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**NOMINATIONS OF TODD D. ROBINSON
AND LESLIE ANN BASSETT**

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2014

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

Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala
Leslie Ann Bassett, of California, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tom Udall presiding.

Present: Senators Udall, Kaine, and McCain.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TOM UDALL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator UDALL. I call this nomination hearing to order. Today we meet to consider two nominations for the Western Hemisphere: first, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Mr. Todd D. Robinson, to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala; and second, the Deputy Chief of Mission to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, Korea, Leslie Ann Bassett, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay.

Both nominees are Career Foreign Service officers who currently hold the rank of minister-counselor. Both have extensive experience in the Western Hemisphere, which will be needed to address many of the pressing issues of importance to the United States and the regions they will serve.

In Paraguay, if confirmed, Ms. Bassett will be confronted with issues surrounding economic development, counternarcotics, corruption, and governance reform, as well as sticky issues of land reform and indigenous rights. Furthermore, she will need to address the issues of terrorism and the threat of terrorism in the triborder region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

Like my home State of New Mexico, Paraguay is home to indigenous tribes. The Paraguayan population itself is a large mix of Spanish and Guarani Indians, many of whom are of mixed descent. In fact, 90 of the population speaks Guarani. This relatively poor and inland country has had a very difficult political history, including decades of dictatorship, in the last century. Most recently, the

impeachment of the former President, Fernando Lugo, in 2012 raised many questions about the state of Paraguayan democracy. With the help of the Organization of American States, Paraguay held elections in 2013 and elected the current President, Horatio Cartes.

Mr. Robinson, if confirmed, you will be representing the United States in a country that has experienced civil war, dictatorships, and now is in the throes of increasing gang violence, economic stagnation, and a resultant migration problem that is spreading throughout the hemisphere, including in my home State of New Mexico, where many of the immigrants are being held in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, New Mexico.

In order to deal with this most recent crisis, you will need to first address the dangers of traveling north to the United States. To the families and children that may be listening, this journey is dangerous. You should not undertake this journey to the United States or to Mexico. I have been briefed by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, FLETC, and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection regarding the individuals undergoing removal proceedings and I can positively say that, despite what you may have heard, there is no amnesty for individuals once they reach the United States.

While it is easy to concentrate on the impacts of this side of the border, you will also need to deal with the underlying causes surrounding the migrations of children and families outside of Central America. Guatemala, like other countries, is in the area known as the northern triangle. It is one of the most violent countries in the world, with a rate of homicides of 34 homicides per 100,000 people, narcotics trafficking and rampant gang violence and a population of distrustful law enforcement authorities due to a history of corruption and abuse.

It should not be surprising that some of you believe that the dangerous trek to the United States would be worth the risk. I believe strongly that not only do we need to address issues on this side of the border, which includes passing comprehensive immigration reform and strengthening the border, but that we need to stop turning a blind eye to a region that has continued to receive diminished attention in multiple administrations. We need to put together a comprehensive plan which helps the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, better deal with violent crime and counter-narcotics, governance and corruption issues, human rights and judicial issues, and economic development.

Until that happens, I believe that families will continue to see the dangerous trek to the United States as the least bad option, which will further stress our ability to deal with these issues in the border States.

Mr. Robinson, I am looking forward to hearing from you about how you will address these pressing issues during this hearing.

Before we hear from the nominees, I would like to give the ranking member, Senator McCain, an opportunity to give his opening statement as well.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have any opening statement except to thank both of the nominees for

their long and honorable service to our country, and we look forward to rapid confirmation through the committee and through the Senate, hopefully before we are out for the year.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator UDALL. Senator McCain, we also look forward to that, and I know you put a real emphasis on having well-qualified nominees and obviously these two I think are very high up on that standard.

I would now like to turn to our two nominees for their opening statements, beginning with Mr. Robinson. As always, your full testimony will be included in the record, and please try and stay within the allotted time.

Mr. Robinson.

STATEMENT OF TODD D. ROBINSON, OF NEW JERSEY, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is an honor to appear today before you as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Guatemala. I am humbled by the trust and confidence President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have shown in putting forward my nomination for this position.

I joined the Foreign Service in 1986 and since then I have briefed Capitol Hill staff a number of times. Needless to say, this time is a little different. This time, while they are not with me today, I have the opportunity to acknowledge the support of my mother, Willetta BaCote, and my brothers, Mark Robinson and Jeffrey BaCote. They have been enormously influential on my career and without their support and that of my friends and colleagues I would not be before you today.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed it will be an honor to return to the Republic of Guatemala. I was deputy chief of mission at the Embassy in Guatemala from 2009 to 2011. Much of my career in the Foreign Service has been in the region—Colombia, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia. I was consul general in Barcelona from 2006 to 2009 and I have been a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement since 2011. I would hope to use this experience to advance United States goals in Guatemala.

Guatemala is at a critical moment. While the nation has made significant progress since signing peace accords in 1996 that ended a three decade-long internal conflict, significant challenges remain: trafficking of humans, weapons, and drugs, high rates of violence, impunity and corruption, poor education and employment opportunities, and chronic malnutrition. These are all serious and all particularly damaging to Guatemala's youngest, most defenseless citizens.

These challenges are complex. They require sustained and continued United States cooperation and engagement, and if confirmed I will work with this committee and our Guatemalan partners to promote respect for human rights and economic and social inclusion for all members of society.

