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UNITED STATES SENATE**

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**NOMINATIONS OF ROBERT STEPHEN
BEECROFT, STUART E. JONES, DANA SHELL
SMITH, JAMES D. NEALON, AND GENTRY O.
SMITH**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2014

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

Hon. Robert Stephen Beecroft, of California, to be Ambassador to
the Arab Republic of Egypt
Hon. Stuart E. Jones, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic
of Iraq
Dana Shell Smith, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the State of
Qatar
James D. Nealon, of New Hampshire, to be Ambassador to the Re-
public of Honduras
Gentry O. Smith, of North Carolina, to be Director of the Office of
Foreign Missions

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:05 a.m., in room
SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez
(chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez, Murphy, Kaine, Corker, Risch,
Rubio, Johnson, and Barrasso.

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

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

For our first panel today, we have nominees for U.S. Amba-
sadors to Egypt, Iraq, and Qatar.

In Egypt on Sunday, the former Minister of Defense, Field Mar-
shall Sisi, was sworn into office. But, as we all know, a sustainable
democratic transition is about more than elections. I remain con-
cerned by the state of media repression in Egypt, the intimidation
and detention of activists, mass death sentences, and the dispropor-
tionate use of force by Egypt's security services. That said, the peo-
ple of Egypt have taken to the streets to protest successive govern-
ments, and there is no reason not to expect protests again if the
Sisi government is unable to deliver on its promises.

Ultimately, my goal is to find a way forward for the United States/Egypt partnership, which means maintaining the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and a strong defense in counter-terrorism partnership. When it comes to assistance, continued U.S. aid must be based on the totality of our shared interests. And this now includes the Egyptian Government taking steps toward a sustainable democratic transition. That is not only my view, but a legal requirement of the 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Act. So, that said, I look forward to hearing from Ambassador Beecroft on his views.

In Iraq, while political leaders are dealmaking to form a government, the Iraqi people are not benefiting from their country's increased oil output, and the conflict continues to surge in western Iraq, as the spillover from Syria has enabled the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria to take hold. Clearly, we must continue to support the Iraqi Security Forces, but I am concerned by reports that they have been using barrel bombs in their operations. Syria's questions remain unanswered: Iraq's role in Syria, the activities of Iraqi Shia militias fighting with Assad security forces, Iranian influence in Iraq, and the commitment of the Iraqi Government to protect the residents of Camp Liberty until we can conclude a resettlement process. So, Ambassador Jones, I look forward to your perspectives and analysis.

Qatar presents another set of issues. I know that there are many who have questions about the context of the negotiations, the Qatari Government's role in facilitating the talks, and its commitments regarding the status of the Taliban detainees. However, Qatar's multifaceted strategic importance goes far beyond its facilitating role in the Bergdahl/Taliban deal. So, I sincerely hope that this hearing does not denigrate into a political debate that demands answers the nominee does not have and ultimately holds up the process, leaving us with no ambassador on the ground to enforce the terms of the agreement. This is not the time to debate those terms. It is time to confirm an ambassador who will enforce them. I look forward to hearing from you, and to hearing about what you see as your role in Qatar, broadly, as well as on this issue. If you are confirmed, I am monitoring this commitment, and I want to make it clear that Congress will play an active oversight role on this issue. That said, I look forward to hearing from the nominee on the many facets of Qatar's broader strategic importance.

With that, let me turn to the distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Corker, for his remarks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks, to all three of you, for your desire to serve in this way. We obviously have three very qualified nominees, and going to very, very important places.

And I think, to a lesser degree in Qatar, but certainly to a degree, there are two issues that overwhelmingly will affect the service of both Ambassador Jones and Beecroft, and that is the black hole that we have right now in Syria.

And I know that both of you have already experienced that in the countries in which you are serving right now and the fact that we have never really put in place any kind of policy or strategy, or even laid out what our objectives are clearly. And that is obviously having a very destabilizing effect on Iraq and Jordan, where both of you have been.

We also have a situation where there is just no regional strategy. You know, the administration, unfortunately, continues to hide behind, you know, classified briefings and those kind of things, and is unable to lay out a coherent strategy for the region. And so, again, all three of you enter places where that has created significant difficulties. And again, I thank you for your desire to serve in that way.

Egypt, since 2011, there has been no stabilization there. The country is really no better off, relative to many of the issues that we care about, than it was. I do have hopes—maybe greater hopes than our chairman just mentioned—for Egypt, going forward. And I know that they are a very important relationship for our country.

Iraq, we are continuing to read daily the devolution that is taking place there. You feel it on the ground. The lack of involvement that we have had in helping shape things on the ground is very, very apparent, and I know we will talk about that during Q&A.

And in Qatar, because of our inability or lack of desire or just whatever in taking a lead, relative to the Syrian opposition, Qatar obviously has taken a role that has been unhealthy. I understand that may be tapering back some now, but that is a very, very important relationship.

So, I look forward to our questions and answers. I want to thank each of you again for the lives you have led that have made you so qualified for the positions that you are ascending to. And I thank you for being here today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Corker.

Let me again welcome our first panel of nominees, all decorated career Foreign Service officers. None is a stranger to demanding, consuming critical assignments, both domestically and abroad. And we thank them and their families for their past service, and for their willingness to serve again in very challenging roles.

Let me introduce them. They are Robert Stephen Beecroft, to be Ambassador to Egypt; Stuart E. Jones, to be Ambassador to Iraq; and Dana Shell Smith, to be the Ambassador to Qatar.

Ambassador Beecroft has undertaken difficult assignments in the most critical countries for U.S. national security and strategic interests. He is a career Foreign Service officer with the rank of minister counselor, and currently serves as Ambassador to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Stuart E. Jones also is no stranger to demanding assignments in the most strategic, pressing areas for the United States. He is a career Foreign Service officer with the rank of career minister. He is currently serving as our Ambassador in Amman, Jordan, and has served twice as the deputy chief of mission in Baghdad, and in our Embassy in Egypt.

Dana Shell Smith is truly a global diplomat, having served throughout the world in her capacity as a public affairs officer. She, too, is a career Foreign Service officer, with the rank of minister

counselor, and currently serves as senior advisor to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

So, let me join Senator Corker in thanking you all for your service, both past and moving forward in the future.

We have a larger audience than we normally have for nominees, so I assume that maybe there are some family members or friends present. If they are here with you, we would urge you to introduce them to the committee when you have your time to testify. We understand and appreciate that families are a big part of the sacrifice and the service, and we honor their willingness to have you serve our country while they, themselves, face sacrifices as a result of it.

Your full statements will be included in the record, without objection, so we ask you to summarize your openings in about 5 minutes or so, so we can enter into a dialogue with you.

And, with that, we will start off with you, Ambassador Beecroft, then Ambassador Jones, and then move to Ms. Smith.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT, OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINEE TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, other members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their support and confidence, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other Members of Congress to advance the interests of the United States.

I am also pleased to share this hearing with my colleagues, Stu Jones and Dana Smith. I look forward to working closely with them on the many issues facing the United States in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman, I have spent much of my career working in the Middle East, including assignments in Syria and Saudi Arabia, and as Ambassador to Jordan and to Iraq. My experience has made me acutely aware of Egypt's strategic importance inside and outside the region, and the need for effective U.S. engagement with Egypt. As the most populous Arab country, Egypt represents fully a quarter of the Arab world. It also hosts the Arab League. Its long-standing cultural influence and importance as an opinion leader and bellwether for trends across the region is well known. Egypt is the third-largest market for U.S. goods and services in the Middle East, and the United States is the second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Egypt.

Approximately 8 percent of global maritime commerce flows through the Suez Canal every year, and a total of 427 U.S.-flagged vessels, including over 85 U.S. military vessels, moved over 1.9 billion tons of cargo through the Suez in 2013.

And I cannot stress enough the importance of Egypt's upholding of its peace treaty with Israel, which has delivered over 35 years of stability to the region. After repeated conflicts, beginning in 1948, the two countries have not seen war since 1973. Conditions in Egypt, thus, have implications for the security of Israel and our allies in the Arab world and beyond. Increased instability in Egypt would not only open space for violent extremist strongholds, but

also encourage migrant flight. It would threaten global commerce with an ensuing ripple effect on international economies.

For these reasons and more, we have crucial interests in Egypt: preserving regional peace and stability with Israel and all of Egypt's neighbors, countering the transnational threats of terrorism and weapons trafficking, creating economic prosperity and increased opportunities for foreign investment, and building inclusive democratic institutions and civil societies that undermine the conditions for violent extremism and form the bedrock of prosperous, equitable economic growth. As President Obama said in his May 28 address at West Point, support for human rights and democracy goes beyond idealism. It is a matter of national security.

While views on how to advance our interests in Egypt may differ, there is agreement that Egypt's success as a secure, prosperous, and pluralistic democratic state remains vitally important to the United States. If confirmed, I commit to work with Congress to help achieve this goal and promote a constructive United States/Egypt partnership that furthers our interests.

I want to commend the American personnel and local staff at our U.S. mission who have been carrying out courageous and difficult work during a tumultuous time. The mission has remained actively engaged with Egyptian Government officials, political parties, and civil society. Twelve cabinet-level agencies at the mission are advancing our national security objectives, protecting the welfare of American citizens and business, and pursuing our work with the Government and people of Egypt. If confirmed as Ambassador, I look forward to joining in their efforts.

It is a distinct honor to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker, I look forward to answering any questions you or members of the committee may have.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Beecroft follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their support and confidence, and if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and other Members of Congress to advance the interests of the United States.

I am also pleased to share this hearing with Stuart Jones and Dana Smith. I look forward to working closely with them on the many issues facing the region.

Mr. Chairman, I have spent much of my career working in the Middle East, including assignments in Syria and Saudi Arabia and as Ambassador to Jordan and to Iraq. My experience has made me acutely aware of Egypt's strategic importance inside and outside the region and the need for effective U.S. engagement with Egypt: as the most populous Arab country, Egypt represents fully a quarter of the Arab world. It also hosts the Arab League. Its long-standing cultural influence and importance as an opinion leader and bellwether for trends across the region is well-known. Egypt is the third-largest market for U.S. goods and services in the Middle East, and the United States is the second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Egypt. Approximately 8 percent of global maritime commerce flows through the Suez Canal every year, and a total of 427 U.S. flagged vessels—including over 85 U.S. military vessels—moved over 1.9 billion tons of cargo through the Suez in 2013. And I cannot stress enough the importance of Egypt's upholding of its Peace Treaty

with Israel, which has delivered over 35 years of stability to the region. After repeated conflicts beginning in 1948, the two countries have not seen war since 1973. In the ensuing years, Egypt has even played a constructive role supporting our mediation on other tracks of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Conditions in Egypt thus have implications for the security of Israel and our allies in the Arab world and beyond. Increased instability in Egypt would not only open space for violent extremist strongholds, but also encourage migrant flight that could place added strain on our Southern European allies. It would threaten global commerce, with an ensuing ripple effect on international economies.

For these reasons and more, we have crucial interests in Egypt: preserving regional peace and stability with Israel and all of Egypt's neighbors; countering the transnational threats of terrorism and weapons trafficking; creating economic prosperity and increased opportunities for foreign investment; and building inclusive, democratic institutions and civil societies that deter the emergence of violent extremism and form the bedrock of prosperous, equitable economic growth. As President Obama said in his May 28 address at West Point, ". . . support for human rights and democracy goes beyond idealism—it is a matter of national security."

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It is a distinct honor to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker, I look forward to answering any questions you or members of the committee may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Jones.

**STATEMENT OF HON. STUART E. JONES, OF VIRGINIA,
NOMINEE TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

Ambassador JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I am deeply honored today to appear as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am grateful to the President and to the Secretary for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance U.S. goals in Iraq.

I look forward to building on the excellent work of my predecessor and friend, Ambassador Steve Beecroft, who is, of course, with us today, and I am also delighted to share this panel with Dana Smith, a valued colleague of many years.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my daughter, Dorothy Jones, a rising sophomore at Duke University. She flew up from Atlanta to be with me here today. My wife, Barbara, and two sons, Thaddeus and Woody, are in Amman. I am grateful that my family has been game for every new posting.

Mr. Chairman, I am both humbled and thrilled to have the opportunity to serve as Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in Baghdad, one of our largest and most complex diplomatic missions. I have served in Iraq twice, as you mentioned, and as Director for Iraq Affairs on the National Security Council. These jobs have helped me to prepare for the complexity and challenges of the assignment ahead.

We are all familiar with the history of Iraq's past decade. It is impossible to serve in Iraq without recalling and honoring the sacrifice and achievement of our U.S. service men and women and civilians. More than 4,000 lost their lives there, but they also put an end to the oppression and regional threat of the Saddam Hussein regime. Today, we are all committed to help build a new Iraq, secure in its borders, with strong democratic institutions, where all can benefit from its abundant resources.

Iraq has, indeed, made important economic and democratic progress, but is now engaged in a fierce battle against ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in the world. Monday's coordinated attack on Mosul in which ISIL militants overran parts of the city highlights just how dangerous this group is. We will continue to work with our international partners to try to meet the needs of those who have been displaced, and we will look for ways to support the government and the security forces in their conflict with ISIL.

Overall, violence in Iraq has reached levels not seen since the height of the U.S. surge in 2007. Suicide vests and vehicle bomb attacks are averaging nearly 70 per month since the beginning of this year. The United States has taken important steps to help Iraq combat this shared enemy. We have provided urgently needed military equipment through the foreign military sales process, and the Iraqis have told us that our equipment and advice are making a critical difference. I would like to thank this panel for making these transfers possible.

In addition to military equipment transfers, we have strengthened our information-sharing relationships and are developing programs to improve border security. We have also initiated a high-level dialogue between our senior military leadership and key Iraqi military commanders.

Security assistance, however, is only one element of our assistance, and it is connected to intense political and economic engagement. The United States has also encouraged Iraq to adopt a holistic strategy to isolate ISIL from the population and develop a strategy for sustainable security. This strategy will require continued engagement between Iraq's political leaders, Sunni tribal leaders, and others.

From a political standpoint, Iraq's successful national election on April 30 was a victory for efforts to strengthen Iraq's democratic institutions. While Prime Minister Maliki's State of Law Coalition won more seats than any other, it fell short of the 165 needed to form a majority government. Government formation is an Iraqi-owned process, and it will be up to Iraq's political leaders to form a government that reflects the will have the people, as expressed in the April 30 election.

Despite Iraq's political and security challenges, its tremendous economic growth over the last decade has been impressive. Iraq's economy has averaged 6.5-percent growth since 2005. It is now producing 3.2 million barrels of oil per day.

The United States and Iraq have partnered to share best practices on fossil fuel production and exports. We are engaged with the Government of Iraq on capturing gas for power generation and on political issues related to hydrocarbon revenue management. The

government also faces a challenge in its natural resources—in distributing the wealth created by its natural resources to its population and to use its oil wealth to promote growth in other sectors.

Iraq's economic growth offers exciting opportunities for U.S. firms, particularly in key sectors, such as infrastructure development and construction. If confirmed, I look forward to promoting Secretary Kerry's Shared Prosperity agenda as Ambassador to Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, as I have discussed, Iraq poses a challenging security environment. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will bear responsibility for the safety of all U.S. personnel in Iraq, including at Embassy Baghdad and our consulates in Erbil and Basrah. If confirmed, I will work closely with our security team on the ground, as well as with our diplomatic security professionals back here in Washington, to ensure that our people are well protected. This will be my highest priority, as well as to protect the safety of American citizens in Iraq.

Since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011, the Embassy and consulates have significantly reduced our staffing. As of June 2014, we have approximately 5,300 staff, just one-third of our 2012 footprint. If confirmed, I will continue to examine staffing levels to ensure that we have the appropriate number of personnel to carry out our mission.

Our diplomatic efforts are supported by a highly skilled team of individuals at the Embassy in Iraq, and they represent a wide range of U.S. departments and agencies. This whole-of-government approach allows us to bring the very best experts our government has to offer and address some of the challenges I have raised with you today. I would like to thank everyone at the Embassy in Iraq for their service, as well as the leadership back here in Washington, including this committee, that makes this level of inter-agency coordination possible. Our continued success in Iraq depends on continued collaboration.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. I appreciate and value this committee's oversight of our efforts in Iraq. And, if confirmed, I look forward to welcoming you and your respective staff members to Baghdad. Your continued engagement on the policy issues that we face in Iraq are a vital element in ensuring our success.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jones follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY STUART E. JONES

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today, as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance U.S. goals in Iraq. I look forward to building on the excellent work of my predecessor and friend, Ambassador Steve Beecroft, who is of course, here today.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my daughter, Dorothy Jones, a rising sophomore at Duke University. She flew up from Atlanta to be with me today. My wife, Barbara, a former Foreign Service officer and current civil servant, is in Amman with our sons, Thaddeus and Woody, so they could not join us. I am grateful for our children's support for this assignment and throughout our Foreign Service careers.

Mr. Chairman, I am both humbled and thrilled to have the opportunity to serve as chief of mission at American Embassy Baghdad, one of our largest and most complex diplomatic missions. I had the honor of serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad. I also served as the Governorate Coordinator in Ramadi, in Anbar province under the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004. Later I was Director for Iraq Affairs on the National Security Council staff here in Washington. These jobs have helped me prepare for the complexity and challenges of the assignment ahead.

We are all familiar with the history of Iraq's past decade. It is impossible to serve in Iraq without recalling and honoring the sacrifice and achievement of our U.S. service men and women and civilians. More than 4,000 Americans lost their lives to give the Iraqi people a chance at a better future. Today we are committed to helping build a new Iraq, which has moved beyond the isolation and oppression of its past, with secure borders, strong democratic institutions, and where all citizens benefit from its abundant resources.

On April 30, Iraq held its first national elections since the departure of U.S. forces. As they did in 2005 and 2010, Iraq's citizens overcame terrorist threats and exercised their franchise.

Today, Iraq is also producing around 3.2 million barrels of oil per day. It is one of the major contributors to the world oil market and this oil wealth has placed Iraq on the path to economic self-sufficiency. Iraqi oil exports have also made it possible to sustain the international sanctions on Iran without cost to the world economy.

While we are encouraged by these developments, we also recognize that the Republic of Iraq is now engaged in a fierce fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. The complex, coordinated attack on Mosul on Monday, in which ISIL militants overran parts of the city, highlights just how dangerous this group is. ISIL now controls much of Iraq's second-largest city, and thousands of people have been forced to flee in the last several days, according to the U.N. The Iraqi security forces are responding together with Kurdish Peshmerga forces. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, and will work with our international partners to try to meet the needs of those who have been displaced.

Overall, violence in Iraq has reached levels not seen since height of U.S. surge in 2007. Suicide vest and vehicle bomb attacks are averaging nearly 70 per month since the beginning of this year. Most of these were carried out by foreign fighters, who use Syria as a safe haven to conduct attacks in Iraq. The U.N. has reported that in May 2014 alone, 799 Iraqi civilians were killed by acts of terrorism.

ISIL overtook the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi on January 1 of this year. Iraqi security forces cooperated successfully with Sunni tribal groups to largely push them out of Ramadi. But ISIL still occupies Fallujah and poses a threat to the Iraqi state and its neighbors.

The United States has taken important steps to help Iraq combat this shared enemy. We have provided urgently needed military equipment through the Foreign Military Sales process. I would like to thank the members of this committee for their leadership, and the Congress for making these transfers possible. In addition to military equipment transfers, we have strengthened our information-sharing relationships, and are developing programs to improve border security. We have also initiated a high-level dialogue between our senior military leadership and key Iraqi military commanders, coupled with training for Iraqi security forces.

Security assistance, however, is only one element of our assistance, and it is connected to intense political and economic engagement. Accordingly, the U.S. has also encouraged Iraq to adopt a holistic strategy to isolate ISIL from the population and develop a strategy for sustainable security. This includes incorporating tribal fighters from Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah ah Din into their security framework to protect the populations in their towns and villages. This strategy, which was employed successfully during the U.S. military surge in 2007, will also require continued engagement between Iraq's political leaders and Sunni tribal leaders to effectively defeat ISIL. We are also encouraging Iraqi political and security leaders to ensure that their difficult fight against ISIL is conducted in a manner that protects the civilian population and adheres to the rule of law.

I already mentioned Iraq's successful elections. Turnout nationally was just over 60 percent. It is notable that turnout in Anbar province, where ISIL is most active, was 45 percent. Iraq's security forces protected more than 50,000 polling stations on April 30, and with support the U.N. Assistance Mission in Iraq, Iraq's Independent High Election Commission worked to provide Iraq's 21 million eligible voters the ability to vote. While Prime Minister Maliki's State of Law coalition won more seats than any other, it fell short of parliamentary majority that is required under the Iraqi Constitution to form a government.

We will encourage all sides to work together to swiftly form a new government that is representative of all Iraqis. This is an Iraqi-owned process, and it will be

up to Iraq's political leaders to form a government that reflects the will of the people as expressed in the April 30 election. We hope they will pay special attention to the rights and interests of the religious and ethnic minority populations, including the sizeable Christian community. Our mission in Iraq has worked hard—especially as ISIL attacks have escalated in the last year—to urge the Government of Iraq to protect these vulnerable groups. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our commitment to ensuring that these communities are afforded the right protection.

Despite Iraq's political and security challenges, its tremendous economic growth over the last decade has been impressive. Iraq's economy has averaged around 6.5 percent growth since 2005. This has been primarily driven by the energy sector. Iraq is now producing around 3.2 million barrels of oil per day; it is the second-largest producer within OPEC. The International Energy Agency estimates that Iraq will provide 45 percent of all new incremental oil supply worldwide between now and 2035. Iraqi oil will be essential to meet rising international demand and maintain market stability. While the United States imports less than 5 percent of its oil from Iraq, global economic growth will benefit from Iraqi oil reaching the market. Increasing exports from Iraq is therefore one of our highest bilateral strategic priorities.

