

**NOMINATION HEARINGS OF THE
115TH CONGRESS—FIRST SESSION**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—
JANUARY 3, 2017 TO JANUARY 3, 2018
—

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations



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NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017

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

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

Present: Senators Johnson [presiding], Murphy, Shaheen, and Kaine.

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

Senator JOHNSON. Good afternoon. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. This has to be one of the first times one of these started actually ahead of schedule.

I want to welcome the witnesses, and their friends and family. We certainly thank you for your willingness to serve in this capacity.

We gather today to consider the nominations of ambassadorships to Denmark and Croatia. These two European countries are important relationships for the United States, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

Denmark and the U.S. have long had a close relationship. Like the U.S., Denmark is one of the founding members of NATO and has been a strong supporter of expanding the alliance. The Danish people, like many of our European allies, stood by America's side following the terror attacks of September 11th, and have made significant contributions and sacrifices to the war on terror in Afghanistan.

Croatia is a success story of post-Cold War Europe. Emerging from the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars that followed, Croatia's tremendous progress led it to join NATO in 2009 and the EU in 2013. United States was a forceful advocate for Croatia's accession.

As the highest representative of the United States to these countries, you will be tasked with maintaining and strengthening these crucial relationships.

Before I introduce the nominees, I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member for his comments.

Senator Murphy?

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Johnson.

Welcome, both of you, to the committee. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Let me just reinforce the comments of Senator Johnson.

This is a trying time for the United States and Europe. Clearly, the bonds are not as strong in this administration as they were in the past. Yet, whenever we have a big problem anywhere around the world that needs to be solved, the first place we turn is to Europe, to old legacy partners like Denmark, and to newer members, of at least the European Union community, in Croatia.

So I am really eager to hear a little bit more about you and your background and your vision to take up these important posts. You will serve with some truly, truly amazing Americans who have chosen to dedicate their entire lives to a very, very difficult job of traveling the world representing our country.

And I look forward to your testimony.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

Again, I encourage the nominees to introduce their family and friends when you make your opening statement.

Our first nominee is Ms. Carla Sands. Ms. Sands is the President's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador of Denmark. Since 2015, Ms. Sands has been the chairman of Vintage Capital Group, a highly successful real estate firm in Los Angeles. She is also a doctor of chiropractic and has been a television and film actress.

Ms. Sands is a leader in the nonprofit sector, working with organizations to improve the lives of children and others in need. She has served as a board member of Pepperdine University and on the boards of numerous organizations supporting the arts and culture.

While she now resides in California, I understand that Ms. Sands is a proud daughter of Pennsylvania, having grown up there and still returning frequently to visit family.

Ms. Sands?

STATEMENT OF CARLA SANDS OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK

Ms. SANDS. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark.

I am humbled that the President has charged me with this opportunity to work with the White House, Secretary Tillerson, and our gifted and hardworking officers at the State Department and Mission Denmark to lead our engagement with such a longtime and trustworthy ally.

I also want to take a moment to thank my family: my daughter, Allie Sands; my two sisters, who are with me today, Dr. Rhonda Carver and Deborah Sicchitano; and my parents. Their love and support has sustained me through the many phases of my life and the diverse hats I have worn in both the public and the private sector. I take this journey knowing I have their enthusiastic support.

Though now a resident of California, I am a native of Pennsylvania and come from a long line of patriots and supporters of the United States. My ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War II, and more recently have served in the Air Force, Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy.

It is with their legacy in mind that I approach my own government service. And if confirmed, I can assure you that I will carry this history with me to Denmark as well.

If confirmed, I bring to the job of chief of mission experience in the business sector and the nonprofit world, as I have practiced as a doctor of chiropractic, and raised funds for abused and neglected children, the arts, the police, homeless rehabilitation, and many other deserving causes.

In my younger years, I was a working actress. And since my husband's death in 2015, I have been the chairman of Vintage Capital Group.

If I am confirmed, these varied leadership roles will serve me well in the different facets of chief of mission in Denmark, and I could not be more excited about the opportunity to lead this team.

Denmark is a key ally, contributing troops and equipment to international operations, including the coalition to defeat ISIS; U.N. operations in the Middle East, Africa, and South Korea; and enhancing NATO's presence in the Baltic.

Our relationship is supported by many men and women right here in Washington, whether it is our Denmark desk at the State Department or the many departments and agencies that work with their counterparts at Mission Denmark every day.

This is an important time for Europe and Denmark. The aftershocks of Brexit combined with the threats of terrorism and Russia's aggressive actions make clear that we must work with our allies like Denmark to face these challenges together in a united way.

Of course, there may be issues on which our two countries do not totally agree. However, our shared appreciation for freedom, security, and opportunity give us a mutual destination guiding us in our relationship moving forward.

If confirmed, my first priority will always be the welfare and security of U.S. citizens and our mission staff. Beyond that, I will work with our outstanding leadership at Mission Denmark to fulfill three primary goals.

First, I will endeavor to promote bilateral trade and economic prosperity. There are more than 700 subsidiaries of Danish companies in the United States employing over 70,000 people. The United States is Denmark's largest trading partner outside of Europe, and I believe we can increase our sales of military aircraft and equipment, machinery, medical and technical equipment, and other outstanding American products.

Second, Denmark is a trusted and dependable ally in an increasingly unstable and unpredictable world. It is the only Nordic country that is both a member of the EU and NATO, and our alliance with Denmark is crucial for peace and stability in the Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic regions.

If confirmed, I will work with the regional commander to further our close military alliance with Denmark to deter aggressors in the region and promote stability worldwide.