The United States and Guatemala are making progress. Guatemala is advancing in the fight against trafficking in persons and is committing additional funding in a constrained budget environment to its antitrafficking efforts. There is strong cooperation on counternarcotics, judicial strengthening, and maternal and child health issues, but more steps are needed to ensure that this cooperation is institutionalized.

Earlier this year, a Guatemalan court convicted four labor traffickers, the first ever conviction for forced labor in the country's history. And the Department of State is working closely with the government of Guatemala to resolve the remaining 31 intercountry adoption cases pending since 2007.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot talk about Guatemala today without acknowledging the urgent humanitarian situation at the United States southern border relating to unaccompanied children. As nations that value human dignity, it is our duty to respond collectively. Both President Perez Molina and First Lady Rosa Leal de Perez have acknowledged the need for collective action and we are working toward that end.

The United States and the Government of Guatemala are committed to addressing the factors driving migration, such as the lack of economic and education opportunities. We cannot resolve this overnight and neither we nor Guatemala can address this single-handedly. If confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Guatemala Government to see that U.S. assistance is effectively targeted so that Guatemalan citizens can build their lives at home. I will also continue efforts to correct misunderstandings about U.S. law and correct misperceptions that children are permitted to remain in the United States.

Guatemala is a nation of diverse people who are working to consolidate democratic principles and who are cognizant of their responsibilities to advance the cause of international peace and security. It is a nation of enormous pride and cultural patrimony and it will be my high honor to represent the United States in Guatemala.

Mr. Chairman, I deeply appreciate the honor of appearing before the committee today. I understand the serious interests the United States has in the success of Guatemala and the region as a whole. If confirmed, I pledge to work with Congress and this committee to ensure that as we meet the challenges ahead we do so reflecting the values and ideals of the United States.

Thank you very much and I look forward to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Robinson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TODD D. ROBINSON

Mister Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is an honor to appear today before you as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Guatemala. I am humbled by the trust and confidence President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have shown in putting forward my nomination for this position. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and your colleagues to advance the interests of the United States.

I joined the Foreign Service in 1986 and since then, I have briefed Capitol Hill staff a number of times. Needless to say, this time is a little different. This time, I have the opportunity to acknowledge the support of my mother, Willetta BaCote, and my brothers, Mark Robinson and Jeffrey BaCote. They have been enormously

influential in my career, and without their support, and that of my friends and colleagues, I would not be before you today.

Mr. Chairman, it will truly be an honor to return to the Republic of Guatemala. As you know, I was deputy chief of mission at the Embassy in Guatemala City from 2009–2011. In fact, much of my career in the Foreign Service has ranged throughout the region in Colombia, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia. Before going to Guatemala, I was consul general in Barcelona, and when I left Guatemala, I took up my current duties as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. I have gained a wealth of experience from my work in these places and, if confirmed, I pledge to use this experience to advance U.S. goals in Guatemala.

Guatemala is at a critical moment. While the nation has made significant progress since the signing of the peace accords in 1996 that ended a three-decade-long internal conflict, significant challenges remain. Trafficking of humans, weapons, and drugs; high rates of violence; impunity and corruption; poor education and employment opportunities; and chronic malnutrition are all serious issues and all particularly damaging to Guatemala's youngest, most defenseless citizens. These challenges are complex and require sustained and continued U.S. cooperation and engagement and, if confirmed, I will work with this committee and our Guatemalan partners to promote respect for human rights and economic and social inclusion for all members of society.

The United States and Guatemala are already making some progress. Guatemala has made advances in the fight against trafficking in persons and is committing additional funding in a constrained budget environment to its antitrafficking efforts. There has been strong cooperation on counternarcotics, judicial strengthening, and maternal and child health issues. If confirmed, I pledge to work to support President Perez Molina's "Zero Hunger" campaign to see that child health efforts, in particular, become institutionalized. Earlier this year, a Guatemalan court convicted four labor traffickers, the first ever conviction for forced labor in the country's history. The Department of State is working closely with the Government of Guatemala toward resolution of the remaining 31 intercountry adoption cases, pending since 2007. And, Guatemala recently became a "compliant" country in the terms of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which means it has agreed to work with civil society and international community to ensure all mining projects are conducted transparently.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot talk about Guatemala today without acknowledging the urgent humanitarian situation at the U.S. southern border related to unaccompanied children. As nations that value human dignity, it is our duty to respond collectively. President Perez Molina has acknowledged the need for collective action, and we are working toward that end. While visiting DHS facilities in Arizona last week, Guatemalan First Lady Rosa Leal de Perez, a leading voice on this issue, re-emphasized the Government of Guatemala's commitment to addressing the factors driving migration, including of children, such as a lack of economic and education opportunities. The significant increase in unaccompanied children is, in large measure, a direct result of the challenges I described earlier. We cannot resolve them overnight and neither we, nor Guatemala, can address them alone. If confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Guatemalan Government to see that U.S. assistance is effectively targeted to address the underlying causes of migration. I will also continue efforts to correct misunderstandings about aspects of U.S. law and correct misperceptions that children are permitted to remain in the United States.

Guatemala is a nation with drive and determination to open its borders and compete on a global scale. It is a nation of diverse people who are working to consolidate democratic principles, and who are cognizant of their responsibilities to advance the cause of international peace and security. It is a nation of enormous pride and cultural patrimony and, if confirmed, it will be my high honor to represent the United States in Guatemala.