Lack of onshore pumping and storage capacity continues to prevent Iraqi production and exports from reaching their full potential. There is also tremendous opportunity to harness Iraq's significant natural gas resources. If this gas is converted to power, this would provide much-needed electricity to the Iraqi people, fueling further economic growth. In addition to partnering to share best practices on fossil fuel production and exports, we are engaged with the Government of Iraq on capturing gas for power generation, and on political issues related to hydrocarbon revenue management. The government also faces a challenge in equitably distributing the wealth created by its natural resources to its population and to use its oil wealth to promote growth in other sectors. These are all areas where the United States would be willing to help play a positive role and exchange lessons learned.

Iraq's economic growth offers exciting opportunities for U.S. firms, particularly in key sectors such as infrastructure development, construction, health care, telecom, and agriculture. Iraq imports some of the best equipment and technology in the world from the United States, including civilian aircraft and the turbines that generate much-needed electricity. I have spent much of my career promoting U.S. economic engagement overseas. If confirmed, I look forward to promoting Secretary Kerry's Shared Prosperity agenda as Ambassador to Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, as I have discussed, Iraq is a challenging security environment. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will bear responsibility for the safety of all U.S. personnel in Iraq, including at Embassy Baghdad and at our consulates in Erbil and Basrah. If confirmed, I will work closely with our security team on the ground—as well as with our Diplomatic Security colleagues back here in Washington—to ensure that our people are protected. I assure you this will be my highest priority, as well as to protect the safety of American citizens in Iraq.

Since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011, the Embassy and consulates have significantly reduced our staffing. As of June 2014, we have approximately 5,300 staff; just one-third of our 2012 footprint. If confirmed, I will continue to examine staffing levels to ensure that we have the appropriate number of personnel to carry out our mission.

Again I wish to commend my colleague Steve Beecroft and his whole-of-government team for their tremendous achievements and selfless service; I am proud to be named as Steve's successor.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. I appreciate and value this committee's oversight of our efforts in Iraq and, if confirmed, I look forward to welcoming you and your respective staff members to Baghdad. Your continued engagement on the policy issues discussed today is a vital element in ensuring our success in Iraq. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Smith.

**STATEMENT OF DANA SHELL SMITH, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINEE
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE STATE OF QATAR**

Ms. SMITH. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee—

The CHAIRMAN. Will you put your microphone on, please?

Ms. SMITH. This is my first time doing this.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Qatar. I am extremely grateful to President Obama and to Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me.

If confirmed, I look forward to representing the American people and to working with this committee and other interested Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in Qatar.

And it is a privilege to share this panel with Stu Jones and Steve Beecroft, two of our finest Ambassadors, whose work I have long admired.

It has been an honor to serve as a Foreign Service officer since 1992 and to use my regional experience and the Arabic language in a variety of assignments. The Foreign Service even introduced me to my husband, who is here today, and our two children—well, the Foreign Service did not introduce me to them—he is here with our two children. And it is exciting to have them here, able to watch our democracy in action. I am delighted that my aunt and uncle and so many of my friends could be here, as well.

Qatar plays a growing role in the international community, with influence that extends far beyond its 4,400 square miles and 250,000 citizens. We share a productive relationship on key regional issues, ranging from Syria to Iran. They have been extremely supportive of our commitment to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our policies and diplomatic platform advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Qatar and the region more broadly.

Defense cooperation is a central pillar of our partnership, and it is best reflected in Qatar's hosting of the U.S. CENTCOM forward headquarters, the Combined Air Operations Center, and the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing at al-Udeid Airbase.

The renewal, in December 2013, of our Defense Cooperation Agreement is a further testament to our enduring security partnership. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our military ties and expand our regional security cooperation.

We have an active and productive dialogue on both counterterrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Qatar has endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative and is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. These efforts take on increased importance, of course, as violent extremists expand their operations in Syria. And we are working together to improve the capacity of Qatar's counterterrorist financing regime and to disrupt illicit cash flows.

The United States is also continuing efforts with Qatar and other regional partners to support the moderate opposition in Syria. Qatar believes, as we do, that Bashar al-Assad's murderous oppression of the Syrian people leaves him with no legitimacy to rule. And we share the view that the crisis in Syria should be resolved through a negotiated political solution. We are working closely with regional partners to maximize the impact of our collective efforts. Qatar has also publicly welcomed the Joint Plan of Action reached between Iran and the P5+1 on Iran's nuclear program, and has

made clear it supports United States efforts to negotiate a comprehensive agreement.

As you know, Qatar played an instrumental role in recovering Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. Their efforts are a testament to our partnership. With regard to the five individuals transferred from Guantanamo in connection with Sergeant Bergdahl's release, the United States has and will continue to coordinate closely with Qatar. We are confident that the security measures that have been put in place, including restrictions placed on the activities of the individuals, will substantially mitigate any threat that the individuals may pose to our national security. The Amir personally provided his assurances to the President, and the administration is confident that the Qataris have the capacity and will to deliver on the commitments made. But, let me be clear. If confirmed, I will work each day to ensure that these commitments are upheld. I will consult regularly with the members of this committee as we move forward on this issue.

Our thriving commercial relationship with Qatar continues to grow, presenting tremendous opportunities for American business. Qatar is one of our most important trading partners in the region, importing over \$5 billion worth in U.S. goods in 2013. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to advocate for U.S. companies vigorously to ensure that we continue to seize on the multitude of opportunities offered by the Qatari market.

Qatar also hosts six branches of U.S. universities. If confirmed, I will work to expand our cultural and educational partnerships to promote enduring ties between our people for the next generation.

At a U.S. mission with employees from a variety of U.S. Government agencies, my first priority, if confirmed, would remain, at all times, protecting the safety and security of the dedicated men and women at our mission, as well as of all Americans living, working, and traveling in Qatar.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, members of the committee, it has been my privilege and great honor to spend my entire adult life in the service of our country, promoting and defending U.S. interests and values. If confirmed, I welcome your views and insights on Qatar and the region, and look forward to your visits to Doha.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have for me today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DANA SHELL SMITH

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Qatar. I am extremely grateful to President Obama and to Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to representing the American people, and to working with this committee and other interested Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in Qatar. It is a privilege to share this hearing with Stu Jones and Steve Beecroft, two of our finest Ambassadors whose work I have long admired. I look forward to working closely with them.

It has been an honor to serve as a Foreign Service officer since 1992, mostly in the Arab World, and to use my regional experience and the Arabic language in a wide variety of assignments. The Foreign Service even introduced me to my husband, Ray Smith, who is here today, an agent with the Diplomatic Security Service.

As a tandem couple we have been fortunate to serve together and to raise a family while pursuing careers we love. Our two children are also with me here today. They have learned so much from living overseas, and should I be confirmed, I know that Qatar will serve as an incredible educational and cultural experience for them. They have been great sports moving as often as they have, and I am very proud of them.

Qatar is playing a growing role in the international community with influence that extends far beyond its 4,400 square miles and 250,000 citizens. As President Obama has said, "If our two countries are communicating frankly and constructively, and pursuing common strategies, we can be a force for good for the entire region and for a vision of a Middle East that is democratic, that is prosperous, that is tolerant, that is representative of all peoples, and that is a force for good around the world." We enjoy a productive relationship with Qatar on key regional issues ranging from Syria to Iran. Qatar has been extremely supportive of our government's commitment to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Qatar agrees that peace between Israelis and Palestinians would advance security, prosperity, and stability in the Middle East. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our policies and diplomatic platform advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Qatar and the region more broadly.

Defense cooperation is a central pillar of our partnership and is best reflected in Qatar's hosting of U.S. Central Command Forward Headquarters, the Combined Air Operations Center, and the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Udeid Air Base. Al Udeid plays a critical role in advancing our regional security as the platform for U.S. air operations in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility, including for Afghanistan. The renewal in December 2013 of our Defense Cooperation Agreement with Qatar, governing interactions between U.S. and Qatari forces, is a further testament to the enduring security partnership enjoyed by our two countries. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our military ties and expand our regional security cooperation.

We have an active and productive dialogue with Qatar in the areas of counterterrorism and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Qatar has endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative and is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. In March 2013 Qatar hosted a Forum workshop to develop a plan of action for rule of law-based, community-oriented policing programs to counter violent extremism (CVE). Qatar has also pledged \$5 million to support the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, the first public-private global fund to support local, grassroots CVE efforts. As violent extremists expand their operations in Syria, these efforts take on increased importance, and we are working with Qatar to improve the capacity of its counterterrorist financing regime and disrupt illicit cash flows, including through the provision of training.

The United States is also continuing efforts, together with Qatar and other regional partners, to support the moderate opposition in Syria. Qatar believes that Bashar al-Assad's murderous oppression of the Syrian people leaves him with no legitimacy to rule and Qatar shares our view that the crisis in Syria should be resolved through a negotiated political transition. Qatar is an active member of the London 11 Core Group on Syria and a strong supporter of the Syrian opposition. We are working closely with regional partners like Qatar to maximize the impact of our collective efforts to support the moderate opposition and address the humanitarian crisis.

Qatar has publicly welcomed the Joint Plan of Action reached between Iran and the P5+1 on Iran's nuclear program, and has made clear it supports U.S. efforts to negotiate a comprehensive agreement.

As we saw a few weeks ago, Qatar played an instrumental role in recovering Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. Qatar's efforts in this regard are another testament to our partnership. With regard to the five individuals transferred to Qatar from Guantanamo in connection with Sergeant Bergdahl's release, the United States has and will continue to coordinate closely with Qatar. We are confident that the security measures that have been put in place, including restrictions placed on the activities of the individuals, will substantially mitigate any threat that the individuals may pose to our national security. The Amir personally provided his assurances to the President, and the administration is confident that the Qataris have the capacity and will to deliver on the commitments made. If confirmed, I will ensure that my Country Team tracks closely and verifies that these commitments are being upheld. In this regard, I look forward to consulting with the members of this committee and their staff, if confirmed.

Our thriving commercial relationship with Qatar continues to grow, presenting tremendous opportunities for American business. Qatar plans to invest up to \$200 billion in preparation for hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and to date U.S. companies have performed exceptionally well in securing contracts for mega infrastructure projects, such as the new airport, port, metro system, roads and bridges. Qatar

is one of our most important trading partners in the region, importing over \$5 billion in U.S. goods in 2013, and it is the fifth-largest destination for U.S. exports in the Middle East. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to advocate for U.S. companies vigorously to ensure that we continue to seize the multitude of opportunities offered by the Qatari market.

Qatar's 2030 National Vision aims to transition to a knowledge-based economy, and critical to this effort is Qatar's development of a strong education sector. Qatar has served as a center of innovation in the region, in part thanks to its warm welcome of diverse academic institutions and think tanks, particularly U.S. institutions. Qatar's "Education City" is home to six U.S. universities, and Qatar has also welcomed the presence of U.S. institutes Brookings and RAND. Our partnerships in education have expanded dramatically, with the number of Qatari students choosing to study in the United States more than doubling over the past decade. Qatar's contribution of \$5 million to the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative will help equip more than 1 million youth with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century through online educational exchanges between the U.S., the Middle East, and North Africa. If confirmed, I will work to expand our educational and cultural partnerships to promote enduring ties between our peoples for the next generation.

At a U.S. mission with employees from a variety of U.S. Government agencies, my first priority, if confirmed, would remain at all times protecting the safety and security of the dedicated men and women at our mission as well as of all Americans living and working or traveling in Qatar.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, members of the committee, it has been my privilege and great honor to spend my entire adult life in the service of our country, promoting and defending U.S. interests and values. If confirmed, I would welcome your views and insights on Qatar and the region and look forward to your visits to Doha. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have for me today.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you all for your testimony, and again, welcome to your family and friends.

Let me start with you, Ambassador Beecroft. Well, let me ask you—all three of you—an overarching question. A simple yes or no will do. If confirmed, will you make yourselves available to the committee and answer inquiries from the committee while you are in post?

Ambassador JONES. Yes.

Ambassador BEECROFT. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. SMITH. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. OK.

Ambassador Beecroft, you know, you are going from one difficult assignment to another one. That is why we have some extraordinary persons like yourself. But, speaking for myself as the chairman, let me just say, if we are going to continue to see mass death-penalty sentences, if we are going to continue seeing massive arrests of the young people who, in essence, created the situation in Tahrir Square that ultimately led to President Sisi's election, if President Sisi believes that only his engagement in the Sinai, which I applaud, is sufficient for his relationship with the United States, then there will be a rude awakening. And I hope that, in your role as our Ambassador, that you will be able to relay to President Sisi that we need a broader agenda to see progress moving forward, not just because that is my view, but the FY14 appropriations legislation contains certification requirements to release the rest of Egypt's FY14 assistance, including that "A newly elected Government of Egypt is taking steps to govern democratically."

So, I would like to hear from you, as you approach this new assignment, what is it that you will be saying when you go to Egypt, and how do we make progress to create the political space for the

Egyptian Government to address some of these concerns that, by law, they must do if we are ultimately going to continue our assistance?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I agree with you 100 percent, that we want to have the strongest, broadest possible partnership and relationship with Egypt, and we want an Egypt that is stable and secure because it has and respects fundamental human-rights, democracy, and because it builds a prosperous economy. If confirmed, I will engage on all these issues with the Egyptian Government and work with them to partner and develop the economy, to build human rights, expand those rights, to stop practices such as the mass trials that you have referred to, which we have condemned, and to ensure that justice is individualized, to ensure that there is a society and a country and a government that the Egyptian people buy into, that they see that their interests are best represented inside the democratic process, and not outside it, and that will lead to fundamental, long-term stability. Egypt does have promising prospects, including economic prospects, and it has demonstrated, over the last two decades at times, that it can function as a emerging economy, that it can have real GDP growth in excess of 7 percent. And we need to, again, build on that and do whatever we can to—

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate that.

Ambassador BEECROFT [continuing]. Strengthen the partnership.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, in addition to those concerns, you talked about the economic questions. And I am concerned by what I read in President Sisi's statements, where it sounds like he thinks that greater state intervention in the economy is going to create the opportunities that Egyptians need. And I am not quite sure, having just returned from the gulf region, that our gulf partners, who have actually been very helpful to the Egyptians, will have that view. What messaging will we be giving as it relates to how this economy can revive itself and grow?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much. It is, of course, very much in our interest to see Egypt build its economy, strengthen its economy. It is in our interest to work with the gulf countries you referred to, to target assistance as effectively as possible, and to encourage the economic reforms that are necessary for the economy to progress.

I would note that Egypt has a number of economic advantages we can build on. It has a relatively well-developed infrastructure; specifically, telecommunications, roads, ports. It has access to markets in—because of its proximity—in Europe, in Asia, in Africa. It has labor that should attract investment, as well. And it has natural resources, particularly natural gas, that can be developed. So, there is the basis for a strong economy. We have to encourage the reforms that will attract investors into the country and to target the assistance so that it addresses the parts of the economy that need to be addressed—particularly reforms.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Jones, you know, we had Prime Minister Maliki here last year. It was a difficult meeting. I do not know whether or not he will actually be the Prime Minister again. I guess, by many accounts, he may very well ultimately put together the coalition necessary to do that. But, as I said to Ambas-

sador Beecroft as it relates to our relationship with the Egyptian Government, in this case, the Iraqis must understand that the use of barrel bombs, that the overflights and transiting of airspace by Iran sending troops and military equipment into Syria with impunity, and the lives of the people at Camp Liberty, until they are resettled, is going to be part of what this committee uses to judge, our relationship, with regards to future arms sales.

So, I would like to hear from you—we understand the importance, we honor the lives of those who were lost, in pursuit of a more democratic Iraq, from the United States, and an enormous national treasure, but there has to be some change in the course of events here, including having a government that is more inclusive, in which every Sunni is not an enemy of the state. There are many Sunnis who want to be part of Iraq, as a nation, but they have to be included as well.

Can you tell me about what you will be messaging there as it relates to these issues?

Ambassador JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me take your last point first, which is, of course we completely agree that, for Iraq to succeed, the different political elements, the sectarian groups, need to come together and create a shared vision. They need to create a shared vision for their national security. They need to pull together to address the terrorist threat posed by ISIL. And, although the news from Mosul is very bad, I think one positive aspect of this may be that the groups are, indeed, coming together to address this challenge. At least we are seeing signs of that in the last 24 hours.

In regards to the barrel bombs, the use of barrel bombs is completely unacceptable. It is an indiscriminate weapon against civilians and cannot be tolerated. This is something that my colleague Steve Beecroft has raised with the senior levels of the Iraqi government. There has been an instruction handed down through the military that barrel bombs will not be used. And we have also heard, from military contacts, that they recognize that instruction.

In regards to the overflights, this is an issue that remains a problem. We are concerned that Iran is supplying the Bashar Assad regime with overflights over Iraq. This is something that we would like to see the Iraqis stop. And this is, again, something we have raised at the most senior levels. And I will continue to do that and look for ways to find a way to stop this traffic.

On the issue of Camp Liberty, I know this is an issue of particular concern, and it is a very important issue. When I was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Iraq in 2010 and 2011, we witnessed a terrible attack on Camp Ashraf in which many people were killed and others wounded. I think the steps that we have taken since then have been quite positive. Moving the residents of Ashraf to Camp Liberty has improved their security. The Government of Iraq has also responded to our request, and others' requests, to improve the security around Camp Liberty, and that is encouraging. But, the solution, of course, is to remove the members of the Mujahedine Khalq from Iraq and get them to a safer place. They will not be safe until they are outside of Iraq. And I am—our government is taking the lead on this. The Special Envoy to the Secretary, Jonathan Weiner, is meeting with representatives of countries around

the world and asking them to take members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq. And we also now have a team in Baghdad to interview members to see—working toward receiving a group of those here in the United States. And I think this is the best solution that we can present.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, two final points, so that it is crystal clear. I do not want to hear Iraq tell us that, "We need actionable intelligence." When we have it, we will provide it. But they have a responsibility, in doing random surveillance of overflights, and that is an excuse that is unacceptable.

Secondly, I agree with you that resettlement of the MEK is the ultimate solution. I hope—and I have urged the State Department to consider bringing some of them to the United States as an example to those in the rest of the world that we are also asking to consider resettlement. But, in the interim, I hold the Prime Minister responsible for the lives of those individuals at the camp.

Ms. Smith, I do not want you to think I do not have questions for you, but, in fairness to my colleagues, my time is expired. I will come back to you afterward.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. I am sure Ms. Smith was fine with that, actually, so thank you. [Laughter.]

Ms. SMITH. That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I may not be from the South, but I would bet you I will be more genteel. [Laughter.]

Senator CORKER. So, again, I want to thank all three of you. And I will start—I will just go in order.

Ambassador Jones, you know, I visited Ambassador Beecroft and have been to Iraq, like many of us, many times. And today when you are there, unlike Jordan, where you have just—where you still are—it feels like a vacant, deserted lot, relative to our emphasis on it. It feels like we have checked the box and moved on, and that we really have lost influence. That is, I think—I think everybody acknowledges that. But, that we just have not been really robust at all levels, relative to our efforts there.

We had a great conversation yesterday, and we talked a little bit about the lack of the SOFA, and the fact that our troops are gone, and that has contributed to the lack of influence in a pretty big way. You have had two tours there. And I mentioned I was going to bring this up just to kind of set the record straight. Many of us have felt—and maybe even after you say what you say, may still feel—that one of the reasons that Iraq is the way that it is, is that we, you know, did not leave behind some presence and that we actually—this was actually what the administration wanted to occur.

You have a very different perspective of that, and I thought that—do not take too long, if you will—but, I think it would be good for you to share your thoughts, relative to why we do not have a presence in Iraq today.

Ambassador JONES. Thank you, Senator. As you said, we spoke about this yesterday. My view on this is that the Iraqi people really did not come together and ask us to stay in a way that made it possible for us to stay. And it is as simple as that. No major Iraqi leaders, with the exception of the Kurds, came forward and invited us to stay in a public manner, and they did not go on television.

We obviously needed to have a Status of Forces Agreement for the security of our troops, and the Iraqis did not meet us halfway on that. So, I think this was the result of that negotiation, and that is how it ended.

Senator CORKER. And so, from your perspective, the fact that we have no presence there, and, candidly, much lesser influence, is a result, really, of just the Iraqi people not wanting it to be that way.

Ambassador JONES. Yes, sir.

Senator CORKER. OK. Well, it is interesting and a very different perspective than, you know, I have heard from most, but I appreciate you sharing that.

And, you know, I would agree with the chairman, we had a pretty terse meeting with Maliki here. I had had one on the ground with him just before that. He has obviously not been a good Prime Minister. He has not done a good job of reaching out to the Sunni population, which has caused them to be more receptive to al-Qaeda efforts. Obviously, the Syrian conflict—I know there is analysis today saying that that is really not having an impact on Iraq. I believe it is having a major impact on Iraq.

But, with our diminished status in Iraq, and the fact that we used to sort of play shuttle diplomacy, if you will, between the Sunnis and Shias and causing things to work in a better way—I think you did that before, in your previous capacity—how do you view your role there, going there now, under the circumstances that we have and trying to mitigate some of the problems that exist between the—especially the Shia and the Sunni?

Ambassador JONES. Yes. Well, I think I am blessed to be following in the footsteps of Steve Beecroft. I think Steve has established very good relations with all of the groups in Iraq, and I think this is a role that we should continue to play, brokering—using our good offices to broker solutions to the myriad problems that face Iraq. I think we have made great progress, in recent months, in trying to broker an arrangement by which the hydrocarbon law could be finalized and the relations between Kurdistan—the Kurdish regional government and Baghdad could resolve their problems. I think we can also find ways to support a process of political conciliation between some Shia—and Sunni groups with the government. This is the role that the United States has played in Iraq for the last 10 years, and I would certainly hope to continue to play that role.

I think we do have significant influence because of our continuing presence in the commercial and petroleum sector, as well as a continuing presence in the military sector, though obviously not with troops on the ground.

Senator CORKER. Yes. Thank you.

Ambassador Beecroft, we talked a little bit about another topic, and a similar topic, but for different reasons: our influence in Egypt, itself. I think people have had really strongly held beliefs about what we should and should be doing relative to Egypt and aid. And I have felt we should continue the relationship, certainly with some contingencies. But—or conditions—but, the fact is, we have sort of been on again, off again. People there have perceived us to be, in some ways, supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, but not the citizens of Egypt. You have had the—some of the gulf coun-

tries step in and fill a vacuum when Egypt felt we were stepping away.

