make a significant upgrade to their helicopter fleet, such that they are no longer reliant on Russian technology?

Ms. NOYES. Thank you, Senator.

I am delighted to report that this year we are working with Croatia to get them some Kiowas. And I understand that discussions are underway with regard to the Black Hawks. And, if confirmed, I would be delighted to support those efforts.

Senator MURPHY. Black Hawks are much better than Kiowas. [Laughter.]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

Again, I would like to thank all of our witnesses for your testimony, for your thoughtful questions to our answers, and for your willingness to serve this Nation. I would like to thank your families for their willingness to support your service to this Nation.

If there is anything we can, as a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, do to help you succeed in your mission as our Ambassadors to those countries, please let us know. We really do not think often enough about how what this committee says, what we do, and resolutions we may be able to pass, how that can actually aid you. Think of this committee and keep in communication with us. Again certainly wish you the best.

With that, the record will remain open for questions and statements until the close of business on Friday.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:40 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