Third, and if confirmed, my goal is for our public diplomacy to engage with as many of the almost 6 million Danes as I can, including citizens in the kingdom's self-governing areas of Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

I hope to promote the people-to-people partnerships between Danes and Americans through study abroad and exchange programs, cultural programming, and community outreach. I plan to do so by blending classical engagement with new and innovative ways to reach all, especially young people, to continue to foster a close and deep mutual respect and appreciation between our two countries.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I will do my very best on behalf of our Nation, and I welcome any questions you may have.

[Ms. Sands's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARLA SANDS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark. I am humbled that the President has charged me with this opportunity to work with the White House, Secretary Tillerson, and our gifted and hardworking officers at the State Department and Mission Denmark to lead our engagement with such a longtime and trust-worthy ally.

I also want to take a moment to thank my family—my daughter Allie Sands, my sisters who are with me today, Dr. Rhonda Carver and Deborah Sicchitano, and my parents. Their love and support has sustained me through the many phases of my life and the diverse hats I have worn in both the public and the private sector. I take this journey knowing I have their enthusiastic support.

Though now a resident of California, I am a native of Pennsylvania and come from a long line of patriots and supporters of the United States. My ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War II and more recently have served in the Air Force, Marine Corps and U.S. Navy. It is with their legacy in mind that I approach my own government service. And, if confirmed, I can assure you that I will carry this history with me to Denmark as well.

If confirmed, I will bring to the job of Chief of Mission experience in the business sector and the nonprofit world as I have practiced as a Doctor of Chiropractic, raised funds for abused and neglected children, the arts, the police and homeless rehabilitation and many other deserving causes. In my younger years, I was a working actress and since my husband's death in 2015 I have been the Chairman of Vintage Capital Group. If I am confirmed, these varied leadership roles will serve me well in the different facets of Chief of Mission in Denmark and I could not be more excited about the opportunity to lead this team.

The Trump administration has made it clear in words and actions the high-priority it places on our alliance, partnership and friendship with Denmark. The President hosted Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen at the White House just two months after his inauguration. His early engagement with Denmark underscores the strength and importance of our security alliance and overall bilateral relationship.

Denmark is a key ally, contributing troops and equipment to international operations including the Coalition to Defeat ISIS, U.N. operations in the Middle East, Africa, and South Korea, and enhancing NATO's presence in the Baltic. Our Embassy in Copenhagen supports one of our nation's closest and most mutually supportive relationships, and I could not be more excited about the opportunity to lead this team, if confirmed. Our relationship is supported by many men and women right here in Washington, whether it is our Denmark desk at the State Department or the many departments and agencies that work with their counterparts at Mission Denmark every day.

This is an important time for Europe and Denmark. The aftershocks of Brexit combined with the threats of terrorism and Russia's aggressive actions make clear that we must work with our allies like Denmark to face these challenges together in a united way.

Of course, there may be issues on which our two countries do not totally agree. However, our shared appreciation for freedom, security, and opportunity give us a mutual destination guiding us in our relationship moving forward.

If confirmed, my first priority will always be the welfare and security of U.S. citizens and our Mission staff. Beyond that, I will work with the outstanding leadership at Mission Denmark to fulfill three primary goals:

First, I will endeavor to promote bilateral trade and economic prosperity. There are more than 700 subsidiaries of Danish companies in the United States employing over 70,000 people. The United States is Denmark's largest trading partner outside of Europe and I believe we can increase our sales of military aircraft and equipment, machinery, medical and technical equipment and other outstanding American products.

Second, Denmark is a trusted and dependable ally in an increasingly unstable and unpredictable world. It is the only Nordic country that is both a member of the EU and NATO and our alliance with Denmark is crucial for peace and stability in the Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic regions. If confirmed, I will work with the regional commander to further our close military alliance with Denmark to deter aggressors in the region and promote stability worldwide.

Third, and if confirmed, my goal for our public diplomacy is to engage with as many of the almost six million Danes as I can, including citizens in the Kingdom's self-governing areas of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. I hope to promote the people to people partnerships between Danes and Americans, through study abroad and exchange programs, cultural programming, and community outreach. I plan to do so by blending classical engagement with new and innovative ways to reach all, especially young people, to continue to foster a close and deep mutual respect and appreciation between our two countries.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I will do my very best on behalf of our nation and I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Sands.

Our next nominee is Mr. Robert "Bob" Kohorst. Mr. Kohorst is the President's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Croatia. Mr. Kohorst is a prominent American businessman with expertise in law, real estate, and finance. He is President and founder of Everest Properties, a large commercial enterprise that purchases and operates properties throughout the United States.

Mr. Kohorst has contributed to public service organizations and educational institutions, including as director and chairman of the Young Presidents' Organization and regent of Loyola Marymount University.

Mr. Kohorst currently lives in California, but has strong Midwest ties, having earned a bachelor of science degree from the University of Dayton and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School.

Mr. Kohorst, pay no attention to the 2-minute mark. You can read your full opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF W. ROBERT KOHORST OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
CROATIA**

Mr. KOHORST. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the committee, it is a pleasure and a privilege to appear before you today as President Trump'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 the Secretary of State.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Congress in advancing the interests of the United States in Croatia.

I would like to introduce my wife, Shelley; our son Kevin and his wife, Kate; and our other son Matt. Two of our grandchildren, William and Charlotte, unfortunately, are too young to be here today, but we miss them.

I am humbled at the opportunity to appear before this historic committee, and I look forward to starting an ongoing dialogue with all of you.

Although I do not have any recent government or Foreign Service experience, I have enjoyed business and personal successes that will suit me well, if I am confirmed to represent the United States in Croatia. I have practiced law, worked for a large public company, and started my own business more than 20 years ago. I have learned how to manage people, transactions, and money in both large and small settings. I have been actively involved in a number of philanthropic organizations.