What is your sense of how the leadership of Egypt today views the United States? And again, similar to Ambassador Jones, how do you expect to be able to step into that situation and exert appropriate influence and shaping in the country?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Thank you very much, Senator.

Let me first say that we do have a partnership with Egypt. The Egyptians are continuing to engage with us. We need to take advantage of that to pursue our own interests. Our interests and Egyptian interests do happen to overlap considerably, I believe. It is not going to always be—we are not going to always agree on matters, but, again, engaging with them, working with them, we can push in the right direction. And what we want to see in Egypt is, we want to see security and stability that is built on the fundamentals of a sound society, such as the economy and such as democracy and human rights, and be as inclusive as possible.

Our assistance—I see our assistance as pursuing our interests in Egypt and, again, believe that our interests overlap considerably. If confirmed, I will engage with the Egyptians and I will push them in the directions that we want them to go, encourage them, work with them, and use the assistance, to the extent it is approved by Congress, to further our interests in the country.

Senator CORKER. Well, thank you.

And I appreciate the relationship and conversations that we have had in the past with both the Ambassadors. And thank you for your willingness to serve in this capacity.

Ms. Smith, Qatar has played an interesting role in Syria because of the lack of policy, from our standpoint. I think they became exasperated and sort of went out on their own, if you will. There are reports that that is being sort of—is moving back into a more coordinated effort with us. Do you have any sense of their efforts on the ground in Syria relative to opposition? And are they moving more into the mainstream, if you will, relative to the type of support they are giving?

Ms. SMITH. Thanks very much for that question.

Yes, we do have the sense that we are making progress, in terms of coordination. It is all of our goal to support the moderate opposition in Syria and, of course, to address the humanitarian disaster that is happening there. Qatar has been incredibly generous. They have given \$1.2 billion toward the—addressing the humanitarian needs in Syria. And so, going forward, what our engagement consists of with the Qataris is continuing to find ways to coordinate, to work together in support of the moderate opposition. Obviously, with the ultimate goal being Assad not being in charge anymore.

Senator CORKER. In order to give you a chance to say something on the record that I think you are authorized to respond to, it is my understanding the SAS Committee is developing language that allows title 10 training of the opposition on the ground in Syria. Do you know if the administration supports that, or does not support it?

Ms. SMITH. It is my understanding that the administration does support the Levin language in the NDAA to authorize training and equipment—

Senator CORKER. OK.

Ms. SMITH [continuing]. Of the moderate opposition. But, again, I am not in those policy discussions at the moment.

Senator CORKER. I understand. I just understood you were authorized—

Ms. SMITH. Appreciate it.

Senator CORKER [continuing]. To say that they support it, and—

Ms. SMITH. I appreciate it.

Senator CORKER [continuing]. I wanted that on the record.

So, with that, I will close and thank you.

Ms. SMITH. Thank you.

Senator CORKER. I do want to say to the other committee members that our staff has been able to go down and read the memorandum of understanding that we have between the United States and Qatar. I wish it was available to all committee members. For some reason, it is not. It is 3 pages long. My understanding is, it is very unremarkable. And our staff had no antennas raised in reading it. But, I just thought I would share that.

And again, thank you for your service.

And thanks for having this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks, to all of the witnesses, for your service and willingness to serve.

Ms. Smith, let me just ask you a question I was curious about. And we had a chance to talk, but I forgot to ask you this. In Qatar, under the leadership of the new Amir, have there been any particular changes in direction in the United States/Qatar partnership or relationship that have seemed notable during this time of transformation? Is it kind of steady and we are continuing to kind of do—the relationship is in the same place it was? Or have we seen some changes in direction because of that leadership transition?

Ms. SMITH. If I am confirmed, I would love to give a more fulsome response when I am actually there and able to make my own assessment. But, my understanding is that our relationship continues to be as close and cooperative as it was before. The Amir has been in power for just about a year; and, of course, he is not new to the government. He was working there for over a decade before, under his father's rule.

So, while I would not say that we are seeing a change, what we are seeing is continued progress on the areas where we have good and close coordination. And so, I have every expectation that, if I am confirmed, we will be able to deepen and expand those positive areas where we are working together.

Senator Kaine. One of the areas where I know there has been some tension—the chairman has hosted meetings before, where the Foreign Relations Committee members have had a chance to dialogue with the Amir—had been in, you know, who the Qataris—referring to earlier questions—the Qataris have been supporting in Syria. That created some tensions. Is that changing? Are we, maybe, more in accord with the Qataris now and the government

about, you know, what is the right way to have influence to bring this humanitarian issue and, ultimately, the civil war to an end?

Ms. SMITH. Well, this is something we are always watching very closely. I have not heard from anyone that we are ready to just declare, you know, everything is wonderful and perfect, but we do feel that we are making progress in our shared understanding of which groups are—constitute moderate opposition and who is worthy of our support.

Senator KAINE. OK. Thank you for that.

Mr. Beecroft, you talked a little bit about the economic issues in Egypt. You know, it seems like that that would be a real test for the new President, is how quickly he can try to demonstrate some economic improvement. You and I had a chance to talk about this the other day. Could you talk a little bit about the role that the United States can play in helping Egypt in economic transformation, and also the role that other allies—the Gulf State allies should be able to play?

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

As I mentioned earlier in the hearing, Egypt does have the fundamentals for a successful economy, and it needs to be encouraged to take the steps necessary to build that economy. We have a team that is actively engaged with the Egyptians and the Gulf States to help, again, target assistance to Egypt and to encourage the necessary reforms.

One of the things that President Sisi has called for is investment. And investment is key to developing the economy. In order to get investment, you have to have certain sound fundamentals in place, or the investment will not come. And among those are, of course, a stable society based on an inclusive democracy that respects and guarantees human rights for all Egyptians and that provides the security and stability that encourages people to invest.

And again, as I mentioned earlier, Egypt does benefit from certain advantages that should help it get through these crucial times if it chooses to make the right reforms. Among those are an infrastructure that is relatively well developed—as I mentioned, telecoms, roads, ports; access proximity to markets in Europe and Asia, including or allowed by the Suez Canal, and in Africa; natural resources, particularly natural gas—my understanding is, Egypt has the third-largest proven reserves of natural gas in Africa; and a labor market that should be very, very attractive to investors.

And so, we need to focus Egypt on, again, making the necessary changes so investors see that it is a safe and secure environment; again, that the people enjoy their rights; and that they are making the right economic decisions that attract that investment. And again, we can do that by working with the Gulf States that are particularly engaged in Egypt, and staying engaged with Egyptians, I hope.

Senator KAINE. And, Ambassador Beecroft, one last question on the human-rights front. And I know there has been a question before I walked into the room. But, I was most troubled, when I was there in February, about the situation with journalists, and probably because the day that I was meeting with Egyptian leaders, including General al-Sisi, was the day there was a very prominent

set of journalists going on trial. The U.S. Embassy in Egypt even asked if I would do an—come-one-come-all press conference, just to show an example of—an elected official does not have to be afraid to answer tough questions from an even hostile press. And I got some tough questions from hostile press there, but I was very used to it, because I have been in politics in the United States.

But, have you seen any sign, since the Presidential election—is there any even early evidence about the direction that this together will take with respect to press freedoms? Or is it too soon to say?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Well, President al-Sisi, in his inaugural address, did make mention of his desire to be a president for all Egyptians and to see all Egyptians enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms. And I think what we want to do is, to the extent we can, push and take him up on that, and encourage him to follow through. Obviously, we believe in the strongest possible freedom of the press—the broadest possible freedoms for the press. It is very, very disturbing and unfortunate that journalists have been detained and charged with crimes in Egypt. A society cannot function effectively without—a democratic society—without freedom of the press. And so, we need to engage, we need to encourage it, we need to try to find ways to show that having a free press is in the interest of Egypt as a country, in the interest of the government, and interest of the people.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Ambassador Jones, thanks for your service. I very much was impressed with your work leading the mission in Jordan when I visited last July. And I do not have much time left, so let me just get right to it.

What do you think about the commitment of the Iraqi Government to political inclusion of the different factions within Iraqi civil society? That has been troubling me, and I would like your, just, current assessment of that.

Ambassador JONES. Thanks. And thanks also, Senator, for your visit to Jordan. It was a very helpful and positive experience.

I think that, especially as the government faces this terrorist challenge with ISIL, there is a strong incentive and political will to try to unify the groups. Just recently, the Prime Minister has issued a statement, you know, encouraging national unity and inviting participation in unifying the groups against ISIL. So, I think that there is political will. And, you know, even before the most recent crisis in Mosul, the Prime Minister has reached out to Sunni groups, he has brought 6,000 tribal members into the Iraqi security forces, he is aiming for a number of—an even larger number. So, I think that there is—that there is movement on this. And this is obviously something where I think the United States can continue to play a positive role, and we should.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Smith, first of all, congratulates on your appointment. Interesting time to be going to—my first question, just out of the box; we have been debating here for a second—what is the definitive pronunciation? Is it “Cutter,” “Kittare” or “Gutter”? We have heard all three over the—

Ms. SMITH. In Arabic, actually it is "QUH-tar."

Senator RUBIO. OK. Well, how would I say it? Help me. [Laughter.]

Ms. SMITH. "Cutter."

Senator RUBIO. "Cutter." OK.

Ms. SMITH. "Cutter," for ease—

Senator RUBIO. Got it.

Ms. SMITH [continuing]. Is probably the best for an American.

Senator RUBIO. So, "Cutter," all right.

Ms. SMITH. Yes.

Senator RUBIO. Great.

So, let me ask you about Qatar. Have you been briefed on the memorandum of understanding?

Ms. SMITH. Yes, I have.

Senator RUBIO. Well, do you—will that be provided to Congress?

Ms. SMITH. I believe it has been made available to the chair and the ranking member.

Senator RUBIO. Do you know if that will be made available to other members, as well? I do not know if that has been—you have been informed on that.

Ms. SMITH. I do not. I am sorry, I am not in those conversations.

Senator RUBIO. What can you tell us about how much of the supervision of these individuals will the United States have the ability to participate in?

Ms. SMITH. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this, because I know this is very much on people's minds, not only in this room.

If I am confirmed, this goes to the very top of my list of priorities. We will be working very closely with the Qataris. We will be engaging them very closely, verifying both their—what they have been—the restrictions that they have put on these individuals and the information that they will be collecting on these individuals, but also verifying, from our own standpoint. And we will be assessing continuously, every day—every morning when I wake up, every night when I go to sleep—to reassess whether these people pose any threat whatsoever to our national security. And so, I can guarantee you that I will be leading a country team representative of our whole government that will be working on this tirelessly, if I am confirmed.

Senator RUBIO. Well, can you share with us, in this setting, what exactly are the expectations of the U.S.'s participation in that effort, in terms of providing capabilities? Is that something you could share with us at all, in terms of your understanding of—

Ms. SMITH. I think what I can share is that we have a very good and close and productive information-sharing relationship with Qatar. And obviously, as Secretary Kerry said, Qatar will not be the only one with eyes on these individuals. And I think it is probably best to leave it at that.

Senator RUBIO. Can you give us your indication or your feelings about the capabilities of the Qatari Government to carry out this obligation they have committed to?

Ms. SMITH. It is my understanding that they have the capacity to do this, that we have a high degree of confidence in their capacity. And we also assess that they have the will to do this. Their

Amir called and gave the President, personally, his assurances, his personal commitment to upholding this agreement. So, we are cautiously optimistic that there is the ability to do this.

Of course, I think it would not be an effective way to enter into it, just with blind faith, so that is why we will be working constantly to verify and assess, from our own standpoint.

Senator RUBIO. What are your views, in the aftermath of this swap, as to the precedent that it sets and, therefore, the risk that it poses for Americans, both in and out of uniform, in terms of becoming even more appealing targets for other groups to try to—to capture Americans for the purposes of carrying out an exchange similar to this one?

Ms. SMITH. Sorry, that is something that I am not, probably, qualified to address.

Senator RUBIO. Well, let me ask you this way, then. Are we concerned, in the aftermath of this, that Americans serving our country, whether it is at—in the Embassy or as part of any of our governmental efforts in Qatar, are now at increased risk, given the fact—given this—the aftermath of this?

Ms. SMITH. We are—as diplomats, we are always concerned about our national security. It is our top priority, both of the people working on our teams and also for all American citizens, whether in the countries where we are representing America or whether back here at home. So, I—absolutely, safety and security of Americans is the number one thing that we are concerned about and care about.

Senator RUBIO. Well, in that light, obviously we have all seen the—all are aware of what happened in Benghazi, and we understand that, when we send service—when we send men and women to represent us in the diplomatic corps around the world, particularly in areas of the world where are more prone to terrorism, or the presence of terrorist-linked groups, that it places particular dangers upon those who serve our country in that realm. What—can you give us an assessment of how you view our security in the Embassy there? And obviously, you have talked about what a priority that would be. If you could share with us just a little bit about the—to extent that you can, the processes by which that becomes a priority, and how we ensure the safety of those who will be working underneath you in that facility.

Ms. SMITH. Sure. And this is something that every chief of mission is concerned about and particularly focused on, in light of the events in Benghazi. Chris Stevens was a close friend of mine, so it is something that I am very mindful of.

So, as we have moved through since the events, every embassy has been looked at, and looked at again. And it is a primary responsibility of the chief of mission to look at both the physical security, working with the security team that you lead, as well as any threats that are posed, day in and day out, and how that threat level might be changing. And it is a constant give-and-take, it is a constant conversation. And I think it is probably best to leave it at that.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Mr. Beecroft, based—quickly, about Egypt—what would the administration consider to be sufficient measures by Egypt in order to meet the conditions for full resumption of U.S. military aid?

Ambassador BEECROFT. I am familiar with the 2014 Appropriations Act, but I am not a party to those discussions yet. What I look forward to is, if confirmed, going to Egypt, contributing to those discussions, considerations. Again, I know this is something the administration is looking at very, very closely and on a daily basis, but I am not in a position to answer the question. I apologize.

Senator RUBIO. OK. Well, let me ask you briefly, then—there have been recent reports about sexual assault during inaugural celebrations this past week that have been very alarming. In particular, a video showing a mob assault a woman in Tahrir Square, and a policeman struggled to save her has been—and a policeman struggled to save her—has been circulating the Internet. How would you work with the Egyptian government to ensure the prevention and prosecution of sexual assault? Is—how would you work with them to ensure that this is a priority for them in this new government?

Ambassador BEECROFT. The act you are referring to, and others like it which have been reported as well, are extremely disturbing, and we are extremely concerned about those type of incidents. Women should have a—the ability to go anywhere they want in the country, just like a man. And they should be full participants in Egypt's democratic and social processes.

We need to engage with the Egyptian Government. We need to make clear that these activities are unacceptable. And I recognize that Egypt, including President al-Sisi, has made statements to the effect that these are unacceptable, and he has called on security forces to do everything they need to do to enforce the law and make sure that women are safe in the aftermath of this incident. We have ongoing programs about sexual and gender violence and women's rights, and we need to pursue those programs, as well, through our assistance, consistent with the law.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Let me, for the record—and I am just verifying this right now, but, my understanding is that the memorandum of understanding re: Qatar is available to leadership as well as members and appropriately cleared professional staff members of several committees, including the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which would mean that any member, and those professional staff who have been cleared for intelligence briefings, will have access to the memo. So, all members would be able to read it.

With that, Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses and your willingness to serve.

Ms. Smith, when did you review the memorandum of understanding?

Ms. SMITH. Earlier this week, Senator.

Senator JOHNSON. On Monday or—

Ms. SMITH. I believe it was Monday.

Senator JOHNSON. Is your security clearance higher than that of a United States Senator?

Ms. SMITH. I cannot answer that question. I do not know what your security clearance is.

Senator JOHNSON. OK.

I appreciate the fact, Mr. Chairman, that now we have the opportunity to review that memorandum of understanding, but I think the point of my question is, as a nominee to be Ambassador, you know, I think you should certainly be able to review that, but I think we should have been, as well. And we simply were not until, apparently, late last night.

Ms. SMITH. I would like to make this commitment to you, Mr. Senator. If I am confirmed, I will be delighted to consult with you and any of the members of the committee, and your staffs, as closely and regularly as you like.

Senator JOHNSON. You—in your testimony, you said, “We are confident that the security measures that we have been—that have been put in place, including restrictions placed on the activities of the individuals, will substantially mitigate any threat that the individuals may pose to our national security.” Did you by any chance see the video of the celebration as these five detainees were welcomed at Qatar?

Ms. SMITH. I did not see the video. I saw reports about it.

Senator JOHNSON. You should review that. It does not look like particularly restrictive environment to me.

Ms. SMITH. If I am confirmed, we are going to be focused on our national security, and we will be looking at, not only the directly threatening types of things they could be doing, but things that constitute propaganda and that constitute that type of thing.

Senator JOHNSON. Because I was not able to take a look at the memorandum of understanding, I will go down and I will look at it. Can you tell me, were there restrictions in terms of public displays for propaganda purposes within that memorandum of understanding? In other words, has Qatar already violated that, based on your understanding?

Ms. SMITH. I think the best thing that I can say here is that there will be restrictions on some of the activities of those individuals. I would be delighted to consult with you, again, in a different setting.

Senator JOHNSON. OK.

Ambassador Beecroft, how would you assess—or, how would you describe the result that is occurring in Iraq now after we have withdrawn all of our combat forces? How is that going?

Ambassador BEECROFT. Well, Iraq is facing a very, very severe challenge from terrorist groups—particular—terrorist groups—particularly the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. And it has suffered setbacks. If there is a silver lining in this, it is that we are seeing Iraqis, over the past few days, start to pull together in ways they have not before, overcome sectarian divides. We have seen the Kurds and Baghdad start to talk to each other, start to cooperate on the battlefield. And we have seen Iraq putting together a conference for Sunnis to reconcile with as many Sunni groups as possible and engage them in the fight.

So, it is an uphill battle, it is a struggle. We are doing what we can to help them in ways of providing assistance for military equipment, military weapons, ammunition, providing training, and sharing as much intelligence as we can with them to fight this battle.

Senator JOHNSON. But, again, I mean, just kind of a one-word, couple-word assessment of the result. Success?

Ambassador BEECROFT. On the battlefield, it is very, very difficult. It cannot be considered a success. It is going—it is a huge challenge.

Senator JOHNSON. Ambassador Jones, what would you describe the result after our pullout of all combat troops in Iraq?

Ambassador JONES. Thank you, Senator.

As Ambassador Beecroft just characterized, I think the Government of Iraq continues to face a severe threat from ISIL, which has now penetrated Iraq through the influx of foreign fighters across the Syrian border as a result largely, though not exclusively, of course, of the Syrian civil war. ISIL poses a significant threat, not only to Iraq, but to Iraq's neighbors. And I think the United States has a commitment to support Iraq and its security, and we will continue to work, through the measures that Ambassador Beecroft just outlined, to try to support the Iraqi security forces in this challenge that they face.

Senator JOHNSON. Now that we have seen Fallujah, Mosul, fall to, basically, elements of al-Qaeda, now that we have seen the Iraqi security forces shed their uniforms, go door to door, getting civilian clothes so they could meld into the population, do you see any silver linings?

Ambassador JONES. I think what Ambassador Beecroft said was that—I think the escalation of the threat posed by ISIL is having an impact in Baghdad of drawing the political factions more closely together. And I think, in the last 72 hours, we have seen a series of meetings, where the various political elements are coming together and drawing up plans and looking for ways to cooperate for the national security.

Senator JOHNSON. So, do you expect the Iraqi security force now to turn the tide and be able to capture back Fallujah and Mosul?

Ambassador JONES. We certainly hope for that outcome, and I think it is incumbent on the United States to support that outcome.

Senator JOHNSON. You are obviously going to Iraq, and, you know, God bless you for being willing to serve. You said there are 5,300 U.S. personnel in Iraq. Are they going to be safe?

Ambassador JONES. That is a very good question, Senator. And thank you for your kind words.

The compound in—as mentioned earlier, I was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad from 2010 until 2011, and I have worked in that compound. We have taken extraordinary measures to ensure the safety and protection of our personnel. We are going to have to make sure and be vigilant to maintain those.

We cannot stay behind the walls. We have to be out. And I know that Ambassador Beecroft is out frequently to meet with Iraqi contacts in Baghdad and other parts of the country. So, we are going to have to do the best we can to reduce the risks and ensure that we can do—both do our jobs and stay safe.

Senator JOHNSON. Can you tell me, of the 5,300 personnel, how many are really security forces? And is—are those military personnel? Are those State Department?

Ambassador JONES. Yes, it is a complicated question. I would love to go into the details with you in another setting, but—

Senator JOHNSON. OK.

Ambassador JONES [continuing]. Suffice to say that we have a significant number of Diplomatic Security officers who are State Department officers. We also have, of course, the Marine security guards, and then we also have contract guards who are assigned to protect the perimeter. So, it is a significant number, and I will be happy to get back to you with the details of all those numbers.

Senator JOHNSON. OK, well, I appreciate that. And I—again, I wish you, you know, godspeed and safety and best of luck, but I hope this—the security of yourself and those serving with you on the ground in Iraq is your top priority.

Ambassador JONES. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Smith, my questions have largely been asked and answered, so I will not pursue them.

I would just instruct the nominees that the record will be open for the next 48 hours. To the extent that questions are submitted to any of you, I would urge you to respond to them expeditiously so that we can move your nominations through a business meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee.

And, with our gratitude for your willingness to serve, this panel is excused.

And I would call upon our second panel today: James Nealon, nominated to be the Ambassador to Honduras—

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. If we could have everyone who is not staying for the rest of the hearing please leave the room and—

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right. As we have everybody exit, let me, for the sake of time and votes that are going to be coming—our second panel today is James Nealon, nominated to be the Ambassador to Honduras. Mr. Nealon's nomination comes at a time when Honduras is facing serious challenges from crime and violence and a humanitarian crisis of children crossing borders by themselves, and being apprehended and held. The Government of Honduras is struggling to guarantee the security and economic well-being of its people, and, as a result, we are left to address how we will handle waves of children immigrants crossing into the United States on their own, and how the Honduran Government will handle the underlying issues of crime and violence.