Mr. Chairman, after nearly three decades in the Foreign Service, I deeply appreciate the honor of appearing before the committee today. I understand the serious interests the United States has in the success of Guatemala, and of the region as a whole. If confirmed, I pledge to work with Congress, and this committee to ensure that as we meet the challenges ahead we do so reflecting the values and ideals of the United States.

Thank you very much, I look forward to any questions you may have.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Robinson. We appreciate your testimony.

We now go to Ms. Bassett.

STATEMENT OF LESLIE ANN BASSETT, OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY

Ms. BASSETT. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before you today. This is a great honor for me personally and professionally. One hundred years ago my great-great-grandfather, Senator William J. Stone of Missouri, sat as chairman of this committee during a pivotal time in world history. His concern and interest in foreign affairs inspired my decision to join the Department of State and is the foundation of my enduring respect for the important role Congress plays in our foreign policy.

I am both grateful and humbled that President Obama nominated me for this position and I appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me. You have my commitment that, if confirmed, I will live up to the high standards that the administration has set for its appointees, standards that I know this committee and the American people expect of nominees.

I come before you mindful of my family's legacy of service to the Nation. My grandfather graduated from West Point, fought in World War II, and rose to the rank of general in the U.S. Army. My father is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. My two uncles served in the Air Force during the Vietnam war, but only one came home.

For the last three decades I have carried on this family tradition of service to our country as a Foreign Service officer representing the United States across four different regions of the globe. More than half my service has focused both in the field and from the vantage of Washington on our relations with the Western Hemisphere. If confirmed, I will draw upon all of my knowledge and experience to advance U.S. interests in our important relationship with Paraguay; and if confirmed I look forward to working with this committee in this effort.

This is a time of opportunity in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Paraguay. We have a strong interest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, improve the rule of law, advance human rights, counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, combat corruption, and promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system. The tragedy of human trafficking is unfortunately a significant concern in Paraguay and I believe more can be done.

This is a time of opportunity in our trade relationship as well. Trade between the United States and Paraguay continues to grow. In 2013 our two-way trade totaled \$2.2 billion, leaving us with a trade surplus of \$1.6 billion. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the many U.S. businesses represented in Paraguay to support a reliable, transparent business environment conducive to continued growth in trade and investment. Steps Paraguay can take to ensure protection of intellectual property rights will help improve prospects for increased commerce.

This is a time of opportunity in our people-to-people ties, anchored by a strong Peace Corps presence, sustained by the work of dedicated colleagues from the USAID, and made possible by the

committed efforts of the entire U.S. Embassy in Asuncion. If confirmed, I promise to offer mission leadership focused on protecting American citizens and advancing the full range of our goals.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our priorities with the Republic of Paraguay.

Thank you again for this opportunity and I welcome any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bassett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LESLIE ANN BASSETT

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before you today. This is a great honor for me, personally and professionally. One hundred years ago my great-great-grandfather, Senator William J. Stone of Missouri, sat as chairman of this committee during a pivotal time in world history. His concern and interest in foreign affairs inspired my decision to join the Department of State and is the foundation of my enduring respect for the important role Congress plays in our foreign policy.

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I come before you mindful of my family's legacy of service to the Nation. My grandfather graduated from West Point, fought in World War II, and rose to the rank of General in the U.S. Army. My father is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. My two uncles served in the Air Force during the Vietnam war, but only one came home. For the last three decades, I have carried on this family tradition of service to our country as a Foreign Service officer representing the United States across four different regions of the globe. More than half my service has focused, both in the field and from the vantage of Washington, on our relations with the Western Hemisphere. If confirmed, I will draw upon all my knowledge and experience to advance U.S. interests in our important relationship with Paraguay. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee in this effort.

This is a time of opportunity in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Paraguay. We have a strong interest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, improve the rule of law, advance human rights, counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, combat corruption and promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system. The tragedy of human trafficking is unfortunately a significant concern in Paraguay, and I believe we can do more to encourage Paraguay to take more action to prevent human trafficking.

This is a time of opportunity in our trade relationship as well. Trade between the United States and Paraguay, while relatively modest, continues to grow. In 2013 our two-way trade totaled \$2.2 billion, leaving us with a trade surplus of \$1.6 billion. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the many U.S. businesses represented in Paraguay to support a reliable, transparent business environment conducive to continued growth in trade and investment. Steps Paraguay can take to ensure protection of intellectual property rights will help improve prospects for increased commerce.

This is a time of opportunity in our people-to-people ties, anchored by a strong Peace Corps presence, sustained by the work of dedicated colleagues from USAID, and made possible by the committed efforts of the entire U.S. Embassy in Asuncion. If confirmed, I promise to offer collaborative mission leadership focused on protecting American citizens and advancing the full range of our goals.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our priorities with the Republic of Paraguay.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator UDALL. Thank you very much, Ms. Bassett.

I am going to start with questioning with Mr. Robinson. Mr. Robinson, as Ambassador how will you address the root causes leading to the recent surge in minors migrating from Guatemala to the United States? The mass migration is putting immense pressure on

the United States and especially the border regions. In Artesia, New Mexico, the community is being asked to take on more of this burden. I recently visited with the community in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to learn more about what is being done. However, the insecure conditions these children are fleeing are only getting worse.

How will you direct resources to support the Guatemalan Government in both preventing future migration and supporting the repatriation process of those returning to Guatemala?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator. We know what the root causes are. We know that security—both food security and physical security—are important, terrible issues that are affecting the country. We also know that there are networks, criminal networks that are preying upon the families in desperate situations to get their family members from Guatemala up to the United States.