All of this requires hard work, good judgment, strong moral values, and the ability to work with others. If confirmed, I am prepared to bring all of these skills to my new responsibilities. And maybe best of all, I will be supported by my wife, Shelley, who may be the real asset the United States Government is getting in this deal.

Last summer, Shelley and I and a group of friends traveled throughout Croatia. We first visited the Dalmatian coast, from Kotor to Split. We then travelled to Zagreb, with a side trip to Plitvice Park, one of the truly amazing wilderness settings in the world. We were thrilled with the beauty of the country and the friendliness of the people.

I look forward to the opportunity to spend time working with everyone in Croatia and building an even better relationship between our two nations.

In preparing for today's hearing, I have been truly impressed with how well our bilateral relationship with Croatia has been managed. Ambassador Noyes has been a terrific steward of the office, and it is clear that she has a great support team in Zagreb.

I look forward to working with the Embassy staff in an open, friendly, and cooperative manner to achieve common goals. My management style is to respect everyone for their contributions to the effort, help each employee succeed, promote good moral values, and insist on great work.

If confirmed, my foremost priority as Ambassador will be promoting the United States' interests in Croatia and support a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

Of course, our interests can best be achieved if they are compatible with Croatian interests. I intend to work hard to identify areas where we can mutually support each other.

My team and I will focus on: strengthening the capabilities of a willing NATO ally; supporting Croatia's role in promoting regional stability, cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration; encouraging Croatia's contribution to regional energy security, while opening

new markets to U.S. gas exports; and, finally, bolstering Croatia's economic recovery to make it a more attractive partner for American businesses and exporters.

Croatia has been a strong supporter of NATO, including providing troops for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. I look forward to strengthening our support of Croatia's military and making sure the working relationship between the United States and the Republic of Croatia is a model for the region and the world.

I am particularly excited for Croatia as it expands on its opportunities within the European Union. The country has made great strides since it entered the European Union in 2013, and I intend to do my best to assist in maintaining that progress. Croatia's planned accession to the Schengen Area will only help deepen its integration to the European community and expand opportunities, especially in tourism.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I look forward to hosting your visit to Croatia and to working closely with you all to advance the interests of the United States.

[Mr. Kohorst's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF W. ROBERT KOHORST

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the committee, it is a pleasure and a privilege to appear before you today as President Trump'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 the Secretary of State.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Congress in advancing the interests of the United States in Croatia.

I would like to introduce my wife, Shelley Allen, our son, Kevin, and his wife, Kate, and our other son, Matt. Two of our grandchildren, William and Charlotte, unfortunately are too young to fly here and sit through these hearings, but I miss having them here with us.

I am humbled at the opportunity to appear before this historic committee, and I look forward to starting an ongoing dialogue with all of you. Although I do not have any recent government or Foreign Service experience, I have enjoyed business and personal successes that will suit me well if I am confirmed to represent the United States in Croatia. I have practiced law, worked for a large public company, and started my own business more than 20 years ago. I have learned how to manage people, transactions and money in both large and small settings. I have been actively involved in a number of philanthropic organizations. All of this requires hard work, good judgement, strong moral values, and the ability to work with others. If confirmed, I am prepared to bring all of these skills to my new responsibilities. And, maybe best of all, I will be supported by my wife, Shelley, who may be the real asset the United States Government is getting in this deal.

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- Strengthening the capabilities of a willing NATO ally.
- Supporting Croatia's role in promoting regional stability, cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- Encouraging Croatia's contribution to regional energy security, while opening new markets to U.S. gas exports.
- Bolstering Croatia's economic recovery to make it a more attractive partner for American businesses and exporters.

Croatia has been a strong supporter of NATO, including providing troops for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. I look forward to strengthening our support of Croatia's military and making sure the working relationship between the United States and the Republic of Croatia is a model for the region, and the world.

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I look forward to hosting your visit to Croatia and to working closely with you all to advance the interests of the United States.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Kohorst.

Let me just start out, for both nominees, you both mentioned, in some way, shape, or form, talking about bolstering economic ties. Can you talk about, in each particular country, Croatia and Denmark, what are the greatest opportunities, in terms of economic relations between our two countries?

Mr. Kohorst, I will let you go first.

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator, for that very important question.

There is a tremendous opportunity in Croatia to build a natural gas terminal off the Island of Krk in the Adriatic. That program is currently in process, with an expected opening in 2019.

That is an economic program that will provide three terrific benefits. One is it will expand the economic benefits and economy in Croatia. Second, it will have the potential to deliver energy supplies to Southeastern Europe, which has the potential of reducing the Russian energy influence in the area. And third, it is a source of export for the United States delivering natural gas to Southeastern Europe.

Senator JOHNSON. Ms. Sands?

Ms. SANDS. Thank you, Senator, for that important question.

My understanding is that our trade is very important to the present administration. Some of my goals regarding trade will be to open new markets to American products and to receive more investment in the United States from Denmark.

So I believe that we do have a trade deficit with Denmark. One of my goals is to reduce that deficit through great American products finding their way to Denmark.

Senator JOHNSON. Ms. Sands, when you were in our office, we were talking a little bit about the 2 percent goal, which neither country is meeting currently. One of the things you pointed out, and I think is true, and I do not think we do enough of this, is pointing out the fact that Denmark has also sacrificed its sons and daughters as a strong ally.

Can you just talk about how we need to make that point, in your role as future Ambassador?