Just last week, President Obama announced the creation of a new interagency task force to address what he called “an urgent humanitarian situation” stemming from unaccompanied minors crossing the southern border of the United States, many of whom are from Honduras. I look forward to hearing Mr. Nealon's views on the best way forward to address this humanitarian crisis.

Also on our panel is Gentry Smith, nominated to be the Director of the Office of Foreign Missions, with the rank of Ambassador. Mr. Smith is an expert in embassy security issues. He is a career member of the Foreign Service Class of minister counselors, serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director for Countermeasures at the State Department, a position he has held since 2009. He has served as the regional security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo and the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon. He has also served as security officer and deputy regional security officer during two separate tours at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo.

So, we welcome both of you to the committee. Again, if you have family members, we urge you to introduce them to the committee. We appreciate their willingness to join in your service on behalf of our country.

Your full statements will be included in the record, without objection, but I ask you to summarize your openings in about 5 minutes or so, so that we can enter into a dialogue with each of you.

And, with that, Mr. Nealon, you are recognized first.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES D. NEALON, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE,
NOMINEE TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS**

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

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee as Ambassador to Honduras. I am deeply grateful to the President and to the Secretary of State for their trust and confidence.

After 30 years in the Foreign Service, I appreciate the privilege and the responsibility that it is to be considered for confirmation as Ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate in ensuring that the United States has a foreign policy that reflects our Nation's values.

I would like to recognize my wife, Kristin, who is here today, and our four children, Rory, Katie, Maureen, and Liam, all born while we were living overseas. We are a Foreign Service family, and we have been in this together from the very beginning, so this is their day as much as mine. I believe I also have a sister, a brother, a brother-in-law, and many friends here, so I thank all of them. And I see my son arrived from California. I am glad to see him.

Mr. Chairman, the headlines do not often tell a positive story about Honduras. This is a country that faces tremendous challenges, many of them associated with the direct and indirect effects of narcotics trafficking and organized crime. It is a challenge to establish strong democratic institutions, establish a rule-of-law culture, attack impunity and corruption, reduce crime, attract investment, and ensure a prosperous future for Honduran citizens.

We share, with many Members of Congress, a concern about the consequences of slow economic growth, impunity, weak institutions, corruption, and extreme violence in Honduras. We share the view that everything is related: impunity and lack of accountability and transparency promote a weak rule-of-law culture, discourage investment, and encourage illegal migration to the United States. We

are partners with you in seeking to influence this trajectory in a positive direction.

Mr. Chairman, in such circumstances, some will ask if U.S. engagement in Honduras makes a difference. I believe that it does and that it is in our interest to stay engaged. A Honduras with greater accountability and transparency will establish stronger rule-of-law institutions and be more likely to protect human rights. A Honduras with a vibrant middle class means a larger overseas market for American-made products. A more secure and prosperous Honduras means fewer migrants trying to cross our borders. A Honduras with strong interdiction capacity means fewer drugs arriving in our communities. As President Obama recently said, respect for human rights is an antidote to instability—a Honduras with strong human rights protections means enhanced security in our region.

The United States is committed to partnering with the Government of Honduras to promote prosperity, governance, and security. In order to do so, we need willing partners in Honduras who have the political will to transform their society, the capacity to seize drugs, and the commitment to arrest, prosecute, and sentence criminals. They also need to guarantee the human rights of their own citizens.

Mr. Chairman, Honduras is at a crossroads. We have seen some early signs that the Government of Honduras is ready to take important steps to improve the lives of its citizens. In May, for the first time, they extradited a notorious Honduran drug trafficker to the United States, an important strike against impunity. The new government has dedicated scarce resources to better combat trafficking in persons. They have fired corrupt police, they have indicted the entire board of directors of the Social Security Institute for corruption, and they have invited the United Nations to set up a human rights office. They have also formed a task force to investigate unsolved murders in a particularly conflictive area of the country, the Bajo Aguan. But, there is no doubt, the Government of Honduras still has a very big job ahead.

I am fully aware of the serious doubts expressed, including in the U.S. Congress, regarding the willingness and ability of the Government of Honduras to take needed steps to improve the human rights situation. If confirmed, I commit to work tirelessly in this area.

Mr. Chairman, I have been a Deputy Chief of Mission at three embassies in this hemisphere. I am currently the Deputy Civilian Commander at U.S. Southern Command. I have spent the last 30 years in nine foreign postings, working to promote democracy and human rights, enhance law enforcement and security partnerships, and promote U.S. exports and investment.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the honor of appearing before this committee today. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you and your colleagues to advance the vital interests of the United States in Honduras.

Thank you very much. I look forward to answering your questions today and at any time in the future.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nealon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES D. NEALON

Mister Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is an honor to appear today before you as the President's nominee as Ambassador to Honduras. I am deeply grateful to the President and to the Secretary of State for their trust and confidence.

After 30 years in the Foreign Service, I appreciate the privilege and the responsibility that it is to be considered for confirmation as Ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate in the work of ensuring that the United States has a foreign policy that reflects our Nation's values.

I would like to recognize my wife, Kristin, who is here today, and our four children—Rory, Katie, Maureen, and Liam, all born while we were living overseas. We are a Foreign Service family and we have been in this together from the very beginning. This is their day as much as mine.

Mr. Chairman, the headlines do not often tell a positive story about Honduras. Our vision for Honduras is of a country that is middle class, democratic, and secure. Still, this is a country that faces tremendous challenges, many of them associated with the direct and indirect effects of narcotics trafficking and organized crime structures operating throughout the country. It is a challenge to establish strong democratic institutions, establish a rule of law culture, attack impunity and corruption, reduce crime, attract investment, and ensure a prosperous future for Honduran citizens.

We share with many Members on the Hill a concern about the consequences in the United States and in Honduras of slow economic growth, impunity, weak institutions, corruption, and extreme violence in Honduras. We share the view that everything is related: impunity and a lack of accountability and transparency promote a weak rule of law culture, discourage investment, and encourage illegal migration to the U.S. We are partners with you in seeking to influence this trajectory in a positive direction.

In such circumstances, some still ask if U.S. engagement in Honduras makes a difference. I believe it does and that it is in our interest to stay engaged. A Honduras with greater accountability and transparency will establish stronger rule of law institutions and be more likely to protect human rights. A Honduras with a vibrant middle class means a larger overseas market for American-made products. A more secure and prosperous Honduras means fewer migrants trying to cross our borders. A Honduras with strong interdiction capacity means fewer drugs arriving in U.S. communities. As President Obama recently said, respect for human rights is an antidote to instability—a Honduras with strong human rights protections means enhanced security in our region.

The United States is committed to partnering with the Government of Honduras to promote prosperity, governance, and security. In order to do so, we need willing partners in Honduras who have the political will to transform their society, the capacity to seize drugs, and the commitment to arrest, prosecute and sentence criminals, and to guarantee the human rights of their own citizens.

Honduras is at a crossroads. We have seen some early signs that the Government of Honduras is ready to take important steps to improve the lives of its citizens. In May, for the first time, Honduras extradited a notorious Honduran drug trafficker to the United States, an important strike against impunity. The new government dedicated scarce resources to combat trafficking in persons and launched a signature program to bring more people into the formal economy. The government has taken steps to improve security, enhance the rule of law, and emphasize its commitment to improving human rights conditions. The President has fired corrupt police, indicted the entire board of directors of the social security institute, invited the United Nations to set up a human rights office, and set up a task force to investigate unsolved murders in a particularly conflictive area of the country, the Bajo Aguan. But there is no doubt the Government of Honduras still has a big job ahead.

Honduras's location and role in regional security make its success vital to our own national security, and it is in our interest to work with the government and civil society to improve democratic governance, the rule of law, stability, and protection of human rights. It is also important that we emphasize the value of building national consensus in support of the serious challenges the country confronts. I am fully aware of the serious doubts expressed, including in the U.S. Congress, regarding the willingness and ability of the Government of Honduras to take needed steps to improve the human rights situation. If confirmed, I commit to work tirelessly in this area.

The United States engages in Honduras to support social and economic development, improve food security, promote civil society, and give alternatives to joining gangs to at-risk youth. We have a wide variety of programs focused on increasing

law enforcement and rule of law capacity and strengthening violence prevention efforts to improve the security environment, and we recognize that these efforts are only effective and sustainable when human rights are at the center. The United States should remain Honduras' best partner because it is very much in our interest that Honduras be stable, well governed, prosperous and safe.

Mr. Chairman, I have been a deputy chief of mission at three embassies in this hemisphere. I am currently the civilian deputy to the Commander at U.S. Southern Command; in that context, my view is that the most appropriate role for the U.S. military in Honduras is to help ensure that the Honduran military is professional, under civilian direction, and can secure its own borders. I have spent most of the last 30 years working to promote democracy and human rights, enhancing law enforcement and security partnerships, and promoting U.S. exports and investment. Above all, I am proud to have spent my career working in the interests of American citizens to defend our values throughout the world.

I understand the magnitude of the challenges the United States faces in Honduras. I delegate authority, not responsibility. I believe in the power of diplomacy and of using our influence to achieve our national security goals. Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the honor of appearing before the committee today. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you and your colleagues to advance the vital interests of the United States in Honduras.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to any questions you may have, now and in the future.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Nealon. And, you know, we did not give you a complete introduction. You have 30 years of experience, having joined the service in 1984. You have most recently been the deputy chief of mission in Canada, Peru, and Uruguay. You have also been located in Spain, Hungary, the Philippines, and Chile, as well as the current assignment that you just talked about. So, a tremendous background. We appreciate your willingness to serve.

Mr. Smith.

**STATEMENT OF GENTRY O. SMITH, OF NORTH CAROLINA,
NOMINEE TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN
MISSIONS**

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Director of the Office of Foreign Missions, OFM. I am profoundly grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have demonstrated in nominating me for this unique and important position.

My entire professional life has been dedicated to public service. Beginning with my first career as a police officer in Raleigh, North Carolina, to my assignments at our Embassies in Tokyo, Rangoon, and Cairo, and to my current role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Countermeasures with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, I have strived to improve the conditions in which our colleagues live and work. I believe my dedication and commitment in this regard will serve me well if given the opportunity to lead the Office of Foreign Missions, an organization whose primary goals are using reciprocity to ensure equitable treatment of United States diplomatic and consular missions abroad, and their personnel; regulating the activities of foreign missions in the United States to protect our foreign policy and national security interests; protecting the U.S. public from abuses of privileges and immunities by the members of the foreign missions; and the provision of serv-

ice and assistance to the foreign mission community in the United States on a reciprocal basis.

As you are aware, OFM was established in 1982 as a requirement under the Foreign Missions Act. In passing the act, Congress made it clear that the operations of foreign missions in the United States is a proper subject for the exercise of Federal jurisdiction. For more than 30 years, the act has guided the Department's management extension to the foreign missions in the United States of privileges, benefits, and immunities associated with the acquisition and use of real property, motor vehicles, driving services, tax exemptions, custom clearances, and domestic travel courtesies and restrictions. In my estimation, the Foreign Missions Act is a landmark piece of legislation which has positively influenced and conditioned the environment in which U.S. diplomatic and consular missions operate abroad.

This committee is well aware of the Department's ongoing efforts to ensure our personnel abroad work in facilities that are safe, secure, and functional. I can authoritatively attest that the relocation of an American embassy is a complex, costly, and difficult task. To accomplish this job, the United States Government and in many countries—have, in many countries, the support of that host country. And in countries where that support is lacking, the Office of Foreign Missions plays a critical role in assisting in the resolution of these impasses we sometimes face with these governments during our attempts to acquire real property and in those countries where we are relocating our facilities.

When a country has an interest in improving and relocating its own mission in the United States, the Office of Foreign Missions uses its ability to regulate the acquisition and the use of real property of those missions as leverage to achieve the Department's own property-related needs in that country. Without OFM and the authorities it has under the Foreign Missions Act, we may not have been able to build a new embassy in Beijing, China, or a new annex in that same location. This and more was achieved as a result of reciprocity and the Foreign Missions Act.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have the opportunity to address you and the esteemed members of the committee. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to further these important objectives of Congress as set out in the Foreign Missions Act. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the proper treatment of our foreign personnel abroad and that foreign missions here are good neighbors.

Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration for my nomination. I respectfully request that my entire statement be entered into the record, and I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENTRY O. SMITH

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 Director of the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM). I am profoundly grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have demonstrated in nominating me for this unique and important position.

My entire professional life has been dedicated to public service. Beginning with my first career as a police officer in Raleigh, NC, to my assignments as a Regional Security Officer at our Embassies in Tokyo, Rangoon, and Cairo, and to my current role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director for Countermeasures in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, I have strived to improve the overall conditions in which my colleagues, and those of us with families, live and work. I believe my dedication and commitment in this regard will serve me well if given the opportunity to lead the Office of Foreign Missions, an organization whose primary goals are:

- Using reciprocity to ensure equitable treatment for United States diplomatic and consular missions abroad and their personnel;
- Regulating the activities of foreign missions in the United States to protect our foreign policy and national security interests;
- Protecting the U.S. public from abuses of privileges and immunities by members of the foreign missions; and
- Providing service and assistance to the foreign mission community in the United States on a reciprocal basis.

As you are aware, OFM was established in 1982 as a requirement of the Foreign Missions Act. In passing the act, Congress made it clear that the operations of foreign missions and international organizations in the United States, including the permissible scope of their activities and the location and size of their facilities, is a proper subject for the exercise of Federal jurisdiction. The act provides the Department of State with broad authority to determine the treatment to be accorded to a foreign mission in the United States.

OFM vigorously pursues its mandate under the act that, "consistent with our obligations under the Vienna Conventions, the treatment afforded a foreign mission in the United States shall be determined after due consideration of the benefits, privileges, and immunities provided to missions of the United States in the country represented by that foreign mission." With this very mandate, OFM leads the Department's engagement in a process in which it either develops an approach or exploits leverage to achieve a specific end. OFM's approach to issues is a very realistic one. OFM knows that for every action there is a reaction, and so it works daily with a number of stakeholders, both within the Department and the broader community of Federal agencies, to carefully craft and implement responses to a wide range of actions that impact the proper or efficient operation of our diplomatic and consular operations abroad.

For more than 30 years, the Act has guided the Department's management and extension to foreign missions in the United States, privileges and benefits associated with the acquisition and use of real property, motor vehicle and driving services, tax exemptions, customs clearances, and domestic travel courtesies and restrictions. In recent years, OFM's role and its use of the act's broad authorities has allowed it to expand into new areas including the provision of assistance with the establishment and availability of financial services for foreign missions and to the development of the proposed Foreign Missions Center at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center for the purpose of creating a second dedicated "embassy neighborhood" here in our Nation's Capital.

The act is also the reason I am before you today, in that it requires the Director of OFM to be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

In my estimation, the Foreign Missions Act is a landmark piece of legislation which has positively influenced and conditioned the environment in which U.S. diplomatic and consular missions abroad operate. I appreciate the fascinating history associated with the act's origins, and its role in achieving a number of major, and often unsung, improvements to the operations of many of our embassies and consulates abroad. For example, in the past 11 years, OFM's leadership of the Department's Diplomatic Tax-Relief Initiative has resulted in the establishment of close to 100 bilateral and reciprocal construction tax-relief arrangements; this has resulted in an estimated savings to the Department of nearly \$280 million in foreign taxes associated with our efforts to construct new embassy and consular compounds.

I am eager to lead OFM's efforts in using the tools Congress provided the Department in realizing improvements to the many challenges, both new and old, that face so many of our posts abroad and my colleagues and their families who dutifully execute the diplomatic and consular relations of the United States.

The prospect of improving the conditions of my colleagues and their families abroad is of significant personal importance to me. Our personnel, many with accompanying and unaccompanying family members, face pressures and challenges each day that did not exist when I first joined the Department of State. Without question, the life of the Foreign Service has dramatically changed. The daily pres-

tures on our personnel are significant, and I will work every day to use the tools Congress provided OFM to help improve, in both small and big ways, the daily lives of the brave men and women who are assigned to our embassies and consulates around the world.

This committee is well aware of the Department's ongoing efforts to ensure that our personnel abroad work in facilities that are safe, secure, and functional. I can authoritatively attest that the relocation of an American Embassy is a complex, costly, and difficult task. To accomplish this job, the United States must have the interest and support of the host government. In many countries, such support and assistance is there for the asking. In countries where support is lacking, I, as a member of Diplomatic Security, along with colleagues in Overseas Buildings Operations and other parts of the Department, have come to realize and respect the critical role that OFM quietly plays in assisting with the resolution of impasses we sometimes face with foreign governments during our attempts to acquire real property in their countries for the relocation and construction of our facilities.

When a country has an interest in improving or relocating one of its missions in the United States, OFM uses its ability to regulate the acquisition and use of real property by foreign missions as leverage to achieve the Department's own property-related needs in that country. Without OFM and the authorities it has under the Foreign Missions Act, the Department might not have been able to speak today of having a new U.S. Embassy in Beijing, as well as a new annex building under construction there as well. This and more was achieved as a result of reciprocity and the Foreign Missions Act.

If I am confirmed and with your support, I will further use OFM's authorities as a means to support and realize the goal shared by both Congress and the President of ensuring that our personnel work in safe and secure facilities abroad.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have the opportunity to address you and the esteemed members of the committee. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to further the important objectives Congress set out in the Foreign Missions Act, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure proper treatment of our Foreign Service personnel abroad, and that foreign missions are good neighbors here at home.

Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration of my nomination. I respectfully request that my full statement be entered into the record, and I will be happy to answer your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Both of your statements will be fully entered into the record.

Mr. Nealon, let me start off with the—for me, the most pressing issue of the day as it relates to Honduras, which is in the headlines and minds of all of us who care about the issues of human rights and human dignity. And it is the thousands of young people, and increasingly younger people, who seem forced to leave their families and head for the U.S. border because of the inability of the Honduran government and other Central American governments to deal with crime and violence in a region that is home to the highest murder rate in the world.

I am personally appalled by the staggering numbers of minors, sometimes as young as 5 and 6 years old, who are left by their personal circumstances with no other choice than to try to cross the desert by themselves. And, as you approach this post, I would like to get a sense from you as to what discussions you have had with the administration and with the State Department. What is our strategy to try to address both the present challenge, as well as the underlying causes that has given us this humanitarian tragedy?

Mr. NEALON. Thank you very much, Senator.

I very much share your concerns about these children who are leaving Central America, including Honduras, and making a dangerous trip in an attempt to cross our borders. If confirmed as Ambassador to Honduras, of course, my piece of this would be an effort in Honduras to try to get Hondurans to see their future in their own country, and not try to make this dangerous trip. We all know

what the push factors are. The push factors are the threat of violence and a lack of economic opportunity.

Senator, we currently have programs in Honduras that are designed to address these issues. Some of them are very good programs. But, we have to ask ourselves if it is enough. We have programs such as the GREAT Program, which addresses at-risk youth and try to wean them away from the threat of joining gangs. We have programs that offer economic opportunity. We support outreach centers, which try and create a culture where kids stay out of gangs, where they try to get job skills so they can enter the labor force. But, it is extremely difficult. As you said, Senator, it is one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, and it is perhaps the most violent. So, the challenge is staggering.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me just say that—here is part of our challenge. And I hope that, if confirmed, you will make this case within the administration. Last week, the White House informed the Congress that it would need \$2.28 billion to address the issue of unaccompanied minors crossing to the United States. Now, in 2015, the administration's request to Congress was only \$130 million for its five-country Central American Regional Security Initiative, which is a decrease of \$30 million over 2014. So, given that we need to spend \$2.2 billion to address the consequences of the crisis here in the United States, it would seem that 130 million is absolutely insufficient to address the root causes of the problems. This is one of the things that boggles my mind.

So, we are going to spend \$2.28 billion—almost \$2.3 billion, if we honor the President's request, to deal with young people crossing the border, instead of spending that type of money to ultimately make sure they stay in their country and have the aspirations that you so aptly talked about.

So, I know this is above your pay grade. You do not make this decision. But, since you are going to be going to this job, upon confirmation, I hope you are going to make the case that \$130 million for five countries, which is less than what we have done, as compared to \$2.2 billion to respond to the problem—it just does not make any sense.

This is our problem with—as someone who was the Western Hemisphere chair here before I became the full-committee chair, getting the focus of the Congress and this administration on the Western Hemisphere is a challenge. It is our front yard. It is our own national interest. And we seem to have a problem understanding that. So, we will spend more on a crisis than we will on meeting the challenge in the first place.

So, could I get you to be an advocate for this proposition?

Mr. NEALON. Senator, you can absolutely have me as an advocate for this proposition, if confirmed. I am obviously not in a position to assess how much money—how much additional money we might need in Honduras to address this problem, but I do know that both USAID and the State Department are, right now, assessing those programs that we do have. So, I will very much look forward to seeing the results of that assessment to see if we can get a handle on how much additional money we might need.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Smith, let me ask you. What do you consider to be OFM's highest priorities? And how do you perceive your role

in achieving them? This is a mandate that has evolved and expanded since the creation of the office in 1982. I want to get, as the nominee here, what your highest priorities would be, and what your role would be in pursuing them.

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

As we know, the Office of Foreign Missions, as it came into existence from the Foreign Missions Act of 1982, gives the Secretary broad responsibilities for ensuring that foreign missions here act in a manner that is appropriate. My highest priority will be making sure that our citizens who work abroad are treated fairly in a reciprocal manner, and also ensuring that the activities of foreign entities here are in support—or do not conflict with—our national interests, and also that there is no abuse of privileges, immunities by the missions and the personnel that are here.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, I would like to hear from you, what role does the Director of the Office of Foreign Missions play in interacting with diplomatic security with respect to security in our embassies and consulates abroad?

Mr. SMITH. The relationship between the Office of Foreign Missions and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security has existed for a long time, from the time before the Office of Foreign Missions was officially a—an office within the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, until the point where it is now, where it is a separate entity. Diplomatic Security has always played a supporting role in helping the Office of Foreign Missions carry out some of its responsibilities. We help to protect the diplomats who are here in the United States with—through our police liaison unit. Diplomatic Security has relationships with police organizations and local police throughout the country. And so, we help to protect the diplomats who reside here, and we also offer protection to visiting diplomats who come here to visit the country during short periods of time through our protective details.