We have programs that we have been employing, implementing, that include work with the Guatemalan police, with Customs, with Border Patrol. We also have programs that focus on food security and maternal and child health. I think we need to continue to implement those programs and I would direct resources in that regard.

But this is not something that the United States can do on its own. Clearly, the Government of Guatemala has a role to play. We have seen some cooperation in that regard. If confirmed, I would work even more closely with government authorities to address the issue.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Ms. Bassett, the Cartes government's openness to public-private partnership, particularly in improving their infrastructure, I think provides an avenue for U.S. business to offer its unique expertise in this area. If confirmed, what kind of support will you provide to United States business hoping to work in Paraguay in the area of infrastructure, agriculture, and other areas for investment?

Ms. BASSETT. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I think you are absolutely correct in your assessment that this is an opportunity in the Government of Paraguay and with our relationship in Paraguay to expand our economic ties by virtue of the kind of investment Paraguay seeks to make in infrastructure that needs modernizing, both to improve opportunities for commerce, but also to extend the reach of government into more remote areas.

We are working and if confirmed I will continue to work to try to promote American business opportunities through making sure that they are aware of the tenders that are available, that the opportunity for bids and procurement are as transparent and fair as possible, and that when appropriate we advocate on behalf of U.S. businesses interested in engaging in new initiatives with the Government of Paraguay.

Thank you.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Mr. Robinson, as you probably know, I have long advocated for increased attention for the Western Hemisphere region. However, the administration continually deprioritizes this region in relation to others. We are seeing the repercussions of this through the thousands of migrants arriving in the United States from Central

America. How will programs in Guatemala be impacted by the decreased request for the CARSI program in fiscal year 2015? How will you rebalance this request to address crime prevention with equally important issues of economic development, judicial and governance reform, and addressing human rights and issues surrounding endemic corruption?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator. We have to acknowledge that this has been a very constrained budget environment over the last few years. But the State Department and the administration have not lost their focus on the important areas of the Western Hemisphere, particularly the northern tier: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Over the last fiscal year Guatemala was the recipient of \$19 million in aid. They were also from CARSI resources, regional resources—they benefited from \$54 million over the last fiscal year.

We will continue—I will continue to devote and send resources to those areas that are—the programs that are particularly important: police reform, obviously; again, customs and border. We will also work with the judicial sector to continue to work to funnel those resources where necessary.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Ms. Bassett, Paraguay's counternarcotics body reported that drug seizures were up by 39 percent in 2013. The country's status as a major transshipment route for Andean cocaine is troubling, as we have invested considerable resources to address the drug crisis in Colombia, Mexico, and Central America. How will you engage the Paraguayan authorities to stop these transshipments and the potential for Paraguay to become a cocaine-producing country itself?

Ms. BASSETT. I agree that it is a serious concern, although I think that the Government of Paraguay's successes in increasing their amount of interdiction is a positive sign of their commitment to address this issue. Through my experience working as the deputy chief of mission in Mexico and as political counselor in Colombia, I have a great deal of personal experience on both the costs and the consequences of the narcotics business on host governments as well as on the United States, and it is a very serious issue.

I hope that we can continue to cooperate and train with Paraguayan police authorities to try and increase their efforts, but also to encourage regional cooperation, since Paraguay is primarily a transit country for these products, illicit products. So I think the opportunity is also to look at regional cooperation to try and stem the flow in that direction as well.

Thank you.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the witnesses. Ms. Bassett, thank you for your family's service to the country going back several generations, despite your father's lack of education. [Laughter.]

And I thank you for your outstanding service. I have had the privilege of seeing you in other posts and I have always been very impressed by your service and dedication.

Mr. Robinson, you stated in your written statement: "The United States and Guatemala are already making some progress. Guatemala has made advances in the fight against trafficking in persons and is committing additional funding in a constrained budget environment to its antitrafficking efforts." Your statement, I do not question the validity. But I do question the progress.

There is no progress, Mr. Robinson. Numbers of children are the ultimate decider on whether there is progress or not, and those numbers continue to go up. And, as you mentioned, we provide \$19 million in assistance. I do not know how much other funding and assistance. Can you for the record describe, is that the sum total of our financial assistance to Guatemala?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator. No, it is not the sum total. I cannot be exactly sure, but I think we provided over the last fiscal year almost \$80 million total. Some of that obviously goes toward programs that are run by USAID. Some of that goes toward funding INL programs that I am familiar with. Some of that is regional funding, so it is hard to break it down exactly.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I want you to carry a message to the Government of Guatemala from me and other Members of Congress. That is, unless they show a significant amount of progress in reducing flow of children into our country, I and others will be seeking to reducing that funding dramatically. We have every right to expect a greater level of cooperation from the government of those three countries, including Guatemala, in many cases expediting the flow, including advertising on their radio and television that if you can get to the United States you can stay, including paying the traffickers thousands of dollars and seeing those transactions taking place in Guatemala, and of course no border enforcement whatsoever.

So we are—there are many of us that are subject to the immediate impact of these floods of children.

And by the way, there is no way that the drug traffickers and the people who want to send their children to the United States could in any way be anything but encouraged when one-tenth or one-twentieth of those who appear at our border are actually returned to the country of origin. That is not a disincentive. Actually, that is an encouragement.

Many of us are very disappointed at the President's message, where he came over and asked for legislation, \$3.7 billion for a variety of programs, and then at the end of his message: And of course we will negotiate with Congress other measures.