Ms. SANDS. Yes. Definitely, the President and Secretary Tillerson feel strongly about the member commitment to NATO of 2 percent. While it is true that Denmark is not there yet, my understanding is that the Prime Minister is intending to increase the defense budget in the new budget from 2018 to 2022. Of course, that is an important piece.

But Denmark also is small but mighty. They punch above their weight. They give blood and treasure right alongside Americans. They have one of the highest rates per capita of not only troops but also loss of life in defending freedom and prosperity in the world. They have also given funds to Afghanistan and other countries in the world to help restore these countries.

So I believe that while it is important that they give more, Denmark is definitely a great ally to the United States and to NATO, and a very close partner in defense in the world.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

Mr. Kohorst, Senator Murphy and I met with Serbian President Vucic a couple months ago. I was just in Serbia and Kosovo about a month ago. I think our sense was that President Vucic is somebody who is willing to take some risks to help stabilize that region.

I was a little disappointed to hear that the meeting between Serbia and Croatia was called off, I guess just yesterday, because of increased tension.

Can you just kind of speak to, first of all, the imperative of trying to stabilize the Southeast European region, and particularly the crucial role that Croatia and Serbia play in that?

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator.

Croatia has been a longtime ally of the United States, a very strong supporter of NATO, and a source of stability in Southeast Asia. It is very important that the United States continues to encourage Croatia to work on bilateral issues of conflict with their neighbors, so that stability can be achieved for all parties.

I was aware that the Presidents decided not to meet, but I have not yet been read in to any specifics of that, so I, unfortunately, cannot comment about why that meeting was canceled.

But Croatia has shown a willingness to meet and talk with Serbia on the outstanding issues. There are several. There are legacy war issues. There are property rights issues. And there are some border issues that need to be resolved.

In addition, Croatia needs to continue to support the population in Bosnia, and Bosnia's accession into the European Union. And they need to continue to work on areas where they can agree, so that we truly have stability in that part of the world.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Kohorst.

Senator Kaine has to go to the same budget hearing markup that I am going to have to leave for shortly, so, Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine. Thank you. And thank you to my ranking member, Senator Murphy, for letting me jump ahead.

I just wanted to come briefly to congratulate you for your nomination and to hear your statements. These are both important countries, and our relationships with them have been strong. And their membership in NATO, their commitment of troops in Afghan-

istan, the Danish commitment recently to put more troops in Estonia to help us deal with issues on the Russian border, these are important relationships.

I will only just offer one piece of advice. I do not have questions.

One of the things I do when I travel and go to embassies is I tell the Ambassador to depart the room, and I sit down with first- and second-tour of FSOs, and I congratulate them for having a great job and for getting through the difficult vetting and being selected for such an important position. Then I say, "Tell me what will make the difference between you making this a career and maybe just doing it for a few years."

That is usually all I have to say to have about a 1.5 hour-long discussion. You will be glad to know that the deal-breakers are never, "I don't like by Ambassador." But they do talk a little more freely sometimes when the Ambassador is out of the room. A lot of it is about paperwork and organizational structure that they feel inhibits their natural creativity and ability to do a good job.

So when you come in new and they do not have any history with you and any complaints yet, I would encourage, especially with some of the younger members of the Foreign Service in each of your embassies, to really let them know what a wonderful thing it is that they have these jobs, and obviously express appreciation for doing them, but just ask them to share with you candidly the joys and frustrations of the life.

Some of the frustrations they are volunteers for, the challenging travel, and sometimes being assigned to a place they like and sometimes not, and family sacrifices. There are huge challenges and frustrations, and we need to all give them our appreciation for that.

But you will probably learn some things if you talk to the newbies especially that will help you work well and serve them well and serve the mission well during the course of the time that you are there, should you be confirmed.

So congratulations.

And I will hand it back. Thanks.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you. I am going to have to go to the same budget hearing markup as Senator Kaine, so I am going to have to leave now.

Again, I want to congratulate you for your nominations. Thank you for your service. Thank your families for their service.

I will turn it over to Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. [Presiding.] Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I should have done a little bit of research about what power I now have as the holder of the gavel as a minority party member. [Laughter.]

Senator MURPHY. Let me just add my thanks to both of you for your willingness to serve. This is not easy, and you are good to do it.

Just a few additional questions. Senator Johnson really picked out some of the priorities for me as well.

Mr. Kohorst, you are, for all intents and purposes, going to be the first political Ambassador, political appointee to Croatia. Historically, this has been a career Foreign Service post, the exception

being the first Ambassador, Peter Galbraith, who had a long history of experience in foreign policy and international affairs.

So I just say that because I think the burden will be greater on you to get up to speed very quickly, because, as Senator Johnson referenced, the Balkans are a place where many global conflicts start. And it is still, in many ways, a tinderbox of ethnic and nationalist tensions.

He referenced this cancellation of an important meeting between the Croatians and the Serbs, but the Croatians have also been a real thorn in the side of Serbia's desire to eventually join the European Union. One of the things that holds that region together is the aspiration of many countries there, particularly in the Western Balkans, to eventually be members of the EU.

You may not have the answer to this question, but I will ask it anyway. President Trump cheered on Britain as they left the European Union and has put a U.S.-EU trade deal on ice. Do you know, going into Croatia, being in the middle of a region with many EU aspirants, what the administration's policy is as to EU enlargement, whether we are going to be asking Ambassadors such as yourself to work in a manner that would allow countries to join the EU? You are obviously going to an EU country, but they are often trying to stop other countries from joining.

I wonder whether, in your preparation for this, you have been given any indication as to whether you are going to be going to Europe to try to help grow Europe or you are going to Europe to try to cheer on, not its disintegration, but those who might wish to leave.