In every location where there is an Office of Foreign Missions, there is also a field office for Diplomatic Security.

The CHAIRMAN. One final question. Your—this office is often referred to as the Office of Tit for Tat, meaning that for—one of our main goals is to ensure reciprocity of treatment of our diplomats overseas. Can you talk about that reciprocity? And here is one example, for example: Argentina. A February 2013 Department of State Inspector General report suggested that there was an array of reciprocity inequities negatively affecting personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In particular, the report cites inequities regarding the importation, exportation, sales, and transfer procedures relative to private and government-owned vehicles and household effects. I am under the understanding that the office sent a diplomatic note to the Argentine Embassy in Washington drawing attention to the situation, but, at the time of the Inspector General's report, no response had been received.

So, that is an example of one of the important roles you play so that our people can have a decent standard of living as they are representing our country abroad. Tell me a little bit about the reciprocity issue, in general. And do you know about this Argentina issue, in specific?

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

Yes, reciprocity is one of our major tools that is—that we can use in ensuring that our diplomats overseas, and that our missions that operate overseas, are treated fairly. I have heard, during my briefings for preparations, that there has been an issue in Argentina. As a matter of fact, I know that, as you stated, the issue was raised in the February 2013 report.

The reason that the issue is still under discussion is the fact that there is still information that we have asked for, that the Office of Foreign Missions has asked for, from our mission in Buenos Aires. And yes, we have been in contact with the Argentine mission here, but there are additional details that are needed from the people that we have out there on the ground—

The CHAIRMAN. Something is wrong when, 16 months later, we are looking for information versus action. So, if confirmed, will you commit to me that you will make this one of your highest priorities?

Mr. SMITH. I will, indeed, Senator, if confirmed. We very much would like that information, because, you are absolutely right, we are looking and willing to engage on this issue to ensure that our personnel overseas are treated in the fairest manner possible.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, I know Senator Rubio needs to be on the floor, so I am going to defer and let him go, and then I will ask my questions after Senator Kaine.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Thank you both for your service to our country.

Mr. Nealon, I have two quick questions. And I appreciate the ranking member's indulgence on this. The first has to do with an issue I am sure you are aware of, and that is a U.S. crew that was arrested in Honduras during a river job. This is the salvage company, Aqua Quest International. They had a contract to dredge the Patuca River and raise valuable mahogany and cedar logs that were on the bottom of the riverbed. They have been there for more than a century. It was a very valuable contract, mutually beneficial to both Honduras but also to this crew that was involved in this.

It is standard operating procedure for crews in the Mosquito Coast in this part of the world to have firearms onboard to defend themselves from both pirates and potentially from drug traffickers in the region. This group pulled into the port there, they arrived at the port, they declared their two pistols, or two shotguns and a semiautomatic sport rifle that looks like an AK-47. They declared it to the Honduran navy inspection post. The sailors agreed to let them continue to the port. But, when they arrived there, they were arrested for weapons charges, and they remain in the custody of the Honduran Government.

I just was hoping to get your commitment today that, if confirmed, one of your—hopefully, by the time you get there, this will have been cleared up, but, if not, that you will make it among your highest priorities to address this outrage that has occurred there. And these men should not be in jail. They have done nothing wrong. They followed maritime law. And I just want your commitment publicly that we will address this issue, if, in fact, this has

not been cleared up—and we hope it will be—by the time you get there.

Mr. NEALON. Thank you very much, Senator. I am very much aware of the detention of the crew of the Aqua Quest in Honduras on May 5. You do have my word that, if confirmed as Ambassador to Honduras, the safety and welfare of American citizens will be my highest priority. I, too, hope that this situation will be cleared up by the time I get there, if confirmed. But, I want you to know that, if I am confirmed, you will be able to call me personally and hold me personally accountable for the actions of the Embassy in any case involving American citizens or constituents.

Senator RUBIO. Well, we appreciate that. Thank you very much. I want to talk about a broader issue that is emerging in the press lately, because of the urgency of it. And the chairman has already alluded to it a moment ago. Just the—the facts are pretty staggering. About 5 years ago, there were about 100—968 unaccompanied children that crossed the southern U.S. border from Honduras. This year alone—we have not even gone through—halfway through the year—there has been more than 13,000 unaccompanied minors that have come across the border from Honduras. This is, like I said, almost twice as much as last year, the entire year. We understand that violence and poverty are a driver of this. It is important to understand the desperation that a parent must have to put their kids on—in the hands of these groups that are going to move them across the border. That is how desperate people are to—to turn your child over. Some of these unaccompanied minors are very young children—talking very young children—6, 7, 8, 9 years of age. So, this is a very serious humanitarian crisis that we are all kind of struggling around here to figure out what to do about it in the short term, just to deal with the humanitarian aspects of it.

I do want to ask you, What insight do you have as to—beyond the motivation for doing it, why is this happening? In essence—we have heard anecdotal reports—I have, certainly, in south Florida, among members, some in the Honduran community—that there are what are, for lack of a better term, rumors that if, in fact, the children are able to get here, they are going to get to stay. Is that a—is, in fact, those rumors circulating? And what—and if, in fact, they are, as—I believe that there is some element of that; I do not know how much of it is quantified to that, but whatever percentage of it is—what can we do, working with the Honduran Government, to make clear to parents in Honduras that, despite the desperation that they face and what we need to do to help the Honduran people overcome that in their own country, this is not something they should be doing? They should not be—they are putting their children in grave danger. When they are crossing through Mexico into the United States, they become prime targets for traffickers, they become prime targets for all sorts of transnational criminal organizations. And then, when they get to the United States, to be abundantly clear, the laws of the United States do not allow them to stay here. They arrived illegally. That whatever it is they are hearing, it is not accurate. What can we do through our Embassy to help make that clear so that we can prevent this mass migration? I think this is a question to ask of our posts in El Salvador and

Guatemala, as well, but you are going to Honduras. What can we do to make it clear that this is not something that they should do? It is not wise, and it puts their children in grave danger.

Mr. NEALON. Senator, thank you very much. And, as I said to Chairman Menendez, I share your very deep concern for this situation.

I am not sure that I have any wisdom to add to what I already said to the chairman, except that I can say that the Honduran Government is running public service ads in Honduras to counter the kind of rumors that you have described. Obviously—

Senator RUBIO. Where do these rumors come from? Why are they—where did the perception that they can come and stay if they arrive—where is that coming from?

Mr. NEALON. Senator, unfortunately, I am not in a position to answer that question for you. I simply do not know. But, I can tell you that, if confirmed, this issue, which I think has gotten the attention, rightly, of all of us, would be at the very top of my list of priorities to try to address. And I would really look forward to working with you. I know you have deep roots in the community in Florida. I would really look forward to working with you to see if we could come up with some ideas to address the situation.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses.

And, Mr. Smith, I will apologize to you in advance. I have a kind of an obsession about Honduras, and so I am not going to grill you. I hope you do not mind.

And I will start with Mr. Nealon. First, congratulations. I mean, this is a country of many, many wonderful people, and I think being Ambassador to Honduras at this time, though a very challenging one, is going to give you a superb opportunity to continue what has really been an estimable career in Foreign Service. And so, I congratulate you there.

I lived in Honduras, in el Progreso, in the Yoro province, in 1980 and 1981, and I worked with Jesuits there who are responsible for a lot of good work in that province and around the country. And I just—I kind of hate to say this, and I—every time I say it, I kind of feel bad saying it, but, when I was there, it was a military dictatorship, and it was a very brutal place, including brutal to the people that I worked with, many of whom were targeted during that time, and after, by the government, because of their activity and advocacy on behalf of the least of these, especially the campesinos and the banana camps near el Progreso. But, it is worse now than then. They are less safe now than then. It is not a military dictatorship anymore. You know, we moved out of the military dictatorship era into a time of Presidential elections. But, my friends who are there—it is not that they want to go back, but they are less safe than they were. And a country that was—that has been a superb ally to the United States, a country that is one of the original partners with us on an issue—it is like the Peace Corps—now is one of the few countries in the world that cannot even have Peace

Corps Volunteers there, because of the level of violence and danger. And that is just a tragic thing to think about.

One element of the tragedy, in particular, that I am concerned about, is—as you might imagine, is the people that I worked with. There is a radio station in el Progreso, Radio Progreso, that was run by the Jesuits, bombed and attacked when I was there. And a very prominent journalist who worked at the radio station, who also worked for a Jesuit-run think tank, the Equipo de Reflexiones Investigaciones Cristianos, was just murdered, on the 11th of April. Carlos Mejia Orellano, murdered in his home in el Progreso. And the speculation has been that he was murdered because he was a journalist, because he was doing what that radio station does, which is call attention to human rights problems. There has been virtually no progress, or even interest that I am aware of, in solving that case, and he is one of 34 media representatives that have been killed in Honduras since 2010.

The fate of people I know—and maybe it is unfair to focus on this, just because I know these folks—but, these are people doing good work, and they are raising questions that have to be asked, and yet they are being targeted and—as other journalists are, as well.

Maybe if you could just start off there. What can you do, in your position as ambassador, to demand accountability for the deaths of journalists, demand that they take it seriously and hold up the virtues that we proclaim here about the importance of a free press and the protections that they are entitled to?

Mr. NEALON. Thank you very much, Senator.

And, first of all, I am very aware of your obsession with Honduras and your work as a lay missionary there, back in the 1980s. And, if confirmed, I would be delighted to welcome you back and have you—

Senator KAINÉ. I would love to come.

Mr. NEALON [continuing]. Introduce me to your old friends and your old haunts.

You raise a number of very important issues, but I think the most important is the issue that goes to impunity. As you probably know, Senator, impunity is a long-standing human rights issue in Honduras. By some estimates, as many as 95 percent of crimes in Honduras go unresolved, not just crimes against journalists or politicians or members of other such communities, but crimes against the population in general. So, this is something that we simply have to address.

I will say, Senator—and if you come down, if I am confirmed and we get a chance to work together on this—I believe we have seen some early signs of positive steps that this government is willing to take important steps to begin to address these issues. And if, with your patience, I will name a couple of them.

First of all, last month, Honduras extradited—

Senator KAINÉ. Good news.

Mr. NEALON [continuing]. Carlos Lobo, a notorious narcotrafficker, the first such extradition in the country's history. They had to change the constitution in order to do it. And we understand more extraditions may be coming. I think this is a very, very positive step.

They have fired scores of corrupt police officers. They have indicted the entire board of directors of the Social Security Institute, 16 people, for corruption. And the President has requested that the United Nations open up an Office of the U.N. High Commission on Human Rights in Honduras. And I understand that the Congress, our Congress, has appropriated a million dollars toward that, which I think is a fantastic step.

So, Senator, I believe we are seeing early signs of positive steps, but I completely agree with you that the issue of impunity is something that we need to get at.

Senator KAINE. I want to associate myself with comments that the Chairman made about the importance of investments.

Trying to help the Hondurans deal with the violence challenges in Honduras is not just because we are good people, and it is not just because, if we do it, it may slow down unaccompanied minors coming to our borders. I mean, the violence in Honduras is largely driven by a drug trade that is fueled by Americans' demand for drugs. Hondurans are not big drug users. The drugs that are transiting through Honduras are not transiting through Honduras because of the Honduran mass appetite for illegal substances. Honduras has become a convenient staging ground, transit point, and stopover place for drugs that are coming north into Mexico to the United States or Canada.

And so, it is, you know, the—it is hard to look yourself in the mirror and, you know, kind of just point the finger, what the Hondurans need to do about their—you know, their justice system, when you know that so much of the violence that is causing parents to set their kids free, trying to find their way to the U.S. border, is driven by a drug trade that is largely fueled by U.S. dollars and the demand for drugs.

So, we have more than just a need to do something, you know, to help a partner. We have an obligation, here, because the violence that folks are suffering under in Honduras is something that is directly connected to domestic activities here in the United States.

And it is my hope, as well, that we will not just, "Oh, gosh, now there are unaccompanied minors. I guess we have to do something about it, because they are trying to come to our border." If it has—if the country has one of the highest murder rates in the world because of a drug trade that, at the end of the day, is ending up in the United States, that ought to call us to do some things, too. And the chairman said we ought to be proactive and not wait til the problem just gets to our door. If it is a problem that we have some responsibility for, then we ought to be in solving it even before it gets to our doorstep.

And I associate myself, Mr. Chair, with your comments on that.

Thank the witnesses and wish you the best. And I will visit you. I will.

Mr. NEALON. I will look forward to that, Senator. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. My thanks to Senator Kaine, for his always erudite insights, and particularly, I know that he has a real, passionate interest in Honduras. And, as such, throughout the Central America region, which is a challenge for us.

I have one final question, Mr. Nealon. You know, I was arguing earlier that we need to invest more so that we do not spend so much more—multiples more, as it relates to facing the problem versus meeting the core elements of why we have situations like young people crossing the border. By the same token, as I advocate for increased resources for addressing the citizen security issue throughout Central America, including, obviously, in Honduras, we need a strong, shared approach with the governments in the region—in this case, with Honduras.

In that sense, I want to get an understanding of your evaluation of the Hernandez administration's ability and willingness—understanding you are not on the ground, but hopefully the briefings have given you some insight—to address the challenges at hand. The State Department's 2013 Human Rights Report on Honduras raised concerns about corruption, the weakness of the justice system, and unlawful and arbitrary killings by security forces. President Hernandez has prioritized the creation of a military police force over what should be the U.S. priority of strengthening and reforming a civilian police force. And finally, the U.S. Government has limited intelligence-sharing and radar information as a result of recent legislation providing the Honduran governmental authorities to shoot down civilian planes believed to be involved in drug trafficking. And, while we certainly can applaud any efforts to try to interdict drug traffickings, to go to the extreme point of shooting down planes creates all types of risks, especially if you have got the information wrong.

So, what do these developments imply for our relationship with the Government of Honduras as we try to meet this mutual challenge?

Mr. NEALON. Thank you very much, Senator.

First of all, you raised the issue of the military police. These are actually members of the armed forces who have law enforcement authorities who have been put on the street by the Honduran government to try to address the highest murder rate in the world and the other violent crime that is pervasive there. We do not support putting the military in the streets in a law enforcement capacity. We believe that that distracts from the very important work that we do support with our programs, of working with the civilian police force, because we believe that military police in the streets simply is not a viable permanent solution. We have to work with the civilian police.

You also mentioned, Senator, the recent legislation in Honduras, the air sovereignty law, which some people call a "shoot-down law." That is very problematic for the United States, and that point has been made very clear to the Honduran Government. There were some immediate consequences of that law. For example, Southern Command, General Kelly, had to turn off air feeds that we provided to the Hondurans because there was some risk that those air feeds could be used to shoot down civilian aircraft. And there may be other consequences to that, as well, moving forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I hope this will be part of the work that you will pursue upon confirmation, in terms of trying to get us to a point that we can get the Honduran Government to agree with us on the common methodology, if we are going to fund it, one that

we can be supportive of. Because, if not, it will be a further challenge to trying to help them with citizen security.

Senator Corker asked me to say that he will submit his questions for the record. He has deep respect for both of you, but he had a conflict in his schedule, so he could not stay any longer.

The CHAIRMAN. And I would urge you, not only to answer his questions, but any other members' questions that are posed for the record, as expeditiously as possible so that we can, therefore, consider your nominations before a business meeting of the full committee.

And, with the thanks of the committee for your willingness to serve, this panel is excused and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF STUART E. JONES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).—As a result of the current crisis related to the advance of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Northern Iraq, as many as 500,000 people have fled into KRG-controlled areas, creating an urgent humanitarian crisis already severe due to the presence of some 250,000 refugees from the Syrian side of the conflict. Current estimates place the burden to the KRG at roughly \$1,000 per person, per year. The KRG are reliable U.S. partners, and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters are now the frontline against ISIS.

- ◆ What support are we currently providing to the KRG to ensure it can respond to urgent security and humanitarian pressures?
- ◆ How will you address urgent KRG needs for food, shelter, generators, water, irrigation systems, camp infrastructure, vehicles and more, to help the KRG address these urgent humanitarian needs?
- ◆ The KRG has also requested assistance in releasing U.S. military and security equipment withheld by the Maliki government in Baghdad. What leverage do we have to facilitate the immediate release of this equipment to the KRG?
- ◆ What specific steps can the U.S. take immediately to strengthen KRG border security efforts, including providing body armor, communication systems and other nonlethal aid?

Answer. The United States is extremely concerned about the deteriorating security situation deepening the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. On June 12, we announced a contribution of an additional \$12.8 million to international organization partners like the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that are working to meet the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict victims in Iraq. Our total humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict in Iraq in fiscal year 2014 is more than \$136 million. Since 2010, the United States has contributed to the United Nations, other international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations more than \$1.1 billion in humanitarian assistance for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced people throughout Iraq. Separately, we have provided more than \$105 million to support Syrian refugees in Iraq since the start of the Syria crisis in 2011. This funding goes toward international organizations and nongovernmental organizations supporting the more than 225,000 refugees from Syria who have fled to Iraq since March 2011.

Our funding for refugees from Syria supports transportation to refugee camps, refugee camp infrastructure, including providing safe water and sanitation, as well as support for education, child protection, and gender-based violence prevention and response. The recently announced \$12.8 million in support for the current humanitarian crisis in Iraq includes \$6.6 million to UNHCR for essential humanitarian supplies like blankets, tents, and hygiene items, and \$6.2 million to other international organizations for food, clean water, core relief items, and urgent medical care for the affected. These organizations are working closely with the KRG and the Government of Iraq (GOI) to assess needs and support.

The GOI is not withholding any military or security equipment from the KRG. The GOI was temporarily holding some military logistical equipment, which was

purchased through DOD's Iraqi Security Forces Fund (ISFF), but transferred all of it to the KRG in 2013.

If requested and approved by the GOI, the U.S. Government could provide a wide range of assistance to eligible KRG security forces through traditional security assistance authorities like the Foreign Military Sales program. The delivery of such assistance would of course be dependent on host nation funding as well equipment availability and production timelines. We have not received any such requests from the GOI for assistance to KRG security forces.

Question. MeK.—I have received assurances from the Iraqi Government that it will ensure the security of Camp Liberty and its residents, while we continue to work to resettle members of the MeK here in the United States and in other countries outside of Iraq.

- ◆ Is the Iraqi Government committed to the safety and security of the residents at Camp Liberty while in Iraq?

Answer. The United States continues to work closely with the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the United Nations (U.N.) to ensure the protection of those currently residing at Camp Liberty, a.k.a Camp Hurriya. We interact regularly with senior Iraqi officials about the safety and security of the Camp Hurriya residents, and they assure us that they are committed to this issue, despite the current situation in Iraq. To date, the GOI has moved in 520 bunkers, 700 small T-walls, 90,000 sandbags and 1,488 large T-walls, about 750 of which were installed by April 23 in accordance with a plan agreed to by the GOI and the camp residents. They have also granted permissions for requested security enhancements at the camp as appropriate.

- ◆ What will your role be regarding Camp Liberty and the resettlement of MeK residents outside Iraq?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the Government of Iraq and the U.N. regarding the safety and security of the residents. We are fortunate to have a very able senior advisor for MEK Resettlement, Jonathan Winer, and he and I will coordinate closely on finding safe, permanent, and secure locations for the Camp Hurriya residents outside of Iraq.

- ◆ Please provide an update on the resettlement process, and the work of the U.S. interagency team currently in Iraq. How many residents are able and willing to meet U.S. requirements in order to be settled in the United States?

Answer. Currently, 377 Camp Hurriya residents have been relocated outside of Iraq in countries like Albania and Germany. An interagency team was deployed May 18 to evaluate candidates for U.S. resettlement. Our initial goal is to identify at least 100 qualified individuals, subject to security conditions, cooperation of the MEK and availability of interested candidates. At this point, it is too early to say how many are qualified as the team has not yet finished its work.

Question. I understand that the Government of Iraq has yet to sign U.S. contracts for Apache attack helicopters that we intend to sell and lease. We were told repeatedly and in no uncertain terms that these helicopters were absolutely vital to the Iraqis in order to fight the insurgency, and that they needed to be sent as soon as possible.

- ◆ Given this delay, do the Iraqis feel the same way?

Answer. Yes, the Apache remains Iraq's combat helicopter of choice. Congressional approval for the Apaches was urgently needed in order to get the case into the Government of Iraq's (GOI) long and complex bureaucratic process. We are disappointed by the delay on the Iraqi side and continue to urge the GOI to act quickly to sign and fund the cases. Unfortunately, several factors including internal budget issues, recent elections and the ongoing government formation process, and the current counterterrorism crisis combined to muddle Iraq's already complicated approval process, delaying Iraq's decision to finalize large, long, lead-time purchases like the Apache.

The Apache will provide superior precision-targeting and firepower capability and increased in-air flight time to allow for flexibility and longer mission endurance at greater distances. The Apaches will also provide much-needed protection against small arms fire; Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to damage and shoot down Iraq's unarmored helicopters. The Iraqi Security Forces will use the Apaches to support ground forces, interdict border incursions, conduct precision strikes against ISIL targets, and to deter terrorist activities and it will fill a needed capability gap.

- ◆ Was the administration mistaken in their assertions to us about the urgency of approving the sale?

Answer. Congressional approval for the Apaches was urgently needed in order to get the case into the Government of Iraq's (GOI) long and complex bureaucratic process. We are disappointed by the delay on the Iraqi side and continue to urge Iraq to act quickly to sign and fund the cases. Unfortunately, several factors including internal budget issues, recent elections and the ongoing government formation process, and the current counterterrorism crisis combined to muddle Iraq's already complicated approval process, delaying Iraq's decision to finalize large, long, lead-time purchases like the Apache. Although the Apaches will not arrive in time to aid in the current crisis, Iraq will continue to face a critical ISIL threat and have a continuing need for the Apache well into the future. The Apache will provide the Iraqi Security Forces an armored, long-range, precision-strike platform capable of supporting a wide range of counterterrorism operations.