Mr. Robinson, unless those families in Guatemala see planeloads of children return to Guatemala, they are going to keep sending them, and that is just a fact. Whether it is a Bush law, as described by some, or whether it is a Feinstein law or whatever it is, the 2008 law obviously was one of the catalysts for this, and that has to be changed. And for the President of the United States not to view that as the highest priority in my view, he still does not get it. And obviously the fact that he could not take the trouble to not engage in a game of pool and drinking beer and go down to the border to see the actual situation, of course, is really exceptional.

So my message to you, Mr. Robinson, is that we are totally dissatisfied with the failure of the Guatemalan Government to do any-

thing tangible, and the only real metric is how many children from Guatemala are showing up at our border; then there will be many of us who want to review very carefully the investment of American tax dollars. OK?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator. I can assure you that I share your concerns and it will be among my highest priorities to make sure that we are, number one, making sure that our assistance is channeled in the right direction, but also making sure that the Government of Guatemala knows that it has a significant role to play in helping to address these issues.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the witnesses.

Senator UDALL. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Ms. Bassett, in 2014 Freedom House elevated Paraguay's press rating from "Not Free" to "Partly Free" due to reduced political influence in the media. The nation has improved the independence and protection of its press in recent years, but criminal gangs present a real challenge. Already this year, in the border areas with Brazil, two radio journalists, Edgar Fleitas and Fausto Alcaraz, reporting on local government services and drug trafficking taking place across the border were gunned down.

What steps will you take to support the Government of Paraguay's efforts at ensuring the safety of journalists?

Ms. BASSETT. Thank you. As you note, Paraguay has been working to improve its record on both press freedoms and other human rights, but much work does remain to be done, and the two cases you cite are instances where the government has focused, as I understand it, its attention, and at least in one case I believe an arrest has been made.

But the importance is not only in following up on crimes that have taken place, but trying to prevent crimes in the future. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Government of Paraguay on improving its protections, not just to journalists, but to indigenous people to women and to people of diverse groups, so that everyone may enjoy an equal opportunity for a good life in Paraguay, which Gallop rated one of the happiest countries in the world. So it is an interesting contrast.

Thank you.

Senator UDALL. Great. Thank you. That is an interesting contrast. Thank you very much.

Mr. Robinson, we appreciate Secretary Kerry's decision to award to International Women of Courage Award this year to Judge Iris Yassmin Barrios Aguilar. Her work to confront high-profile corruption, organized crime, and drug trafficking and human rights abuses by former military personnel set an important precedent and demonstrated the importance of an independent judiciary.

However, the early removal of Attorney General Paz y Paz and President Molina's decision to not renew the mandate of the Commission Against Impunity are concerning. How would you work to improve the management, accountability, and coordination of the Guatemalan security and justice sectors, which is critical to addressing past crimes and stemming the staggering rate of homicides in the country?

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, Senator Udall. I think, first of all, I should say that as DCM in Guatemala from 2009 to 2011 I had the opportunity to work with many that are in the current government now. If confirmed, I think I would be able to maintain and extend that relationship.

Obviously, the issue of judicial reform and police reform is very, very important. We had an excellent relationship with the Attorney General, Paz y Paz. We also have a very good relationship with the current attorney general, Thelma Aldana, who I know from my time there in the past, and I can assure you that if confirmed I would work very, very closely with her and the rest of the Perez Molina government to address the issue of judicial reform.

I should say that the issues that are important to the current attorney general are also issues that impact on the issue on the front pages of the newspapers today, the children. She has been a strong advocate for children's issues and sexual gender-based violence issues, domestic violence issues. I think that is very important.

On the issue of extending the mandate for CICIG, the U.N. Commission Against Impunity, I think they have not made a decision yet on whether or not to extend the mandate. I would, if confirmed, want to consult with both the Commissioner and with the President to make sure that all of the important issues are taken into account before a decision is made on extending that mandate.

Senator UDALL. Mr. Robinson, thank you very much for that answer.

We have been joined by Senator Kaine, who has a real interest in the region, and I would turn to him for any questioning he would like of the nominees.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses. Congratulations to both of you for your appointments, and thanks also for your significant public service prior to this point.

I know that there have been some questions and the Chair has already focused on CARSI. I have been really stunned by the reducing budgets for CARSI, the Central America Regional Security Initiative. I think it was in fiscal year 2015 \$130 million, which was down from \$160 million. In that same fiscal year 2015 budget where we had \$130 million for CARSI, we, I think, originally programmed around \$700 million for taking care of detainees coming from these countries, and now we are saying that is not enough; we will need \$3.8 billion.

So let me start with you, Mr. Robinson. As Ambassador to Guatemala, what can you do to help make more plain the need for United States assistance in regional security efforts in Guatemala and the other Central American nations?

Mr. ROBINSON. I absolutely acknowledge that, in this very tough budget environment, we have had to really focus on how we implement the funding that we have received. If confirmed, it would be among my highest priorities to make sure that those funds are used appropriately to increase the, for instance, training to customs and border patrol, to increase training for the police, and police reform. I think those are absolutely important issues.

I will, of course, leave it to you to decide how much money is sent in terms of assistance. But I can assure you that my priority,

should I be confirmed, will be making sure that we use those funds to the maximum efficiency possible.

Senator Kaine. Mr. Robinson, let me continue with you if I can on this, because I see you have been in Guatemala previously as consul general. You have been in El Salvador. You have been in the Dominican Republic. This is going to be an odd question: Is there any evidence to suggest that Central American parents do not love their children like American parents do or like the parents of other nations do?