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

First of all, I am aware that the Serbians and the Bosnians are interested in joining the European Union, and that there is some dispute about that. But I have not yet been briefed about any specific aspects about our position on that issue.

Senator MURPHY. Again, I know you well. You have been successful in everything you have done in your life, so I trust you will be successful in this endeavor as well. But I think you will have to be a very quick study, again, building on the work of some great career diplomats who have been there. So I wish you luck.

Ms. Sands, let me ask you a question about that trade agreement that I referenced. Denmark was maybe one of the strongest supporters of T-TIP. This is the U.S.-EU bilateral trade agreement that was being negotiated in the Obama administration that, from what we understand, is now not moving forward. There is one poll showing public support at about 71 percent.

You were part of the President's economic council, so you have been in a position to give him advice. What is your position on the prospects of a future U.S.-EU trade agreement? You are going to be going to a country that is a big fan of that agreement and is very nervous that the prospects for that agreement are pretty dim today.

Ms. SANDS. Thank you, Senator, for that very important question.

As you know, both the United States and Denmark hold trade very high. We are both trading nations and innovative countries.

While it is true that this trade agreement has been paused, my understanding is that the administration is working through how they are going to proceed. And if I am confirmed to serve in Denmark, I will wait to hear what the President and Secretary Tillerson, what agreement they come to. And I will implement the policies of the administration.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. I hope you are right, that we are going to get that trade agreement restarted. There are still plenty of nontariff barriers that hurt companies in the United States.

Just one more question for you, Ms. Sands, on the Danes relationship with Russia. They have to be talking to the Russians, in particular because of their concerns with respect to the Arctic, but they have been partners with us in continuing sanctions against Russia with respect to their action in Ukraine.

I expect that you will have orders to continue to work with the Danes on Russia sanctions, but I just wonder if you might speak for a moment about the work that you expect to be doing to try to make sure that Denmark and the U.S. are working in concert to make sure that Russia continues to pay a price for their invasion of Ukraine while also trying to find ways that we can work together, the Arctic being a good example of it.

Ms. SANDS. Thank you, Senator.

This is a very complicated issue. While I know the administration is working through how this is going to go forward, the Russian sanctions, they are going to be very serious. And I look forward, if I am confirmed, to being at post and being fully briefed on the issues regarding the Russian sanctions and how it will impact both Denmark and the United States.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Kohorst, let me ask you the same question. Croatia, obviously, is an important country with respect to holding European and U.S. sanctions against Russia together. How do you expect to work with the Croats on making sure that they continue to be part of a coalition that holds Ukraine-related sanctions together against the Russians?

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator.

Croatia has been a strong and important ally of the United States for 25-plus years. I expect that relationship to continue. And if confirmed, I will do my best to maintain a positive relationship with the Croatian Government and its people.

Croatia has been fully supportive of the U.S. sanctions against Russia and the Ukraine. From what I understand, they will continue to do so.

Senator MURPHY. I was vamping, waiting for Senator Shaheen. So now that Senator Shaheen is here, I will let her settle herself and turn it over to her for a few final questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Murphy, for keeping the hearing open so that I could come over and get my questions in.

Congratulations to both of you on your nominations and on your willingness to serve the country.

As you know, both Croatia and Denmark are very important to the United States. I am sure you covered many of the questions that I had, but I really wanted to ask you about energy, because as we look at the proposals for Nord Stream II pipeline, obviously,

there are concerns in both Croatia and Denmark about that pipeline and what that would mean in the countries.

So as you are thinking about your role as Ambassador, should you be confirmed, how do you view being able to support your host country as they continue to keep that pipeline from being built and continue to address the energy issues that they have in each country?

I will ask you, Mr. Kohorst, if you would like to go first on that.

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator.

Energy is a critical issue in Croatia, in the past few years and going forward. They are currently in the process of building and LNG terminal off the Island of Krk, which will have the potential, with the pipeline being built through to Hungary, has the potential to deliver substantial energy to Southeastern Europe, which will dramatically reduce the Russians' influence in that area. It provides economic benefits to the country of Croatia, reduces Russian influence, and has the potential to allow American companies to export liquefied natural gas to the area.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ms. Sands?

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

The pipeline is a very important topic. Denmark is concerned, and so is the United States. The pipeline would go through Danish territorial waters. And I believe that, of course, I will look forward, if I am confirmed, to learning more about this at post, but Denmark is very progressive in their energy. They are, actually, I think the only EU net exporter of energy. And I believe that they are so innovative that they, along with the United States, are finding new ways to power Denmark.

But as far as the Nord II, it is a complicated issue, and I look forward to learning more about it.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

I want to go back to Croatia, because Croatia has been very helpful to its neighbors in the Western Balkans, in terms of encouraging them in their efforts to join the EU and to look west and continue to support those values. I think it is probably more important now than it has been in the last several decades, perhaps since Yugoslavia broke apart, to have countries in the Western Balkans who are offsetting some of the influence from Russia.

I noticed recently that Serbia, we have seen a big change in public opinion in Serbia about their interest in joining the EU and in their support for the West versus support for Russia.

So as you think about your role as Ambassador, what can you do to continue to support Croatian efforts to work with their neighbors on continued EU integration?

Mr. KOHORST. Thank you, Senator.

Croatia joined the EU in 2013 after 10 years of going through the process. It is a very difficult process, but they were able to make changes in their society and their economy to satisfy the requirements for joining. I believe their neighboring countries, Serbia and Bosnia, are attempting to make those changes. To the extent that we can help that process, I believe that is in the United States' interests.

So I would encourage Croatia, without interfering with the bilateral relationships between those two countries, to support the EU whenever possible.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

We do not have an ambassador to Hungary yet, but when we do, you will get to know them very well, because at the heart of these energy issues in the region is one of the most complicated energy relationships in Europe between Croatia and Hungary.