- ◆ Why did the Iraqi Government miss a payment for the F-16s? What are the next steps to get this back on track?

Answer. To date, Iraq has paid approximately \$5 billion of the approximately \$7.1 billion total for all 36 F-16s. A payment of \$1.6 billion was due earlier this spring, but has been delayed due to the operations in Anbar and Iraq's delay in passing a new budget. GOI officials have affirmed that the payment will be made. We have informed the GOI that the delivery of the first two aircraft could be delayed as a result of the delayed payment and we will continue to urge the GOI to complete the payment.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

COUNTERTERRORISM LAW

A new counterterrorism law awaiting ratification by the President has been criticized as overly broad, allowing for nonviolent protestors and other critics of the government to be arrested on terrorism-related charges. The current Egyptian Constitution exempts the Egyptian military from trial in civilian courts while giving military courts broad authority to try civilians.

Question. Are you concerned that these laws are essentially making the Mubarak-era "emergency laws" part of Egypt's permanent body of laws?

Answer. I share the U.S. Government's concerns regarding these laws. My understanding is that the draft counterterrorism law and the recently ratified Egyptian Constitution would effectively grant the government and security forces significant new authorities and that the draft counterterrorism law would give the Egyptian Government the right to enforce an undeclared state of emergency. It would also prescribe tougher punishments for terror-related offenses and increase the number of crimes punishable by death or life imprisonment. The laws would also likely further restrict political space and freedoms of expression and assembly and narrow legal channels for dissent, which could give new cause for radicalization in Egypt rather than counter or deter terrorism.

The U.S. Government has expressed its deep concern over such measures and has made clear its opposition to military trials of civilians to the highest levels of the Egyptian Government.

Question. How will you engage with the Egyptian Government to ensure that non-violent critics of the government can speak freely without fear of reprisal or arrest?

Answer. If confirmed, I will emphasize to the Egyptian Government that overly restrictive measures, such as the draft counterterrorism law, will undermine Egypt's stability, increase radicalism, and make it harder for the new government to forge the consensus needed to tackle daunting economic and social challenges. I will press that no matter how difficult the security environment, Egypt must find a way to distinguish extremists and terrorists from peaceful demonstrators. At every opportunity, I will make clear that the U.S. remains deeply concerned by actions the Egyptian Government takes that limit freedom of expression, assembly, and association, including the restrictive demonstrations law decreed in November 2013. I will also encourage the Egyptian Government to develop legislation in keeping with the spirit of those parts of the new constitution which guarantee basic rights and protections and promise to uphold Egypt's commitments and obligations to international human rights covenants and agreements.

ASSISTANCE

Earlier this year, this committee's bipartisan Egypt Assistance Reform Act of 2014 called for a strategic reassessment of security and economic assistance provided to Egypt in light of new realities on the ground.

Question. What can you tell us about the administration's review of U.S. assistance to Egypt? Should we continue to provide \$1.3B in security assistance to Egypt?

Answer. The administration is reviewing how our assistance can best advance U.S. interests. Our military assistance to Egypt has supported stability in the Middle East. It has strengthened protections along Israel's border, enhanced the security of the Suez Canal, and increased Egypt's capacity to participate in regional operations, including peacekeeping.

If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure that any assistance through the Egypt Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program is appropriately structured to counter shared security threats, such as terrorism and weapons trafficking.

Question. Is the balance between security assistance and economic assistance still appropriate given the last several years of upheaval in Egypt?

Answer. U.S. assistance to Egypt, both military and economic assistance, supports key U.S. interests of stability in Egypt and along Israel's border; safe Suez transit; countering transnational threats, such as terrorism and weapons trafficking; promoting inclusive democratic institutions, human rights, and basic freedoms; and supporting broad-based economic stability and growth. The administration considers the FY 2015 request—in conjunction with a more targeted approach—to be necessary and appropriate to meet our goals regarding Egypt.

To that end, we are focusing our Economic Support Fund (ESF) funding on programs that will address Egypt's most critical sources of instability: its economy, particularly the need for private sector-led growth and youth employment, and its lack of sustainable democratic institutions and human rights. Our programs will support basic and higher education; job creation; private sector development; democracy and civil society promotion; and improving health outcomes. Our FMF request will support Egypt in its counterterrorism and border security efforts, including in the Sinai, adding to our ongoing counterterrorism and nonproliferation efforts supported through other assistance accounts.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on advancing U.S. interests in Egypt, including through our assistance programs.

MILITARY SALES

The administration has also placed policy holds on a number of weapons systems scheduled for delivery to the Egyptian Armed Forces. Egyptian military leaders believe the delivery of Apache helicopters is particularly urgent for continuing Egypt's counterterrorism campaign in the Sinai.

Question. Do you agree with the assessment that the Apache helicopters will help fight terrorism in the Sinai?

Answer. Egyptian efforts to combat violent extremism in the Sinai are ongoing, and Apache helicopters have been a key part of those efforts, which is why President Obama directed the delivery of the pending additional Apaches. If confirmed as Ambassador, I look forward to discussing with Congress the conditions in Sinai and the use of U.S.-funded defense items in Egypt.

Question. What is the way ahead on determining when the administration will release the F-16s and other military equipment still under a policy hold?

Answer. President Obama made clear that credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected, civilian government is important to the administration's review of assistance to Egypt and release of held defense items. We are continuing to urge the Egyptian Government to make progress along those lines, including by urging President el-Sisi to establish transparent, accountable, and responsive democratic institutions, based on rule of law and respect for the rights of all Egyptians. If confirmed, I look forward to providing updates on the situation in Egypt and will consult with Congress closely as part of the ongoing assistance review.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Egypt is now host to hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have fled there over the past 2 years. Initially welcoming to them, the Egyptian Government has in the past year made a concerted effort to restrict the entry of Syrian refugees through visa restrictions and security clearance requirements.

Question. In your view, what steps should the U.S. take through its engagement with the Egyptian Government to ensure that Egypt can be a place of refuge for Syrians?

Answer. We recognize and appreciate the tremendous challenges faced by countries in the region as individuals continue to flee Syria and seek asylum in neighboring countries. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to encourage Egyptian authorities to continue extending support and hospitality toward refugees from Syria and all who are fleeing conflict. UNHCR has registered almost 138,000 refugees in Egypt, but according to the Egyptian Government, there may be as many as 300,000 Syrian refugees in Egypt. Separately, there may be as many as 6,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria currently in Egypt. If confirmed, I will continue expressing our concerns about the climate of anti-Syrian and anti-Palestinian public sentiment in Egypt and urge the Egyptian Government to communicate to the Egyptian people the importance of protecting all vulnerable refugees.

RESPONSES OF DANA SHELL SMITH TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Terror Financing.—A large degree of funding for terrorist groups in the region, from Hamas to the Salafist and al-Qaeda inspired groups in Syria, comes from wealthy gulf benefactors.

- ◆ How big a problem is this in Qatar?
- ◆ What has the Qatari Government done to crack down on this, and is the Qatari Government committed to controlling private and charity funding streams?
- ◆ What will you do to expand our terrorist finance and money laundering cooperation with Qatar?

Answer. We engage regularly with Qatar and our other gulf partners on the issue of terror financing, but there is no doubt that more needs to be done. Syria is attracting more violent extremists the longer the conflict goes on. Qatar and other regional partners are working with us to support the moderate Syrian opposition and to work toward a political solution to ensure that Syria no longer serves as a magnet for violent extremists.

In recent years, we have seen some improvements in Qatar's counterterrorist financing efforts, including steps to improve its anti-money-laundering/counterterrorist financing legal framework. In 2012, the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force determined that Qatar had improved its anti-money-laundering/counterterrorist financing (AML/CTF) regime and was either "Compliant or Largely Compliant" with all of the Task Force's recommendations.

However, Qatar's monitoring of terrorist financing by Qatari individuals and charitable associations remains inconsistent, and we will not hesitate to act to disrupt terrorist financing networks. For example, in December 2013, the Treasury Department announced the designation of a Qatar-based financier who secured funds and provided material support for al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.

We remain committed to working with Qatar to confront ongoing terrorist financing and on strengthening its AML/CTF regimes. For example, we conducted an interagency training in early June for Qatari officials involved in the design and implementation of Qatar's CTF regime to improve capacity and coordination on counterterrorism financing. In the coming weeks, we will send an interagency delegation to a number of Gulf States, including Qatar, to improve our coordination on stemming the flow of foreign fighters to Syria. If confirmed, I will ensure that counterterrorism finance issues remain a priority of our bilateral engagement with the Government of Qatar.

Question. Labor Rights.—The system of kafala, or employer sponsorship, is prevalent in many GCC countries. Foreign workers under the kafala system are often subject to abuses such as wage theft, substandard housing, and dangerous working conditions. I have written letters to Secretary Kerry and International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) President Sepp Blatter highlighting my concerns. I was particularly alarmed by the deaths of 44 Nepalese workers in Qatar last year. The Qatari Government recently announced labor reforms that it says will "abolish" the kafala system but did not give any timeline for implementation.

- ◆ How will you engage the Qatari Government to ensure that these reforms are implemented, that protections for workers under Qatari law are enforced and that workers building infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup are not subjected to the same conditions that led to the deaths of those 44 Nepalese?

Answer. We have consistently raised concerns about the restrictive nature of Qatar's sponsorship system and encouraged more robust enforcement of labor and antitrafficking laws with senior Qatari officials. Advancing the protection of labor rights, particularly for migrant workers, is a priority of our diplomatic engagement.

In the past year, Qatar has taken some positive steps to address these issues, including cracking down on visa selling, doubling the number of labor inspectors, and blacklisting 2,000 companies for violations of the labor law. On May 14, the Government of Qatar (GoQ) announced that the ministerial cabinet had endorsed reform of the sponsorship system. The proposed reforms would eliminate no objection certificates, which prevent employees from switching jobs without approval, and amend the exit permit system such that the GoQ—rather than employers—would have the authority to prevent workers from departing the country. The reforms would also increase fivefold the fines for passport withholding.

The announcement did not provide a timeframe for implementation of the proposed changes, which must still undergo passage by the Shura Council. If confirmed, I will urge the implementation of these reforms and continue to encourage Qatari efforts to ensure the thorough protection of workers' fundamental labor rights in Qatar.

RESPONSES OF STUART E. JONES TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. Women's Rights in Iraq.—The Iraqi Cabinet has passed a personal status law that would effectively legalize child marriage and severely set back women's rights to divorce, inheritance, and child custody if passed by Parliament.

◆ If confirmed, how would you use your leverage as Ambassador to discourage Iraq from passing such a harmful law?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to raise—with the Government of Iraq and its Members of Parliament—our strong objections to this draft law. The Embassy will also continue to support civil society efforts to advocate for respect for the fundamental rights of all people including women, children, minorities, and individuals of all faiths.

We have previously expressed our concern regarding the draft law, which has not been enacted, as has the United Nations Mission in Iraq, and a wide range of Iraqi political, religious, and civil society leaders. It threatens to undermine constitutionally protected rights for women in Iraq and jeopardizes the rights and protection of children, especially girls.

Women's rights activists and nongovernmental organizations have also condemned the draft law as a significant step backward for women's and girls' rights in Iraq.

Question. Women in the Iraqi Justice System.—Women in Iraq face significant abuses throughout all stages of the criminal justice process—including during arrest, interrogation, trial, and imprisonment. These abuses have included illegal arrests, lack of protection for female prisoners, and sexual assault. It is clear that more must be done to protect Iraqi women from such abuses—particularly as these violations undermine the rule of law in Iraq.

◆ How do you plan to work with the Government of Iraq to build support for rule of law and ensure that women are afforded all the same protections as men?

Answer. I am aware of the reports of abuse of women in the criminal justice process and in prisons. If confirmed I will continue to raise our concerns about these problems with appropriate Iraqi Government officials at all levels. I will also consult with civil society and international organizations on these issues to ensure that we are kept informed.

Despite serious obstacles for women and girls' political participation in Iraq, we were heartened that Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission reported that 22 women were directly elected to the new Parliament, a significant increase from the 2010 election when only 5 women won seats by popular vote. We hope that this is a trend that will continue. In total, 82 of Iraq's 328 members of Parliament will be women based on a requirement that 25 percent of parliamentarians are women.

The State Department has historically provided \$10 million per year to support efforts to eliminate gender-based violence, protect women's rights, and empower women politically and economically in Iraq. To address reported abuses by security forces, a number of past and current programs focus on human rights training in prisons throughout southern Iraq, implementing the U.N. Convention against Torture and demanding accountability for human rights abuses throughout the country. If confirmed, I will work in partnership with Congress to ensure that this important

level of support continues. I will also work with the Government of Iraq to ensure that it understands the U.S. commitment to the rule of law and the equal rights for all persons, regardless of gender.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. U.S. Strategy to Respond to Gender-Based Violence.—The United States has made gender equality and efforts to combat gender-based violence a priority within its foreign policy.

♦ In light of the ongoing issues in Egypt, how can the United States work to utilize the tools and actions laid out in the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally to better respond to the situation in Egypt?

Answer. The United States, through our Embassy in Cairo, is working to utilize the tools and implement the actions outlined by the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally. This includes supporting the Egyptian Government's legislative responses to gender-based violence (GBV), training for special law enforcement units to respond to sexual assault cases, and supporting capacity-building programs for government and nongovernment stakeholders to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

For example, USAID in Egypt supports a U.N. Women-led program working to expand legal services for survivors of gender-based violence, launch a youth-led public awareness media campaign, and improve small-scale infrastructure in pilot communities, such as improved lighting in high-risk areas. Our USAID mission also plans to increase engagement with local Egyptian organizations working on matters related to gender-based violence to improve their sustainability and effectiveness. The Embassy plans to continue supporting programs aimed at deterring gender-based violence, including those that strengthen law enforcement capacity to more effectively prosecute GBV-related crimes. Through public awareness programs and professional exchanges, the Embassy is continuing to increase community participation in addressing the root causes of GBV. Continued close coordination with partners, such as U.N. Women and the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime, will allow the U.S. Government to continue supporting improved intergovernmental strategic planning, prevention, and training to prevent and respond to GBV.

If confirmed, I will strongly support this work and encourage the use of all possible tools and actions recommended by the Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV. I will continue to raise issues of gender-based violence in my engagement with the Egyptian Government, encouraging it to undertake serious efforts to end all forms of violence in Egypt—including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation—and work to end impunity for violence perpetrated against women and girls.

RESPONSES OF STUART E. JONES TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM UDALL

Question. ISIL's rapid expansion across Iraq is deeply troubling both for regional stability and the security of thousands of Americans working there. Maliki needs to reach out to marginalized groups in Iraq if a unified defense of Iraq's territory is going to be successful.

♦ How will you work with these different groups to ensure unified efforts are made within Iraq against ISIL?

Answer. We are deeply engaged in direct dialogue and active diplomatic strategy with the Prime Minister and all of Iraq's leaders on taking a holistic approach to fighting ISIL by working together to address social, political, and economic issues in addition to security cooperation to drive ISIL out from Mosul and surrounding areas. Our engagement includes working with all sides to urge that they take critical next steps so that a timely, inclusive government formation process in line with the Iraqi Constitution can continue. Without significant, demonstrated efforts by the government on these issues, ISIL will continue to exploit fissures within Iraqi society and leaders for its own gain. We are also working with Iraq's neighbors to encourage unified support for the government's counterterrorism efforts. Iraq held national elections on time April 30; the U.N. praised the elections as free and fair.

♦ How will you engage the international community in this aspect?

Answer. We are also working closely with the P3, Iraq's neighbors including Turkey, and other key players at the highest levels to support the Government of Iraq

(GOI) as they fight ISIL. The U.N. Security Council issued a statement today strongly condemning ISIL's incursion into Iraq and threw its support behind the GOI to combat terrorism. We are urging donors to support the U.N.'s humanitarian efforts in response to the estimated 500,000 individuals who have fled ISIL's recent advances in Ninewa and Salah ad-Din governorates, in addition to the nearly 480,000 who have fled violence in Anbar governorate since January.

- ◆ How will you work to ensure that the U.S. Embassy and our consulates are protected against the threat of ISIL's advance?

Answer. For a number of years, Mission Iraq has maintained a heightened security posture comprised of extensive physical security features, robust and well-armed Diplomatic Security officers, and the ability to be self-responding in the event of an emergency such as an attack. Our Embassy and consulates in Iraq, as with all U.S. Diplomatic Missions, have a highly trained and well-equipped contingent of DS agents under the Regional Security Officer (RSO). The Regional Security Offices also include personnel working under the World Wide Protective Services contract who staff protective security details and static guard positions.

Embassy Baghdad has a Marine Security Guard Detachment that is larger than that of most detachments assigned to U.S. missions. In addition to this robust security platform some additional U.S. Government security personnel were recently added to the staff in Baghdad. I am happy to discuss exact numbers of security personnel with you in a more appropriate setting. Like all other U.S. Diplomatic Missions, the Embassy and our consulates also conduct regular planning exercises for response to possible emergency situations, including evacuation.

In addition to having plans in place, Mission Iraq is well postured with its own assets to support evacuations or long-term sheltering in both permissive and non-permissive environments. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are in continuous communication with our personnel on the ground. We are corresponding regularly with the Government of Iraq to ensure that our sites remain safe for our staff.

Question. Water issues remain a major issue inside Iraq. The Tigris and Euphrates is drier than normal as a result of both drought and new dams upriver.

- ◆ How can the U.S. work to promote water conservation and improved management of resources and will you work with other U.S. agencies, as well as the national labs to help Iraq devise strategies to improve the management of water resources?

Answer. Partnering with the GOI on water resource management is a U.S. Government priority and there are a number of USG programs focused on this issue. For example, Iraq's Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Science & Technology (MOST) has asked for NASA assistance to study dust storms from space. MOST currently is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with NASA on this issue and is working on another with the U.S. Geological Survey to train Iraqi professionals on flood inundation, desertification, and sandstorm analysis. In the past, the State Department has provided \$1.5 million to the U.N. Development Programme for the establishment of a National Water Council and to support capacity-building on transboundary water cooperation. The intent of this project is to give the Iraqi Government the needed diplomatic and technical tools to effectively negotiate international transboundary water issues with neighboring countries. The State Department's Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Bureau is currently exploring engagement with Iraq on transboundary water issues through the U.N. Shared Waters and U.S. Water Partnership programs for FY 2014. Additionally, USAID provided \$10 million between 2012 and 2014 for a harvest program that included improving water usage for efficient irrigation.

We are open to leveraging the expertise of any U.S. department or agency—including the national labs—that can assist Iraq in better managing its water resources. As U.S. development and economic assistance to Iraq decreases, we are exploring options in which the GOI directly funds such programs in the future.

RESPONSES OF JAMES D. NEALON TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM UDALL

Question. As Ambassador, how will you address the root causes leading to the recent surge in minors migrating from Honduras to the U.S.? While putting pressure on our system to house and address each minor's individual case, the insecure conditions these children are fleeing are only getting worse. As chief of mission how will you prioritize and leverage each agency's involvement in Honduras as well direct

the resources of State and USAID to address these root causes including fear of gang violence, and inability to access education and livelihood opportunities. How will you engage the new Honduran Government more deeply into your efforts?

Answer. I am committed to supporting the U.S. response to the influx of unaccompanied children arriving at the Southwest border. Violence, gang recruitment, and lack of economic opportunity are among the root causes that drive people—adults and children—to emigrate from Honduras, along with the perceived economic opportunities in the United States. I share your concerns about the conditions in Honduras.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of Honduras to raise public awareness about the potential for child migrants to be exploited and to support messaging that makes clear the dangers of the journey. I will also encourage the Honduran Government to invest in providing sufficient and capable consular representation along the U.S. border and in Mexico to help respond to this humanitarian situation.

For the long-term, a sustainable solution requires a comprehensive approach to address issues of security, economic opportunity, and governance, all of which play a role in the migration of children and their parents. The Department of State and USAID have a broad range of programs intended to support host government efforts in these areas. If confirmed, I will work with the Honduran Government to continue addressing the complex root causes of migration and will work closely with the U.S. Congress to ensure our requests for future assistance are sufficient and targeted appropriately.

Question. I have long advocated for increased resources for the Western Hemisphere region, however the administration has again de-prioritized this region in relation to others in the President's budget. As Chairman Menendez illustrated during the hearing, we are seeing the repercussions of this through the thousands of migrants arriving in the U.S. from Central America, escaping one of the most violent countries in the world.

◆ How will programs in Honduras be impacted by the decreased request for the CARSI program in FY 2015? What changes will you advocate for in the FY 2016 request?

Answer. I am firmly committed to advancing U.S. engagement with the Western Hemisphere region, including, if confirmed, as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras. I understand the administration's FY 2015 request for the region places a strong emphasis on citizen security, the rule of law, and crime and violence prevention, which account for just under half of the total request.

The FY 2015 request for the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) reflects an assessment of existing resources and current rates of expenditure in some areas, but the CARSI request level reflects no decrease in priority. In addition to CARSI, the administration's request includes \$44.3 million for Development Assistance for USAID programming in Honduras. This assistance prioritizes addressing root causes of crime and insecurity, which lead to migration, complementing CARSI assistance.

If confirmed, I would assess U.S. assistance to Honduras and advocate for resources to advance U.S. objectives.

Question. What is the impact of human rights violations on the public by local security force units, and does impunity and failure to prosecute human rights violators increase the ability for local gangs or organized crime in Honduras to recruit and operate because of a lack of trust in law enforcement? How will you use the Leahy Law as a tool to address the well-documented human rights abuses in the country including against human rights defenders and public officials as noted by the State Department's Human Rights Report?

Answer. The high level of impunity for crimes against all Hondurans means there is little or no disincentive to committing a crime. When human rights abuses are committed by government authorities, this impunity can leave a perception in the public mind of institutional weakness or government tolerance of illegal activities. Either way, the result is greater difficulty deterring narco-trafficking, organized crime, and gangs.