Mr. Robinson. Senator, there is no evidence to suggest that Central American parents love their children any less than any other parents. I think part of the reason for the humanitarian, the urgent humanitarian situation, is probably an indication of how much they do in fact love their children, but the desperation of the situation—

Senator Kaine. So American parents, if we would imagine—I have got three kids. What would it take for me to send my children on a journey of thousands of miles where they would be faced with dangers? It would be a very gut-wrenching decision for me as a parent. It has got to be a gut-wrenching decision for Guatemalan parents and others in the Central American region, correct?

Mr. Robinson. I would imagine so, yes, sir.

Senator Kaine. And it is an expensive proposition. The standard of living in these countries is not a significant one. So not only is it gut-wrenching to separate yourself from your children, but it costs an awful lot of money to do that.

And I gather that these parents are only doing it because of their deep, deep concern about their children's safety in the neighborhoods and communities where they live. Is that your sense of sort of underlying driver of this flood of unaccompanied children that are coming to the U.S. border?

Mr. Robinson. Senator, absolutely. I think there are several underlying reasons. One is the violence, not just in Guatemala, but in the northern tier countries. The other is the lack of education and economic opportunity. I can assure you that, should I be confirmed, those would be absolute priorities for me and for making sure that I raise those issues with government authorities.

Senator Kaine. Mr. Robinson, let me just focus on violence for a minute. I lived in Honduras for a year and recently spent some time with the Honduran President, the new Honduran President Hernandez, talking about this issue. The violence in these communities, a lot of it is connected to the drug trade, is it not?

Mr. Robinson. Absolutely.

Senator Kaine. Now, the drug trade in Honduras or Guatemala, for example, is not a significant trade because Hondurans and Guatemalans consume a lot of drugs, correct?

Mr. Robinson. We do not think that they consume a large amount of drugs.

Senator Kaine. So the drug trade in these nations is really a drug trade where they are being used as a transit point for drugs that are generally produced further south, and whether it is Guatemala or Honduras or El Salvador, these nations are being used as a transit point to get drugs largely to the United States—Mexico, the United States, and Canada; is that not correct?

Mr. ROBINSON. That is correct.

Senator KAINE. Just focusing on the United States demand for drugs as an example, we are a big nation and the Nation, the citizens of the Nation are willing to pay a whole lot of money for illegal drugs. And it is that money that then becomes a corrupting influence that fuels gangs, that fuels the drug trade, that fuels the corruption of law enforcement authorities in many of these Central American nations; is that not correct?

Mr. ROBINSON. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator KAINE. So this notion of these youngsters who are coming to the United States, they are coming to the United States because their parents want them to be free from violence, and the violence is created to some significant degree by domestic choices that American citizens make, to try to consume illegal drugs that are coming through their countries. Is that not part of what is going on?

Mr. ROBINSON. There is no doubt that the corrupting influence of the drug trade is having a major effect on the governments in the northern tier. But what we have also seen is that we can have an effect in arresting that through our community policing programs, through our model precinct programs. There are ways to go after this, and we have had very good cooperation with the government, particularly in Guatemala, but throughout the northern tier, in using these programs to address the security issue at a very local level, at a municipal level.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Chair, could I continue for a bit? I would like to continue if I could.

As I watch TV programs and things and I see American citizens sort of yelling at these kids who have made this long trip, as if the kids are somehow anti-U.S., it strikes me that many of these kids are only refugees because of U.S. destination drug trade. Would it dramatically improve the physical security of these countries if U.S.-demand for illegal drugs was eliminated tomorrow?

Mr. ROBINSON. Senator—

Senator KAINE. And I know your background includes working on narcotics issues. This has been a specialty of yours.

Mr. ROBINSON. Absolutely. No, again there is no doubt that the corrupting influence of the narcotics trade is a major influence, and the violence that is surrounded with that is a major influence, on parents who make the decision to send their kids on this very arduous journey. How you classify them I would leave to another agency.

Senator KAINE. Sure.

Mr. ROBINSON. But it is an urgent humanitarian situation and it is one that we think collective action needs to be taken to address.

Senator KAINE. My sense is it is not just something we should do because we do not want to have unaccompanied minors showing up at the border. But to the extent that U.S.-destination drug trade is creating major security challenges in these nations, who have traditionally been friends and allies of the United States, then we even have a little bit of a responsibility to try to provide some assistance, either in reducing the demand for illegal drugs here or providing security assistance so that these nations can deal with a

problem that is not entirely of their own cause. Would you share that view?

Mr. ROBINSON. Senator, I absolutely believe and both the President and the Vice President and the Secretary of State have all made calls for collective action. This is not an issue that can be resolved by any one country. The United States is going to have to work with Mexico; they are going to have to work with the countries of the northern tier, in order to address that.

Senator KAINE. I share that.

Mr. Chair, I just want to make one point. I think you made this point earlier. When we are spending \$140 million to help Central American nations, \$130 million, deal with a regional security challenge that we have some complicity in, bluntly, and that number is going down, and we are spending \$800 projected to deal with the consequence, and then now deciding we have got to spend \$3.8 billion to deal with the consequence, I think the answer just suggests itself that there is a better way to spend the money, that there is a better way to spend the money.

I am interested in digging into the President's \$3.8 billion request because I know some of it is earmarked toward the causes. But if we just keep dealing with symptoms and we do not deal with causes, then we are going to be dealing with symptoms for a very long time.