We look forward to working with you to try to settle some of those issues around reverse gas flows, because if we put that LNG terminal into Croatia, it does not do much good if we cannot then turn that around and help out neighboring countries that today are dependent on Russian oil.

Thank you both for providing us with your testimony and responses. The hearing record is going to remain open, Senator Johnson tells me to report, for 2 days until October 7 at 5 p.m. So if you do get any questions from members of the committee who were not here or who were here, we hope that you will turn those around as fast as possible.

Senator MURPHY. And with that, as I reach for his gavel, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:05 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO CARLA SANDS BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question 1. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have worked in my local community to benefit and advance the rights of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, such as at risk-youth. These efforts have been a commitment of my entire family as we have raised funds and personally volunteered to benefit local groups that provide support and healing for abused and neglected children and homeless populations.

If confirmed, I will continue my commitment to assisting these and other vulnerable populations as a firm advocate for those without a voice, particularly women and children who have been victims of human trafficking.

Question 2. What are the most pressing human rights concerns in Denmark today? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to advance human rights and democracy in Denmark and, working in partnership with Denmark, to promote human rights around the globe? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

- If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Denmark advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?
- Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Denmark?

Answer. Denmark is an important and active ally on democratic values and the rule of law upon which the NATO Alliance was founded, supporting the United States' efforts to strengthen human rights around the globe. Denmark is among the most generous donor nations in the world, providing \$2.8 billion—the equivalent of nearly one percent of its GDP—each year in official development aid, which is allo-

cated (in part) to promoting human rights and democracy. Respect for human rights is a core Danish value. At the same time, Denmark, in recent years, has drawn international criticism for the treatment of irregular migrants from outside Europe, and tough immigration rules and legislation to deter asylum seekers. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage Denmark to remain firmly committed to protecting human rights at home and abroad. And if confirmed, I will regularly engage with representatives from government, political parties, and nongovernmental organizations to stress the importance of tolerance and diversity and to share best practices and new ideas promoting human rights, including programs, at the local level.

Question 3. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Denmark to address the unjust targeting of key political prisoners and other persons around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Danish Government to call out cases involving victims of politically-motivated prosecution and encourage their resolution in a manner that respects human rights and the rule of law.

Question 4. If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts to ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that staff have access to training on Leahy Law restrictions on providing assistance to foreign military units that violate human rights and will ensure Embassy Copenhagen thoroughly vets individuals and units that it nominates to participate in U.S.—funded security assistance activities.

Question 5. Will you engage with the people of Denmark on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening the people to people partnerships between Danes and Americans, whether through study abroad or exchange programs, cultural programming, or community outreach. I plan to do so by blending traditional engagement with new and innovative ways to reach a diverse audience, especially youth, to continue to foster a close and deep mutual respect and appreciation between our two countries and to emphasize areas of shared values including human rights, civil rights, and governance.

Question 6. What will you do to promote, mentor and support your staff members who come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the State Department?

- What steps will you take to ensure that supervisors at the Embassy foster an environment that is diverse and inclusive, including in terms of gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics?

Answer. As a business executive, I appreciate the importance of fostering diverse and inclusive teams, and understand the value of having minorities in leadership positions. In keeping with Secretary Tillerson's strong emphasis on diversity, if confirmed, I will develop an inclusive work environment at Embassy Copenhagen that encourages different perspectives, and I will ensure that all supervisors receive regular formal training and guidance on EEO principles, diversity, and inclusion.

Question 7. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question 8. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question 9. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Denmark?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes companies that have a presence in Denmark. I am committed to ensuring my official actions will not give rise to a conflict of interest. I will divest my interests in those companies that the State Department Ethics Office deems necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, and will remain vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

Question 10. Have there been any material changes to your financial assets, income, or any other information requested by the OGE financial disclosure form since

the date you signed it? If so, please list and explain below, and whether you have raised them with OGE.

Answer. I know of no significant change in my financial affairs since I filed my report. I am committed to ensuring that my official actions will not give rise to a conflict of interest and will remain vigilant with regards to my ethics obligations.

Question 11. Russia Sanctions: Unity with European partners on Russia sanctions is critical to their success. What is your diplomatic plan to build support within Denmark for stronger sanctions on Russia?

Answer. Denmark has been a steadfast supporter of EU sanctions against Russia, which are designed to impose costs on Russia sufficient to change the Russian Government's behavior. Denmark also remains committed to challenging Russian influence campaigns in Europe and has taken part in and supported international efforts to restore Ukraine's integrity. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. and Danish policies towards Russia remain closely coordinated. Close coordination with allies, like Denmark, is vital to ensure the sanctions effectively support our work in resolving the conflict in Ukraine, and to push back against Russian efforts to influence the domestic affairs of other countries.

Question 12. Russian Malign Influence: How will you seek to boost resilience to Russian meddling within Danish institutions and civil society? What assistance priorities will you push with Danish counterparts to shore up resilience elsewhere in Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support a larger effort to build the resilience of European partners against Russia's whole-of-government efforts to undermine democratic processes through programs like media messaging, bilateral exchanges (e.g. student outreach in Denmark and Greenland), cultural programs, and regional networks. I will encourage direct government-to-government collaboration to address and push back on Russian influence campaigns through grant assistance, training, and exchange programs.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ROBERT KOHORST BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question 1. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Over the course of my career, I have been active with a number of charitable organizations that focus on youth, education and health care.

I was a long-term board member and a 2 term President of the San Gabriel Valley Chapter, Boy Scouts of America, which serves thousands of young men. During my tenure, I was an advocate for the Boy Scouts to change their policies to be more inclusive.