Honduras continues to face significant challenges establishing strong democratic institutions, establishing a rule of law culture, attacking impunity and corruption, and ensuring a safe and prosperous future for Honduran citizens. The Honduran Government has made some efforts to change its trajectory, but more needs to be done. If confirmed, I commit to partnering with the U.S. Congress to assist Honduras to address these challenges. I will support efforts to increase accountability, promote the rule of law, and improve the capability of the Honduran Government

to protect the rights of its people. I will be an advocate for U.S. programs to train Honduran officials to protect against and effectively prosecute crime—exactly the skills they need to address the impunity that exists, stop the high levels of crime in their country, and build trust between law enforcement officials and the communities they serve.

In accordance with U.S. law and policy, including the Leahy law, the Department of State vets units and officers in Honduras who may receive assistance. We do not provide assistance to security force units when we have credible information that they have committed gross violations of human rights.

RESPONSES OF JAMES D. NEALON TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. I am concerned about the rule of law in Honduras, particularly corruption within the legal system. Pan-American Life Insurance Company (Pan-American), an American company with offices in Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, Kansas, and Minnesota, has experienced significant injustices at the hands of the Honduran Judiciary. Pan-American has attempted to resolve this matter through various diplomatic channels, but the courts of Honduras continue to enter judgments against Pan-American that are contrary to Honduran law, basic insurance tenants and governing policy provisions.

- ◆ 1. Have you been briefed on Pan-American's situation in Honduras?
- ◆ 2. I understand that at least two other U.S. Senators have written to the Honduran authorities on the harassment of Pan-American, but have yet to receive a response to their concerns. What concerns does this raise about Honduran authorities?
- ◆ 3. What are your thoughts on using visa revocation as a tool to curb corruption in Honduras?
- ◆ 4. What is your position on providing U.S. foreign assistance to countries in which the judiciary's integrity may be compromised at the highest levels?
- ◆ 5. If confirmed, would you agree to meet with Pan-American representatives to discuss this matter in detail?

Answer. I am aware that the Department of State and Embassy Tegucigalpa have been in touch with the offices of Senator Vitter and Senator Landrieu regarding the Pan-American case and that Ambassador Kubiske has spoken personally about the case to both members. Ambassador Kubiske has also raised the case on several occasions with the Honduran Government and judiciary to note our government's interests in U.S. companies receiving fair treatment in Honduran courts. If confirmed, I will meet with the Pan-American representatives and press the Honduran Government to answer the Senator's letters. I will also promote U.S. business interests in Honduras, including advocating for fair treatment of U.S. businesses and citizens in Honduras through promoting the use of applicable dispute settlement provisions of our Bilateral Investment Treaty and the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement.

The United States recognizes institutional weaknesses in Honduras' judicial system and supports efforts to increase accountability and promote the rule of law. U.S. assistance provides training, mentoring, and professionalization to Honduran officials and supports reforms to strengthen police, judicial, and rule of law institutions. If confirmed, I will continue to work in these areas and be an advocate for judicial independence in Honduras.

Concerning visas restrictions, the Department faithfully enforces the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) by which aliens are ineligible for visas based on criminal activity. Moreover, we have ample additional authority under Presidential Proclamation 7750 (2004) and section 7031(c) of the FY 2014 State Appropriations Act to impose restrictions based on significant corruption. The Department takes seriously allegations of corruption and reviews such allegations in order to determine whether credible evidence exists to justify revoking a visa or imposing visa restrictions under U.S. law.

RESPONSE OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTION
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. I want to raise with you an issue that I believe is incredibly important: ensuring that the Egyptian Government respects the rule of law regarding the abduction of American children. Having a child abducted by a current or former spouse to a foreign country is one of the most heartrending events a parent can face.

Not only does it deprive a child of the opportunity to have frequent contact with both of their parents, it does violence to our entire system of justice. People need to play by the rules—they can't be allowed to steal a child just because they don't like the decision a court makes regarding custody. And other countries need to respect the decisions of our courts.

Now, this is a global problem, and I look forward to the Foreign Relations Committee considering a bill this Congress to address international child abduction. But this problem appears to be especially acute in Egypt. Because Egypt is not a partner to the Hague Abduction Convention, it's more difficult for the State Department to reunite kids, many of whom are United States citizens, with their American parents. In fact, last year, there were 22 active custody disputes involving an American child in Egypt, and apparently half of the cases have been pending for at least 12 years. That is appalling.

One of those 22 cases involves one of my constituents, Colin Bower. Mr. Bower was married to an Egyptian citizen and had two wonderful little boys with her, Ramsay and Noor, both of whom are American citizens. In 2008, the marriage ended in divorce and an American court granted sole custody to Mr. Bower. A little under a year later, Mr. Bower's ex-wife unlawfully absconded to Egypt with the boys by making use of illegal passports and then got an Egyptian court to grant her custody.

Mr. Bower did everything he could to get his kids back. He got state and federal warrants issued for her arrest. He got Interpol to issue a red notice for her arrest. He even got an Egyptian court to grant him visitation rights every 2 weeks. Yet, every effort he's made to enforce even the Egyptian court order has been thwarted. He's traveled to Egypt 12 times to see his kids. Eight times he went to the appointed meeting place and waited for his boys. And 8 times they never arrived. It's been 5 years since Mr. Bower's boys were kidnapped and over two and a half since he has even seen them.

- ◆ If confirmed, will you commit to making the international parental child abduction case of *Noor and Ramsay Bower* a priority? Also, what concrete steps can you take as Ambassador to ensure that Egypt respects decisions of U.S. courts regarding child abduction cases?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make the abduction case of *Noor and Ramsey Bower* a priority. I will press members of the Egyptian Government at all levels to gain their cooperation in resolving the *Bower* case and all other child abduction cases involving Egypt, while also encouraging Egypt to accede to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Convention). The State Department and I share your concern regarding international parental child abduction (IPCA) and we share Congress' goals of preventing IPCA, returning children expeditiously to their countries of habitual residence, and strengthening and expanding membership in the Convention worldwide.

My understanding is that the State Department is currently aware of 19 IPCA cases in Egypt, including the case of *Noor and Ramsay Bower*, and senior State Department leaders have raised these cases with Egyptian Government officials at every opportunity to ensure the Egyptian Government understands the U.S. Government's concern for the welfare of U.S. citizens overseas, especially children, who are some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I also understand that the U.S. Embassy in Cairo has ongoing engagement with relevant offices in the Egyptian Government, such as the Good Intentions Subcommittee, to request their action on these cases and have discussed the case of *Noor and Ramsay Bower* specifically. The Office of Children's Issues in the Department of State is also in frequent contact with, and always available to, the left-behind parents and their representatives to discuss the status of their case and options for continuing action.

RESPONSES OF STUART E. JONES TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

IRANIAN OVERFLIGHTS

Question. Please describe the actions the Government of Iraq is taking to stop the flow of Iranian arms from going to the Syrian regime.

Answer. We know that Iran is supplying arms to the Syrian regime and violating the U.N. Security Council prohibition against selling or transferring arms and related materials, including through flights over Iraqi territory. Iraqi leaders have issued statements condemning the flow of foreign fighters and weapons through, and from, Iraqi territory. However, the Government of Iraq is not doing enough to prevent Iran from using its territory to supply the Assad regime, and we continue

to urge all senior Iraqi officials to either deny overflight requests or require flights to land in Iraq for credible inspections consistent with Iraq's international obligations.

Question. How is the U.S. continuing to apply pressure on Iraq to stop these overflights that are building and arming Iranian militias in Syria?

Answer. The Government of Iraq is not doing enough to prevent Iran from using its territory to supply the Assad regime and Iraqi Shia militants, and we are urging all senior Iraqi officials to either deny overflight requests or require flights to land in Iraq for credible inspections consistent with Iraq's international obligations. Secretary Kerry, and other senior U.S. officials, have consistently raised this issue with Iraqi officials, emphasizing the connection between the flow of weapons and the escalation of extremist violence in the region, particularly in Syria. If confirmed, I will continue to make it an issue of urgent concern and regular diplomatic engagement.

Question. How is the United States engaging with our gulf partners to stop these over flights?

Answer. In our senior-level engagements with our gulf partners, we are stressing that we are not satisfied with the Government of Iraq's inaction to prevent the use by Iran of Iraq's airspace to resupply the Assad regime, and that senior officials, including the Secretary, continue to raise this with Iraqi officials, emphasizing the connection between the flow of weapons and the escalation of extremist violence in the region, particularly in Syria. We have urged that Iraq either deny overflight requests for Iranian aircraft going to Syria, or require such flights to land in Iraq for credible inspections, consistent with its international legal obligations.

Question. What is the relationship between Iraq and Iran?

Answer. Despite decades of mutual mistrust stemming from the Iran-Iraq war, Iran continues to try and forge closer ties with Iraq—in the interests of neighborliness but mostly to expand and deepen its sphere of influence. There have been high-level exchanges of visits between the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, and Iranian leaders. Iraq is one of Iran's top-five trading partners, with bilateral trade between \$6–\$12 billion in 2013. Iran supplies about 11 percent of Iraq's electricity. The two countries have also signed an extradition treaty (this does not include the status of the Mujahedin-e Khalq members still in Iraq), but are still negotiating border issues going back to the 1975 Algiers Accord.

Question. What kind of influence does Iran have either politically or economically in Iraq?

Answer. While Iran continues to be an influential neighbor, Iraq does take actions that run counter to Iranian interests, such as increasing oil production just as Iranian exports were being taken off the market due to U.S. and EU sanctions. Had Iraq not done so, worldwide oil prices would have spiked, ultimately reducing the impact of sanctions on Iran and hurting U.S. consumers. On issues like Syria and nuclear proliferation, Iraq has demonstrated that it acts in its own interest. For example, Iraq has fully supported a negotiated political solution to the crisis in Syria, and the U.S. position on converting Syrian chemical weapons production facilities in Syria (Iraq, in fact, has an expert on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons staff). Iraq has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Additional Protocol, which requires inspections of nuclear facilities, and hosted the P5+1 talks in May 2012. Iraq has also publicly called to prevent flows of foreign fighters and weapons through Iraq.

Question. If the U.S. cannot stop these flights diplomatically, does Congress need to withhold foreign military sales to Iraq if these flights continue?

Answer. No; withholding foreign military sales risks reducing U.S. influence as Iraq engages in an important fight against ISIL. We are seeking to increase our influence with Iraq's leaders and this is a critical component. U.S. security assistance enables Iraq to better combat ISIL, which is an increasingly direct threat to the United States and our allies; U.S. assistance serves broader U.S. goals, too; limiting or conditioning it would limit our progress toward those goals. Even without the growing terrorism threat, U.S. security assistance provides an important vehicle for cementing the United States enduring partnership with Iraq. Security cooperation on critical systems, such as air defense, will provide a basis for a long-term relationship.

SECURITY SITUATION

Question. When did the United States, either through intelligence, diplomatic channels, or military analysis, become aware of the deteriorating security issue in Iraq?

Answer. We have maintained a close watch on Iraq's security situation since the standup of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in 2004. The threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its effect on Iraq's overall security situation was neither a surprise nor a sudden event. We have watched and warned of ISIL's growing strength and its threat to Iraq and U.S. interests in the region—and now to Europe and the U.S. homeland—since the group's resurgence in 2012 as a result of the escalating conflict in Syria.

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, we watched with growing concern as ISIL—formerly Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—took advantage of the escalating conflict to establish a safe-haven in Syria's eastern deserts. With ample resources, recruits, weapons, and training, ISIL slowly began to execute its strategy across the Syrian border into Iraq. Violence in Iraq began to increase toward the end of 2012, but did not accelerate until early 2013, including a marked rise in ISIL suicide bombings. These attacks increased throughout 2013, jeopardizing the political discourse in the country, further fueling mistrust from political leaders to ordinary citizens, and making the tangible reforms that Iraq needs to reconcile its society even harder to reach. Taking advantage of the instability it was causing, ISIL then seized parts of Anbar province including the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah in early January 2014, initiating what has been a constant counterterrorism counteroffensive by the Government of Iraq. Although ISIL has long operated in Mosul and northern Iraq, its recent, sudden, large-scale offensive there further escalated the fight, dramatically demonstrating the existential threat that we have been assisting the Government of Iraq to combat.

Question. What action, if any, did the administration take when it first learned of the deteriorating security situation?

Answer. As the ISIL threat increased, we took several steps over the last year to increase counterterrorism assistance to Iraq and to build a foundation for future, expanded cooperation. Military efforts alone will not defeat ISIL. We have encouraged a holistic counterterrorism approach with the Government of Iraq, fusing political and security efforts. We have urged the recruiting of tribal leaders and greater Sunni incorporation into the military ranks to reduce sectarian tensions.

To increase Iraq's military capabilities, we expanded training in Iraq and Jordan, provided military advice, enhanced information-sharing relationships, and sought opportunities to increase border security.

Additionally, we have expedited shipments of weapons, equipment, and ammunition to Iraq's military. Thanks to congressional support, recent shipments included the delivery of 300 Hellfire missiles, thousands of helicopter-fired rockets, thousands of rounds of tank ammunition, thousands of machine guns, grenades, flares, sniper rifles, M16 and M4 rifles to the Iraqi Security Forces. We also delivered additional Bell IA-407 helicopters late last year and 10 Scan Eagle surveillance platforms are on schedule for delivery this summer. The Iraqis have told us that our equipment and advice is making a critical difference. In particular, the Hellfire missiles are the most effective airborne weapon the Iraqis have, and they have been using them to great effect.

Question. When the President ordered the last withdrawal of troops from Iraq, did that improve or diminish our ability to predict changes in the security situation in Iraq?

Answer. The withdrawal of U.S. forces was consistent with the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. It honored our commitment to Iraqi sovereignty and began a new chapter in our partnership. The follow-on U.S. military forces discussed in 2011 was primarily a small training contingent that would not have had a significant impact on our ability to predict changes in Iraq's security situation.

Question. Do you anticipate that a similar deterioration of security will occur in Afghanistan once the United States withdrawals from Afghanistan in 2016?

Answer. We believe that at the end of 2016, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will be capable of maintaining security in Afghanistan with the continued international financial assistance pledged at the NATO summit in Chicago. The ANSF took the lead for security around the country in June 2013, have lost no significant ground to the insurgents since that time, and have won the trust of Afghan citizens in their ability to protect them, which was manifest in the high turnouts

for both rounds of the elections despite determined Taliban efforts to disrupt the electoral process and intimidate voters.

While the situation in Iraq is cautionary, it differs from that in Afghanistan in some important ways. In Afghanistan, the people overwhelmingly want us to stay, to the extent that every single contender in the Presidential election said he would sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).

In addition, the international community has made a range of significant commitments to Afghanistan that extend well into the future that will continue to shore up the military and civilian sides of the Afghan Government as well as support Afghan civil society.

COUNTERING ISIL

Question. Since the United States withdrew our troops in 2011, a security vacuum has emerged in Iraq. From the al-Qaeda fighters seizing Fallujah and Ramadi in January to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) gain of the second-largest city of Mosul to the declaration of a state of national emergency, Iraq is facing significant security challenges.

◆ How committed is Prime Minister Maliki to ending the strong al-Qaeda and ISIS backed insurgency that is taken place in the western part of Iraq?

Answer. Prime Minister Maliki has stated that he is dedicated to combating and driving back the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). However, it has long been the case that all Iraqi leaders, including Prime Minister Maliki, need to do more to address unresolved issues to better meet the needs of the Iraqi people. Unfortunately, Iraq's leaders have too often been unable to overcome the mistrust and sectarian differences that have long been simmering, creating vulnerabilities within the Iraqi Government as well as its security forces.

ISIL, the primary threat to Iraq's stability, has an ideology that has little to do with Iraqi domestic politics and no appeal to the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people. ISIL's aim is to take territory and terrorize the Iraqi people, regardless of sect, as it seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate from Lebanon to Baghdad.

We support Iraqi efforts to implement a coordinated approach to effectively address the security and political situations. Nobody has an interest in seeing terrorists gain a foothold inside of Iraq, and nobody is going to benefit from seeing Iraq descend into chaos. Our focus is on the Iraqi people, and we urge all Iraqi leaders across the political spectrum to unite, put differences aside, and stand together against the threats they face.

Question. What steps is the administration willing to take to address the reemergence of al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq?

Answer. The United States has been engaging in intensive and active diplomacy inside Iraq, across the region, and with the international community since this crisis erupted. We are coordinating with our international partners and countries in the region on next steps and how we can effectively help Iraq push back against ISIL's aggression.

While it is evident that Iraq needs assistance to break ISIL's momentum, there is no military solution that will solve Iraq's problems. Any action we take would have to be done in conjunction with a serious and sincere effort by Iraqi leaders to govern in a nonsectarian manner; promote stability and unity among Iraq's diverse population; build and invest in the capacity of Iraq's Security Forces; and address the legitimate grievances of Iraq's Sunni, Kurd, and Shia communities. No short-term assistance we might provide—to include military action—will succeed absent a serious Iraqi political effort.

CAPTURED WEAPONS

Question. Media reports indicate that terrorist fighters were able to gain arms supplied by the United States during the capture of Iraq's second-largest city yesterday.

◆ Who has these weapons?

Answer. We are concerned by the reports of captured U.S. military equipment captured from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). We are working to confirm what material may have fallen into the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) hands. We are also following up on reports that Kurdish Peshmerga forces may have secured some of the equipment left behind by the Iraqi Army.

At this time, we do not have information indicating that the loss of any equipment would constitute a violation of our agreements with Iraq regarding security and end-use of U.S.-provided equipment. However, we are aggressively following up on the

issue. Halting the transfer of defense articles to the ISF because of these setbacks, though, would only decrease ISF capability and willingness to fight an enemy that endangers the stability of the region as well as our own national security.

We take end-use monitoring of all U.S.-provided equipment very seriously. Our Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) works closely with senior Iraqi Ministry of Defense leadership to stress the importance of responsible use and stringent management of all weapons systems.

Question. What weapons have the terrorist fighters obtained?

Answer. The situation on the ground in Iraq is fluid, and we do not have confirmation of what may have fallen into ISIL's hands. Initial reports indicate that ISIL captured U.S. manufactured small arms, associated ammunition, and HMMWVs. We have not seen credible reports that ISIL captured any U.S. manufactured heavy combat equipment like M1A1 tanks or helicopters, although there are reports that ISIL captured some of Iraq's older, Russian-made tanks.

Question. How capable are the terrorist fighters and the ISIS of effectively using those weapons and equipment?

Answer. We assess that ISIL fighters are highly effective at employing small arms, crew-served weapons, and light tactical vehicles. They are likely less effective at using more complex weapons systems that require advanced operator and crew training as well as significant maintenance. ISIL would likely not be able to effectively employ advanced U.S. weapons systems like M1A1 tanks or helicopters. U.S. equipment, although the best in the world, requires advanced training, frequent maintenance, and a steady supply of spare parts—none of which ISIL possesses.

Question. Do you believe that these weapons will make their way to Syria and support the Assad regime?

Answer. Although ISIL may take some of the reportedly captured weapons to Syria, it is highly unlikely that any of the captured equipment will be used to support the Assad regime. ISIL is a violent Sunni extremist terrorist group with the stated goal of overthrowing the Assad regime and installing an Islamic caliphate from Lebanon to Baghdad. ISIL would employ any captured weapons against the Assad regime in Syria and against the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi people in Iraq.

GTMO DETAINEES

Question. As you know, Jordanian officials recently rearrested a former Guantanamo detainee named Osama Abu Kabir for conducting terrorist activity. Kabir was initially picked up in Afghanistan in November 2001 and subsequently transferred to Guantanamo Bay. The United States at the recommendation of the Joint Task Force-GTMO released Kabir to Jordan in 2007 even though he was considered a "high risk."

◆ Given your firsthand experience as an ambassador to a country that has accepted high-risk Guantanamo Bay detainees, what are some of the lessons learned that should be applied to any future transfers?

Answer. The USG has implemented a series of "lessons learned" from the early transfers from Guantanamo. All detainees currently designated for transfer have been extensively reviewed through an interagency process—comprised of military, national security, intelligence, law enforcement, counterterrorism, and foreign policy experts—and have been unanimously approved for transfer by the six agencies responsible for that review. This rigorous, updated review given to each detainee has resulted in a significantly lower recidivism rate than that prior to the 2009–10 interagency review process. We also obtain appropriate security assurances from the receiving nations.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT STEPHEN BEECROFT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

EGYPTIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Question. How would you characterize the bilateral relationship between Egypt and Russia?

Answer. The two countries maintain decades-old economic and military ties, with Russia a major source of tourists for Egypt and also a supplier of military equipment, primarily for air defense.

Question. What is the reason for the recently increasing cooperation on energy, trade, and arms sales between Egypt and Russia?

Answer. While there has been press speculation on increased activity between Egypt and Russia in areas such as arms sales, we have seen no confirmation of these claims. Even if the speculation is accurate, Egypt already has a long-standing relationship with Russia, and such cooperation would not represent a substantial change in that relationship.

If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize to Egyptian officials the benefits of the U.S.-Egypt relationship to advancing our shared interests.

Question. Do Egypt's expanding military and economic ties with Russia signal a larger shift in Egyptian foreign policy?

Answer. While there has been press speculation on increased activity between Egypt and Russia, we have seen no confirmation of these claims. Egypt has a long-standing relationship with Russia on a variety of mutual interests, including economic and military ones, and such cooperation would not represent a substantial change in that relationship, nor would it be an area of concern for us. Egyptian officials have repeatedly told us that they value the U.S.-Egypt relationship, and a relationship with the United States provides unique benefits and capabilities not available through other partners.

If confirmed, I will continue to press Egyptian officials on the benefits of the U.S.-Egypt relationship to advancing our shared interests, and I will make myself available to Congress to provide updates on the state of our relations with Egypt.

ASSISTANCE

Question. Is U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt still in the U.S. national interest? Why or why not?

Answer. All U.S. assistance to Egypt, both military and economic assistance, supports the key U.S. interests of stability in Egypt and along the Egyptian-Israeli border; countering transnational threats, such as terrorism and weapons trafficking; ensuring safe Suez transit; promoting inclusive democratic institutions and protection of universal human rights; and supporting broad-based economic stability and growth. Continuing assistance to support these objectives—while also regularly reviewing how our assistance can better support our goals—remains in the U.S. interest.