Your background in having been in these countries and your background in working on narcotics control issues is a very important background to bring to this task.

Ms. Bassett, let me just ask you one question if I can about Paraguay. I know that there has been studies suggesting that among nations in the Western Hemisphere Paraguay has had a particular problem with corruption. This is a domestic political matter that we have to be careful about, about how we deal with those. But what in your position as Ambassador could you do to try to help foster a climate that was more hostile to public corruption?

Ms. BASSETT. Thank you. I think we should first take note of President Cartes' strong efforts to address that problem directly through the appointments he has made to his Cabinet, through reforms that he has made in government, through the process of issuing very public and transparent tenders for infrastructure reform. All those are important first steps that I think Paraguay has recognized it needs to take to begin to erode that perception of corruption that impacts its reputation in the region, as you say, and also its ability to attract new investment and trade opportunities.

I think we can continue and, if confirmed, I will certainly continue to encourage the government in that direction, to use the resources that we may have through our assistance and other programs to promote those reforms and strengthen democratic institutions so reforms can endure from administration to administration; and then finally remind that our own projects and our own processes serve as models. So our visa process can be very transparent and objective and that serves as a model. We hope to be constructing a new chancery in Paraguay in the near future and that process should model the transparency that we hope will occur throughout every transaction in Paraguay.

So both through our programs, our rhetoric, and our actual actions in country, I hope that we can reinforce the message that there is nothing more valuable than good governance.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you to both witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator UDALL. Thank you so much, Senator Kaine, for your questioning. I think you hit on some very issues there.

Let me thank both the witnesses for your testimony today. I want to once again echo what I think all of the members of the committee said: We thank you very much for your public service.

We would ask you both to reply very quickly to all questions that are submitted for the record. This will allow us to move quickly to report your nominations on to the full committee. We will keep the record open until the close of business Friday so that other Senators can ask questions.

This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 10:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF LESLIE ANN BASSETT TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How would you characterize the current state of U.S.-Paraguayan relations? What steps would you propose the United States take to assist the Cartes administration in consolidating democracy? What would be your top policy priorities as U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay?

Answer. Bilateral relations with Paraguay are strong. Embassy Asuncion engages actively and broadly with the Government of Paraguay on a range of U.S. national interests. President Horacio Cartes enjoys strong public support for his efforts to foster economic growth, reduce poverty, and eliminate corruption.

If confirmed, I will seek to expand efforts to support Paraguay's initiatives to make its government more effective in delivering services to its people and to create a transparent and democratic state. This includes initiatives to reduce poverty, improve public health services, promote human rights, fight corruption, incorporate the informal the economy and foster development, enhance law enforcement capacity, and improve educational systems.

Question. What are the principal barriers to the growth of the Paraguayan economy? What policies does the Cartes government have in place to combat poverty, and what support does the United States provide in this area?

Answer. Paraguay has yet to fully realize its economic potential. Growth in Paraguay's relatively small economy has been volatile—for example, Paraguay had negative growth in 2012, followed by 13.5 percent growth in 2013. Paraguay's economy is heavily dependent on agricultural commodities exports—many Paraguayans make their living from agriculture, often on a subsistence basis. Roughly one-third of Paraguay's 6.5 million people live below the poverty line. The Cartes administration has sought to grow the economy, create jobs, and sharply reduce extreme poverty by building major infrastructure projects, using both government funds and newly attracted investment, and increasing competitiveness as Paraguay further integrates into the regional and global economy.

USAID began two large 5-year programs in Paraguay in October 2013. The programs, totaling \$33 million, are focused on inclusive and sustainable rural economic development, strengthening public institutions, and combating corruption. USAID works with public institutions in Paraguay to strengthen management and governance systems, improve accountability mechanisms, and professionalize the Paraguayan civil service. USAID's economic growth program supports the GOP's "Cultivating Opportunities" initiative by generating opportunities to increase impoverished families' incomes in the Northern Zone, one of the areas with highest concentration of poverty and limited government presence. If confirmed, I will support continuity of these programs in pursuit of U.S. and Paraguayan interests.

In response to Paraguay's request, the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance funded four teams in 2014 to work with the Ministry of Finance and Central Bank to strengthen Paraguay's financial institutions and promote transparency.

If confirmed, I will support continuation of these programs in furtherance of U.S. and Paraguayan interests in Paraguay.

Question. What is the extent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's presence in Paraguay and is this cooperation sufficient? With State Department's counternarcotics assistance to Paraguay recently eliminated, what types of counternarcotics cooperation do you recommend?

Answer. The U.S. Government works closely with the Government of Paraguay on counternarcotics, and focuses on strengthening Paraguayan capability to disrupt cocaine trafficking operations, pursue and arrest high-level narcotics traffickers, and to combat money laundering and trafficking in persons, with an emphasis in and around the Tri-Border area. The U.S. Government has provided training, equipment and technical support to Paraguay's Anti-Narcotics Secretariat (SENAD), the Paraguayan National Police, and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of the Anti-Money Laundering Secretariat (SEPRELAD) as well as training to judges and prosecutors who prosecute narcotics and money laundering cases.

Although additional International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funding has not been requested, the U.S. Embassy is using remaining funds to strengthen antimoney laundering and asset forfeiture regimes, and to strengthen Paraguay's criminal justice system. The U.S. Government also supports sensitive investigation units (SIUs) that work well with DEA to disrupt drug trafficking organizations.