My wife and I have also been active supporters of Dolores Mission School, a Catholic grade school that supports education in the Hispanic community, which includes a significant immigrant population. Dolores Mission School has made a noticeable advancement in the number of youth in the community that graduate high school and go on to college. I have also been a long-term Trustee for La Salle High School, which has a mission under the Christian Brothers to provide education for an inclusive demographic, with a particular focus on the educating the poor and disadvantaged community.

My wife and I have also been significant contributors to Huntington Hospital, which provides key services to all members of our community and is the main critical care facility in our area.

Question 2. What are the most pressing human rights concerns in Croatia today? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to advance human rights and democracy in Croatia and, working in partnership with Croatia, to promote human rights in the Europe and Eurasia region? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Croatia is still addressing issues related to the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Some of these legacy issues continue to have human rights implications. Although the government generally tries to address these issues, relations with members of ethnic minorities—most notably the Serb community—could be better. Isolated instances of anti-Serb protests and the vandalizing of Serb churches and monuments have occurred. Some extreme elements of Croatian society have engaged in sporadic anti-Semitism or Holocaust revisionism.

The recent controversy surrounding the placement of a veteran's group plaque bearing an Ustasha-era slogan near the World War II-era Jasenovac concentration camp and a lack of progress in resolving the property restitution claims of Croatian Jews or their descendants highlight the need for more resolute, timely action by the government.

Promoting human rights and democratic governance is a core element of U.S. foreign policy. Fortunately, we have a willing partner in the current Croatian Government, although our priorities in Croatia and the region may, at times, differ. As a party to a number of UN human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, and having met human rights-related criteria during its accession to the European Union, Croatia has undertaken obligations to uphold human rights and democratic ideals.

If confirmed, I will remind the Croatian Government of such obligations when needed. I will also cooperate with the Government in the promotion of human rights and democracy in the region, notably in constructively supporting democratic and electoral reform efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and resolving war legacy and other contentious issues with Serbia. Through these actions I hope to contribute to regional stabilization and respect for human rights and democracy, and to the deepening of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Question 3. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Croatia advancing human rights, civil society and democracy in general?

Answer. As I mentioned, some of the human rights-related issues in the Balkans are linked to historical events, going back in some cases to the Second World War. These deep-seated legacy issues often require cultural, and even generational, change to fully resolve. If confirmed, I may encounter some resistance when addressing these issues in my public role as Ambassador to Croatia, but addressing such issues is something I intend to do.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the young people of Croatia, whose youth was not shaped by war and who look forward to Croatia's bright future in the European Union. I will leverage cultural and educational exchange programs, person-to-person ties and our outstanding relationship with the Croatian government to further promote human rights and respect for democracy.

Question 4. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Croatia?

Answer. Yes, I am committed to meeting with and supporting civil society organizations who work in the promotion of democracy and human rights in both the U.S. and in Croatia.

Question 5. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Croatia to address the unjust targeting of key political prisoners and other persons around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I will address such practices in my role as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, and my Embassy team will continue to execute U.S. Government policy to help resolve significant cases of political persecution.

Question 6. If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts to ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. As our security cooperation with Croatia has expanded over recent years, our Embassy has executed a significant International Military Education and Training (IMET) program (\$1.1 million last year, \$850K for FY 2018). This means they send security force personnel from the Croatian military to mutually-beneficial training programs in the U.S. and elsewhere. As part of the nomination process for such training, candidates are vetted by several offices in the Embassy to ensure that no assistance is provided to members of security force units credibly implicated in gross human rights violations, in accordance with the Leahy Law. Several past courses executed through the IMET program focused on human rights and international humanitarian law; these courses supported the spirit of the Leahy Law by promoting human rights in our security partnerships. If confirmed, I will ensure the Embassy continues properly vetting candidates per existing Department policy, in close coordination with the Department's Office of Democracy Human Rights and Labor. I will continue to include the subject of human rights in the dialogue of our security partnership.

Question 7 Will you engage with the people of Croatia on matters of human rights, civil rights and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Yes, I am committed to meeting with and supporting civil society organizations and Croatian citizens who work in the promotion of democracy and human rights in both the U.S. and in Croatia.

Question 8. What will you do to promote, mentor and support your staff members who come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the State Department?

Answer. Embassy Zagreb already works actively to promote and support staff members from diverse backgrounds, and if confirmed I intend to continue those efforts. The first step in promoting diversity in the State Department is recruitment; building a workforce that reflects our nation's broad diversity is a top priority of the Department and one I share. In accordance with this guidance, Embassy Zagreb recruits from a diverse, qualified group of potential applicants to secure a high-performing workforce drawn from all segments of society. The mission welcomes and recruits diversity in all forms, including gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Senior leaders in the embassy mentor and support staff members through various means. Embassy Zagreb also promotes diversity and inclusion through its active First and Second Tour Officer group and Federal Women's Program. If confirmed, I pledge to continued support of these efforts.

Question 9. What steps will you take to ensure that supervisors at the Embassy foster an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. I will ensure Embassy Zagreb continues to cultivate a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness. Transparency in decision-making is an essential part of ensuring diversity and inclusion. I understand the mission likewise promotes a diverse and inclusive environment that attracts new talent from diverse backgrounds, enhances professional development, and encourages supervisors to value and respect unique perspectives. If confirmed, I will continue to honor those principles.

Question 10. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question 11. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question 12. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Croatia?

Answer. No.

Question 13. Have there been any material changes to your financial assets, income, or any other information requested by the OGE financial disclosure form since the date you signed it? If so, please list and explain below, and whether you have raised them with OGE.