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on ways our assistance can best be used to promote U.S. interests in Egypt.

Question. Do you support reinstating all of the U.S. foreign assistance to Egypt? Which U.S. financial assistance is the most critical to the Government of Egypt?

Answer. I support assistance to Egypt which is determined to best serve U.S. interests. As part of those interests, the United States has a pressing need to address Egypt's most critical sources of instability: its economy, particularly the need for private sector-led growth and youth employment, and its lack of sustainable democratic institutions. Our programs support basic and higher education; job creation; private sector development; democracy and civil society promotion; and improving health outcomes. Our FMF supports Egypt in its counterterrorism and border security efforts, including in the Sinai, adding to our ongoing counterterrorism and nonproliferation efforts supported through other assistance accounts. Our ongoing assistance review will also inform future assistance plans.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on advancing U.S. interests in Egypt, including through our assistance programs.

Question. What conditions need to be attached to U.S. foreign assistance to the Government of Egypt?

Answer. While the Department of State does not support conditioning U.S. foreign assistance, the administration made clear the importance of credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected, civilian government to reviews of assistance to Egypt and release of held defense items. We are continuing to urge the Egyptian Government to make progress along those lines, including by urging President el-Sisi to establish transparent, accountable, and responsive democratic institutions, based on rule of law and respect for the universal rights of all Egyptians, which will allow the participation of all voices and overcome the current political and social polarization in Egypt.

If confirmed, I look forward to providing updates on the situation in Egypt and will consult with Congress closely as part of the ongoing assistance review.

EGYPTIAN ECONOMY

Question. Is the Government of Egypt at risk of default?

Answer. The Government of Egypt has not provided indications that it is considering default, and they have not defaulted in recent years when faced with similar fiscal pressures. It is true that Egypt continues to face economic challenges, including high expenditures, particularly subsidy costs, which are causing fiscal deficits to rise. External imbalances are also putting pressure on foreign currency reserves, and low economic growth has been exacerbated by disruptions in manufacturing and tourism. Egypt also continues to finance the deficit with domestic T-bills and Central Bank financing, which creates higher interest obligations for the government and poses an increased risk of inflation. Recent disbursements from the gulf have helped to temporarily relieve fiscal and exchange rate pressures.

If confirmed, I will continue the State Department's work of emphasizing to the Government of Egypt that sustainable and credible reforms will set the stage for long-term stability and growth. I will work with our gulf partners and international financial institutions to emphasize a common call for reforms so that Egypt can move quickly to reduce its fiscal deficit and address external imbalances.

Question. What issues must be addressed by the Government of Egypt in order to stabilize their internal security and improve their economic growth?

Answer. The U.S. Government is urging Egypt to undertake credible and sustainable economic reforms to spur private sector-led growth, attract investment, and create jobs, especially for Egypt's youth. We are also urging the Egyptian Government to address its lack of inclusive and sustainable democratic institutions and to guarantee fundamental human rights as a means of combating radicalization and improving internal security.

If confirmed, I will emphasize to Egyptian officials that issues of democracy, human rights, economic growth and development, security, and stability are all inextricably linked.

REFORMS AND VISION

Question. What is President Sisi's vision for the future and top priorities?

Answer. In his inauguration speech and initial statements, President el-Sisi made clear that his top priorities are strengthening the state, restoring security, combating corruption, promoting economic growth, and respecting human rights. He also noted that he planned to protect the rights of, and govern for, all Egyptians. As President el-Sisi will surely be presented with multiple competing interests, he must seek to build institutions that will ensure all Egyptians can participate in the political process and provide clarity on Egypt's national priorities.

If confirmed, I will work with President el-Sisi and his government to identify and refine our shared interests, and I will seek practical and effective ways that we can work together to achieve our common objectives. This includes working with the Egyptian Government to help demonstrate the benefits of pursuing political and economic reform.

Question. How would you characterize the current state of religious freedom, freedom of speech, right to assembly, and the rule of law in Egypt?

Answer. The Department of State and broader administration have repeatedly noted concerns about the current restrictive environment in Egypt, including on freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion and on issues of due process. Egypt's new constitution, passed in January 2014, does guarantee basic freedoms, such as freedom of religion and the rights of women, but leaves much room for legislative and judicial interpretation that could curtail those freedoms. Both the State Department and the White House have consistently expressed concerns about the restrictive political environment in Egypt, including on limits to freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression. In addition, the United States has made clear that it is the Egyptian Government's responsibility to ensure every citizen is afforded due process.

I believe ensuring these rights is an essential element of any successful democracy and necessary for Egypt's stability and prosperity. Should I be confirmed as Ambassador, I will urge Egypt's leaders to ensure these freedoms for all Egyptians and press for the government to make good on its promise to govern inclusively, protect freedoms of the press, and allow open debate and free flow of information.

Question. What is your assessment of the current Egyptian judicial system?

Answer. The State Department has noted that Egypt's judicial system functions extremely slowly and is subject, in some cases, to political influence. Additionally,

Egypt's new constitution permits military trials for civilians, which the United States has consistently opposed. We are also deeply concerned by the use of mass trials that deny individualized justice and due process and the preliminary death sentences against hundreds of people without due process. An independent and impartial judiciary is essential to any democracy and to the protection of individuals' rights and freedoms. It assures decisions based on law, rather than politics, and on democratic principles rather than current events.

If confirmed, I would continue U.S. engagement with the Egyptian Government and society on the crucial role that judicial systems play in a democracy and on the government's responsibility to afford every citizen due process.

Question. What actions would you take to address the continued use of mass trials and sentencing in Egypt?

Answer. The White House and Secretary have both made clear that the denial of individualized justice and due process through mass trials and sentencing in Egypt is unconscionable, defying even the most basic standards of international justice. Mass trials and sentencing, including decisions by an Egyptian court to issue preliminary death sentences to hundreds of people, cannot be reconciled with Egypt's obligations under international human rights law.

If confirmed, I will make clear our position to the Egyptian Government that they have the responsibility to ensure every citizen is afforded due process. While we respect that the Egyptian judiciary is a separate institution from the executive branch, I will urge Egypt's leaders to take a stand against proceedings that deny defendants individualized justice or violate due process and basic standards of international justice.

IRANIAN OVERFLIGHTS

Question. As Ambassador to Iraq, what specific actions did you take to apply pressure on Iraq to stop Iranian overflights that are building and arming Iranian militias in Syria? What actions were the most effective? What actions were the least effective?

Answer. Despite repeatedly declaring that it will not allow any party to transport arms and related materials through its airspace to Syria, the Government of Iraq has failed to take adequate steps to prevent Iran from overflying its territory to supply the Assad regime. Along with Secretary Kerry and other U.S. Government officials, I consistently urged the Prime Minister and senior Iraqi officials to either deny overflight requests or require flights to land in Iraq for credible inspections consistent with Iraq's international obligations.

Secretary's Kerry's visit to Iraq in March 2013 as well as Prime Minister Maliki's meeting with the President in Washington, DC, later that year resulted in a temporary increase in Iraq's inspections of flights bound for Syria.

In a few specific cases, we were able to provide detailed information in advance regarding flights carrying objectionable cargoes, and the Iraqi Government was generally more cooperative in denying overflight. We continue to engage every level of the Iraqi Government on this very important issue and to press them to fulfill their international obligations to deny overflight clearance or require aircraft to land for inspections.

Question. Why has the Government of Iraq failed to stop the flow of Iranian arms from going to the Syrian regime?

Answer. Despite statements from Iraqi leaders condemning the flow of foreign fighters and weapons through and from Iraqi territory, we know that Iran continues to supply arms to the Syrian regime in violation of the U.N. Security Council prohibition against selling or transferring arms and related materials through flights over Iraqi territory.

Iraqi leaders have cited Iraq's lack of an air interdiction capability, stating they have neither fighter aircraft nor ground-based interceptors that could defend Iraq's airspace and force any transiting aircraft to land for inspections. Additionally, senior Iraqi officials have argued that the collapse of the Assad regime would create an even greater security vacuum and strengthen ISIL, which would further increase the ongoing terrorist threat to Iraq.

Question. As Ambassador to Iraq, how did you engage with our gulf partners to stop these overflights?

Answer. I frequently met with foreign ambassadors resident in Baghdad, including those ambassadors resident from Gulf States, and urged them to engage the Iraqi Government and press it to prevent the use of Iraq's airspace to resupply the Assad regime.

Question. What is the relationship between Iraq and Iran?

Answer. Despite decades of mutual mistrust stemming from the Iran-Iraq war, Iran continues to try and forge closer political and economic ties with Iraq in part to expand and deepen its sphere of influence. There have been high-level visits between Iranian leaders and the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government. Iraq is one of Iran's top-five trading partners, with bilateral trade of approximately \$6 billion in 2013. Iran also supplies about 11 percent of Iraq's electricity. The two countries have also signed an extradition treaty (this does not include the Mujahedin-e Khalq members still in Iraq), and recently resumed negotiating border issues going back to the 1975 Algiers Accord.

Question. What kind of influence does Iran have either politically or economically in Iraq?

Answer. As noted in the answer to the previous question, Iran and Iraq have economic and political relations. They also have significant disagreements over border, water, investment, visa, and other issues. For example, while Iran is an influential neighbor, Iraq does take actions that run counter to Iranian interests, such as increasing oil production just as Iranian exports were being taken off the market due to U.S. and EU sanctions. Had Iraq not done so, worldwide oil prices would have spiked, hurting U.S. consumers and likely leading to a reduction in the impact of sanctions on Iran. In another example, Iraq has fully supported the U.S. position on converting Syrian chemical weapons production facilities in Syria. (Iraq, in fact, has an expert on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons staff.) Iraq has also ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Additional Protocol, which requires inspections of nuclear facilities.

SECURITY SITUATION

Question. What was the security situation on the ground in Iraq when President Obama withdrew the last American troops from Iraq?

Answer. Although dramatically improved since the 2007 troop surge, Iraq remained a violent country when U.S. military forces departed in December 2011. Approximately 4,400 Iraqis were killed each year in 2011 and 2012, most in attacks by violent extremist groups led by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) predecessor, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). While this violence was persistent and targeted, it did not threaten the stability of the state or threaten to rekindle civil war.

However, 2011 and 2012 also witnessed the escalating civil conflict in Syria, inflamed by regional rivalry and opportunism by terrorist groups. AQI—rebranding to call itself ISIL—reemerged in Syria as one of the most organized and lethal terrorist groups exploiting the conflict and loss of state authority there. Primarily focused in Syria in 2012, ISIL was able to reconstitute itself from the losses it had suffered against U.S. military and Iraqi Security Forces, setting the stage for the group to shift its resources and focus back to Iraq in 2013. Flush with resources, recruits, weapons, and training, ISIL slowly began to execute increasingly sophisticated and frequent attacks inside Iraq from its safe-havens in Syria. Violence in Iraq ticked up toward the end of 2012, but did not accelerate until early 2013, including a marked rise in suicide bombings.

Question. At what point did you first determine that there was a significant problem of security deterioration in Iraq?

Answer. Although the U.S. interagency had been watching ISIL with growing concern since the start of the civil war in Syria, in early 2013 we began to see ISIL shift more of its resources and focus from Syria to Iraq. In 2012, Iraq witnessed an average of 5–10 ISIL suicide attacks per month. By the summer of 2013, Iraq was averaging 30–40 suicide attacks per month, which were increasingly coordinated and effective attacks. On March 14, 2013, for example, five ISIL suicide bombers attacked and took hostages in the Ministry of Justice in Baghdad, controlling the building for several hours before detonating themselves. This was the first in a series of sophisticated military-style operations throughout 2013, with suicide bombers used to clear a path, followed by well-trained fighters to take and hold an objective.

These attacks increased throughout 2013, devastating the political discourse in the country, further fueling mistrust from political leaders to ordinary citizens, and making the tangible reforms that Iraq needed to reconcile its society even harder to reach. Taking advantage of the instability it was causing, ISIL then seized parts of Anbar province including the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah in early January 2014, intensifying what has been a constant counterterrorism offensive by the Government of Iraq. Although ISIL has long operated in Mosul and northern Iraq, its

recent, sudden, large-scale offensive there further escalated the fight, dramatically demonstrating the existential threat that we have been assisting the Government of Iraq to combat.

Question. What action, if any, did you take when you determined that the security situation in Iraq had deteriorated?

Answer. As the ISIL threat increased, we took several steps to increase counterterrorism assistance with Iraq and to build a foundation for future, expanded security cooperation. Military efforts alone cannot defeat ISIL. We have encouraged a holistic counterterrorism approach with the Government of Iraq, fusing political and security efforts. We have urged the recruitment of tribal leaders and greater Sunni incorporation into the military ranks to reduce sectarian tensions. In early 2014, Prime Minister Maliki pledged that Sunni tribal fighters injured or killed in the conflict with ISIL would receive the same benefits as members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

To increase Iraq's military capabilities, we expanded training in Iraq and Jordan, provided military advice, enhanced information-sharing relationships, and sought opportunities to increase border security.

Additionally, with the support of Congress, we have expedited shipments of weapons, equipment, and ammunition to Iraq's military. Recent shipments included the delivery of 300 Hellfire missiles, thousands of helicopter-fired rockets, thousands of rounds of tank ammunition, thousands of machine guns, grenades, flares, sniper rifles, and M16 and M4 rifles to the Iraqi Security Forces. We also delivered additional Bell IA-407 helicopters late last year and 10 Scan Eagle surveillance platforms are on schedule for delivery this summer. The Iraqis have told us that our equipment and advice is making a critical difference. In particular, the Hellfire missiles are the most effective airborne weapon the Iraqis have, and they have been using them to great effect.

Question. When the President ordered the last withdrawal of troops from Iraq, did that improve or diminish our ability to predict changes in the security situation in Iraq?

Answer. The withdrawal of U.S. forces was consistent with the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. It honored our commitment to Iraqi sovereignty and began a new chapter in our partnership. The follow-on U.S. military force discussed in 2011 was a primarily a small training contingent that would not have had a significant impact on our ability to predict changes in Iraq's security situation.

Question. Based on your previous experience as Ambassador to Iraq, what are your recommendations to prevent a similar deterioration of security in Afghanistan once the United States withdraws its troops from Afghanistan in 2016?

Answer. We believe that at the end of 2016, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will be capable of maintaining security in Afghanistan with the continued international financial assistance pledged at the NATO summit in Chicago. The ANSF took the lead for security around the country in June 2013, have lost no significant ground to the insurgents since that time, and have won the trust of Afghan citizens in their ability to protect them, which was manifest in the high turnouts for both rounds of the elections despite determined Taliban efforts to disrupt the electoral process and intimidate voters.

While the situation in Iraq is cautionary, it differs from that in Afghanistan in some important ways. The withdrawal of our forces from Iraq in 2011 was consistent with the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement signed in late 2008, honoring our commitment to Iraqi sovereignty. We could not reach agreement on key issues that would allow our troops to stay in Iraq, the people did not want U.S. forces to remain, and it was the mutual decision of both countries to start a new chapter in our partnership under the Strategic Framework Agreement. By contrast, in Afghanistan, the people overwhelmingly want us to stay, to the extent that every single contender in the Presidential election said he would sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).

In addition, the international community has made a range of significant commitments to Afghanistan that extend well into the future that will continue to shore up the military and civilian sides of the Afghan Government as well as support Afghan civil society.

RESPONSES OF DANA SHELL SMITH TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. GTMO Recidivism.—In March 2014, the Director of National Intelligence released the most recent recidivism rate on Guantanamo detainees who have been released. Out of the total of 614 transferred detainees, 104 are confirmed to have reengaged in hostilities and 74 are strongly suspected of returning to the fight. We are now at a 29-percent recidivism rate for released GTMO detainees.

- ◆ With a 29-percent recidivism rate, do you believe releasing five high-level Taliban operational commanders is in the interest of U.S. national security and the security of our allies?

Answer. The administration's policy is clear: we will not transfer any detainee from Guantanamo unless the threat the detainee may pose to the United States or U.S. persons or interests will be sufficiently mitigated. The Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the President's national security team, determined that the transfer was in the national security interest of the United States and that the threat posed by the detainees to the United States or U.S. persons or interests would be substantially mitigated. Although we cannot publicly detail all of the assurances we received from the Government of Qatar, they were sufficient to meet these requirements. The national security team was unanimous in endorsing this transfer.

The previous administration transferred over 500 detainees from Guantanamo. This administration has now transferred 89 detainees. There are 149 detainees remaining at Guantanamo, including 78 eligible for transfer. The DNI has concluded that 18.6 percent of detainees transferred by the prior administration have been confirmed, under the IC's definition, to have engaged in terrorist or insurgent activities and an additional 13.5 percent are suspected of having done so. The DNI has found that only 6.1 percent of detainees transferred under this administration have been confirmed to have engaged in terrorist or insurgent activities, with another 2.4 percent suspected of having done so. The dramatic reduction in reengagement rate—over 90 percent of detainees transferred in this administration are not confirmed or even suspected of having reengaged—is a reflection of the President's strong and continuing commitment to transferring detainees from Guantanamo Bay responsibly and consistent with our national security interests.

The President's position is clear: The Guantanamo facility weakens our national security by wasting our resources, damaging our relationships with key allies and partners, and emboldening violent extremists—and that this administration will continue to pursue appropriate dispositions for the detainees remaining, based on the facts and circumstances of each case and consistent with our national security interests. This includes transferring detainees abroad when the threat the detainee may pose can be sufficiently mitigated and when consistent with our humane treatment policy.

Question. In your preparation for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Qatar, have you been briefed on any of the security measures that will be put in place by the Qatari Government to prevent the five recently released Taliban detainees from returning to the battlefield?

Answer. Following completion of the transfers and prior to my confirmation hearing, I was able to view the classified U.S.-Qatar Memorandum of Understanding governing the transfers. This MOU has also been made available to Members.

Question. United Nations War Crimes.—Two of the five Taliban detainees are wanted by the United Nations in connection with possible war crimes that include the murder of thousands of Shiite Muslims in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban.

- ◆ Has the United States ever knowingly released a detainee that is wanted by the United Nations for possible war crimes?
- ◆ Do you believe it is appropriate for the United States to release individuals that are wanted by the United Nations for committing war crimes?

Answer. As I have been briefed, the United Nations has neither established, nor authorized, any tribunal that would have jurisdiction over war crimes committed in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the United Nations has not undertaken criminal investigations, nor has it sought or obtained arrest warrants for individuals accused of war crimes in Afghanistan and thus we know of no individuals who are wanted by the United Nations for war crimes committed in Afghanistan.

Question. Qatar Terrorism Financing.—According to the State Department 2013 Country Reports on Terrorism, "Qatar's monitoring of private individuals' and charitable associations' contributions to foreign entities remained inconsistent. Qatari-

based terrorist fundraisers, whether acting as individuals or as representatives of other groups, were a significant terrorist financing risk and may have supported terrorist groups in countries such as Syria."

- ◆ While Qatar has taken steps to improve its terrorism financing laws and enforcement, do you believe there are security measures in place to prevent the Taliban Five from using Qatar as a fundraising safe haven?

Answer. The administration's policy is clear: we will not transfer any detainee from Guantanamo unless the threat the detainee may pose to the United States or U.S. persons or interests will be sufficiently mitigated. The Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the President's national security team, determined that these transfers were in the national security interest of the United States and that the threat posed by the detainees to the United States or U.S. persons or interests would be substantially mitigated. Although we cannot publicly detail all of the assurances we received from the Government of Qatar, they were sufficient to meet these requirements. In addition to the travel ban, the transferred individuals will be subject to security measures in Qatar that will substantially mitigate the risk they might pose to U.S. interests. We are confident that the Qataris will enforce the restrictions agreed upon and these individuals will be restricted from activities that could pose a threat to our national security.

Question. Qatar Capabilities to Mitigate the Risk.—In 2005, a Guantanamo detainee was transferred to Kuwait with the promise that the country would mitigate the risk of him returning to terrorist activity. In 2008, he exploded a truck bomb near an Iraqi army base, killing 13 Iraqi soldiers and himself.

- ◆ In what ways is Qatar more capable than Kuwait of mitigating the risk that a transferred Guantanamo detainee may reengage in terrorist activity?

Answer. Although we cannot publicly detail all of the assurances we received from the Government of Qatar, in addition to a travel ban, the transferred individuals will be subject to security measures in Qatar that will substantially mitigate the risk they might pose to the United States or U.S. persons or interests. We are confident that the Qataris will enforce the restrictions agreed upon and these individuals will be restricted from activities that could pose a threat to our national security.

Question. In your written testimony, you stated: "We are confident that the security measures that have been put in place, including restrictions placed on the activities of the individuals, will substantially mitigate any threat that the individuals may pose to our national security."

- ◆ Please describe the specific security measures that have been put in place.
- ◆ What restrictions are placed on the activities of the individuals?
- ◆ What specific requirements did the United States request from the Government of Qatar?
- ◆ Were all of the security measures requested by the United States agreed to and implemented prior to the release of the detainees?

Answer. While we cannot publicly detail all of the assurances we received from the Government of Qatar, we required that certain security measures be put in place to substantially mitigate the threat that these individuals may pose to the United States and our interests. Those demands were met, and we are confident that the Qataris will enforce the restrictions agreed upon and these individuals will be restricted from activities that pose a threat to our national security. The classified U.S.-Qatar Memorandum of Understanding governing the transfers has been made available to Members.

Question. Are you confident that these five Taliban detainees will not pose any threat to our national security after 1 year when they are fully free to travel and return to the fight?

Answer. The President and his national security team, including the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and the Director of National Intelligence, all concurred that the assurances we received from the Qataris were sufficient to substantially mitigate the threat these individuals may pose to the United States or U.S. persons or interests. That is not to say they may never rejoin the Taliban movement. But the threat they may pose to the National Security of the United States has been mitigated to the satisfaction of our top military commanders and national security advisors.

This is not a decision the President made lightly; many actions were taken to restrict the activities of these individuals. As the President said, we have confidence that we will be in a position to use appropriate tools to pursue these individuals if, in fact, they are engaging in activities that threaten our national security. The President would not have determined that the transfer should go forward if he thought it was contrary to U.S. national security interests.