Answer. My financial condition, income and other information requested by OGE has not changed in a material way since that date I signed my financial disclosure form. Although I would not characterize these changes as material to my overall financial condition, please note that I have sold a significant number of the assets requested to be sold by the Ethics Agreement I signed. All of the proceeds of such sales have been deposited in money market accounts. Upon confirmation, I will sell the remaining assets requested to be sold pursuant to the terms of the Ethics Agreement.

Question 14. Croatia's relations with neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina have always been delicate, and in recent weeks have taken a downturn. While formally respecting its neighbor's territorial integrity, Zagreb is not as helpful as it could be in countering the unhelpful positions of Bosnian Croat political leaders that block needed reforms to improve effective government, to remove ethnicity as dominant and discriminatory forces in politics to fight corruption. The stability and sovereignty of Bosnia, of course, has been a priority of concern for the United States

and for Europe. What plan of action do you have to encourage Croatia to be a more positive partner in helping to bring about change in Bosnia?

Answer. If confirmed, most immediately, I will urge Croatian leaders to use their influence with Bosnian Croats to gain support for electoral reforms consistent with the Dayton framework of one state, two entities, and three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs), and with European Court of Human Rights decisions which Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) must implement. Longer term, Croatia can play an important role by supporting the accession of BiH to the EU and NATO—steps which would have a stabilizing effect on the entire region. I will encourage Croatia to continue to work with BiH on the technical aspects of EU and NATO accession, including sharing its own lessons learned, and to support political reforms that move BiH further along the path toward accession.

Question 15. Croatia, like many countries in Europe, has a Romani population that faces various and widespread forms of discrimination, in particular in regard to education. The State Department also reports a rise in anti-Serb and anti-Semitic incidents in recent years. As Ambassador, how will you engage in outreach to Roma and other minority groups in Croatia to determine how the United States can actively assist in supporting tolerance and non-discrimination efforts across the country, including improving conditions and living standards for the Roma?

Answer. As in many other European states, Roma face challenges in Croatia. Discrimination occurs and Roma are generally disadvantaged in their access to education, housing, employment and even documentation of citizenship. According to the Council of Europe, as few as 6.5 percent of Roma in Croatia are in formal employment. Full equality for Roma will remain a challenge, but as the Department reported in previous years' Annual Human Rights Reports, the Government of Croatia has taken positive steps forward. For instance, the Government has financially supported Romani integration initiatives, applying state and EU funding to educational, occupational, linguistic and housing programs, and subsidizing businesses that formally employed Roma.

Isolated instances of anti-Serb protests and the vandalizing of Serb churches and monuments have also occurred. Some extreme elements of Croatian society have engaged in sporadic anti-Semitism or Holocaust revisionism. The recent controversy surrounding the placement of a veteran's group plaque bearing an Ustasha-era slogan near the World War II-era Jasenovac concentration camp and a lack of progress in addressing the property restitution claims of Croatian Jews or their descendants highlight the need for more resolute, timely government action.

Promoting human rights and democratic governance is a core element of U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I will engage directly with the leaders of minority communities to hear about their concerns and the status of the groups they lead. I will ensure embassy outreach, programs, and exchanges include representatives from minority communities. And, I will encourage the Croatian Government to continue, or expand, initiatives that work towards the integration of Romani communities and the improvement of relations with other minority groups in Croatian society.

Russia Sanctions

Question 16. Unity with European partners on Russia sanctions is critical to their success. What is your diplomatic plan to build support within Croatia for stronger sanctions on Russia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be committed to working closely with the Government of Croatia to maintain unity on Russia sanctions and their implementation. The U.S. Government has employed a collaborative and consultative approach on sanctions, which Croatia has strongly supported. Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic was an outspoken critic of Russia's occupation of Crimea during his time in the European Parliament, and his second official foreign visit was to Ukraine, drawing intense Russian criticism. I will engage high-level Croatian officials to ensure they understand they must fully implement existing sanctions and maintain strong EU support for sanctions, including the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act recently passed by Congress. As a NATO and EU member, and a country that strongly supports the transatlantic relationship, Croatia can play a more active role in ensuring the EU responds decisively to Russian influence and aggression in the region. Close coordination with our allies is crucial to enabling the sanctions to achieve their ultimate goal: imposing costs on Russia sufficient to change the Russian Government's behavior.

Russian Malign Influence

Question 17. How will you seek to boost resilience to Russian meddling within Croatian institutions and civil society? What assistance priorities will you push with Croatian counterparts to shore up resilience elsewhere in Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue and expand exchange programs that highlight the importance of a vibrant civil society, independent press, and government transparency. As an EU member, Croatia is not eligible for most U.S. foreign assistance, but Croatia is a recipient and also a co-leader in our regional rule of law training program, which brings prosecutors and judges from around the region together to learn how to fight corruption and protect human rights. If confirmed, I will push to continue this program and maximize Croatia's participation. I will explore opportunities to provide targeted assistance that helps mitigate Croatia's vulnerabilities to Russian pressure, as is evident in the \$1,000,000 in technical support we are providing to facilitate the development of a planned liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at Krk Island. This assistance will address key components of the terminal's pre-development phase, helping to ensure its timely completion and, in doing so, enabling greater European energy security through diversified gas supplies. I will also work with Croatian leaders to accelerate their transition to NATO-interoperable weapons systems, in order to reduce Croatia's dependence on Russia-maintained equipment. Finally, I will encourage Croatian officials and institutions to share their successful EU integration experience with their neighbors, by growing as a donor and by partnering with the United States through mechanisms such as the Emerging Donors Challenge Program.