Question. What steps do you recommend to help Paraguay tackle its persistent and endemic corruption? What are the lessons learned from USAID's anticorruption and democracy programming in Paraguay that has aimed to reduce corruption in public sector institutions?

Answer. President Horacio Cartes has emphasized reforming the Paraguayan economy and governance controls, seeking to fight corruption, impunity, and international crime. He has sought to create jobs and sharply reduce extreme poverty by encouraging economic growth, investing heavily in infrastructure, and increasing competitiveness. These efforts are designed to help Paraguay strengthen the rule of law and promote transparency. We are working with President Cartes and his administration to address our many shared interests in this area.

In 2012, Paraguay completed the second of two Millennium Challenge Corporation threshold programs totaling over \$65 million. Both threshold programs were focused on reducing corruption and they achieved tangible results including: reducing the length of time for response to complaints and for starting a business; building a forensics lab to improve the reliability of evidence provided to prosecutors; and strengthening procurement processes and accountability measures in 12 key government ministries and public offices.

Currently, USAID supports Paraguay's efforts to develop a National Anticorruption Strategy and will provide technical assistance for its implementation. An important component of this assistance will focus on strengthening the GOP's ability to effectively communicate reforms to its constituents. The overarching strategy will encompass USAID and Paraguay's joint efforts to strengthen management and governance systems improve accountability mechanisms, expand transparency through the Open Government Partnership, and professionalize the Paraguayan civil service. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Cartes administration's efforts to reduce corruption.

Question. What is your view of the potential threat of terrorism emanating from the tri-border region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil? What is the extent of the threat posed by the People's Paraguayan Army (EPP)? How would you characterize U.S. support to Paraguay for its counterterrorism programs and is the level of support adequate?

Answer. The Tri-Border area of Paraguay is home to some of the continent's most active contraband traffickers. Although there is no evidence of terrorist operations in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, there are concerns that some portion of the money laundered from smuggling and drug activity may be used for terrorist financing.

The U.S. Government supports the Paraguayan Government's efforts to build stronger democratic institutions, improve internal auditing controls, establish internal disciplinary systems, and incorporate regular external audits. These efforts represent the types of systemic changes that will decrease the perception of corruption in the country and will improve delivery of citizen services.

A specific example of our support is the Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) Trade Transparency Unit (TTU) in Paraguay that serves as a strategic effort to combat and prevent exploitation of the international trade and financial systems through trade-based money laundering. Through the exchange of trade data, investigators are able to see both sides of transactions and increase transparency.

Since 2008, persons claiming to be part of the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP)—an internal guerrilla movement—have been active in the northern Departments of Concepcion and San Pedro. The group has been involved in violence designed to intimidate the population and government. The true size of the group has been difficult to establish, but the Government of Paraguay believes it to be a small, decentralized group of approximately 20–100 members.

The United States cooperates with the Government of Paraguay to counter potentially destabilizing threats. The U.S. Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program has contributed to building Paraguay's counterterrorism law enforcement capacity through training that included: the Police Leaders' Role in Combating Terrorism, Fraudulent Document Recognition, Investigating Terrorist Incidents, Interviewing Terrorist Suspects, and Cellular Telephone Forensics.

Question. To what degree are there models of effective land reform from the region that might be adapted to Paraguay?

Answer. President Cartes has stated that he supports land reform to spur economic growth and alleviate rural poverty. This June, President Cartes signed a law returning more than 14,000 hectares to an indigenous community. Land reform has been successful in many countries. Best practices that have worked well in other countries in the region include: developing mechanisms for land registration and titling, land taxation which encourages productive use, financing mechanisms to help landless peasants purchase land and assistance to small farmers in identifying commercially viable crops to move beyond subsistence agriculture.

RESPONSES OF TODD D. ROBINSON TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM UDALL

Question. Guatemala is considered to be one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the region. Tropical storms, flooding, and landslides are just a few of the extreme weather events impacting the country, many of which are expected to worsen. If confirmed, how will you support communities to build resilience, strengthen environmental governance and science based decision making?

Answer. Given the precarious environmental situation in Guatemala, as well as the likelihood of continued climate-related impacts, the Department of State and USAID have prioritized adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change and environmental degradation under the Country Development Cooperation Strategy and the President's Global Climate Change Initiative (GCCCI). Under GCCCI, the United States is working to foster low-carbon growth, reduce emissions from deforestation, and promote sustainable and resilient societies. In Guatemala, USAID's Climate, Nature, and Communities Program, for example, works to reduce the risks associated with climate-related natural disasters, while also improving adaptive capacity through improved natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. Additionally, through funding from the State Department, Guatemala benefits from USAID's E-CAM Regional Environment Program's work on regional adaptation measures focused on building capacity and governance structures to respond to the threats and potential impacts of climate change.

If confirmed, I will work through these programs to build resilience within Guatemala to respond to the impacts of climate change and to improve domestic capabilities to the Guatemalan Government to develop their own mechanisms to respond to these vulnerabilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you address the ongoing conflicts around mines and hydroelectric dams in Guatemala?

Answer. The Department of State continues to closely monitor all potential areas of conflict surrounding mega projects in Guatemala. We were encouraged that the Guatemalan Government recently became a "compliant country" in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which means it has agreed to work with civil society and international community to increase the transparency of the mining sector. If confirmed, I will encourage the Guatemalan Government to work closely—and peacefully—with communities involved in mega projects, including mines and hydroelectric dams, to ensure an open and peaceful dialogue and that the Guatemalan Government complies with its domestic and international legal obligations

relating to these projects. It is imperative the Guatemalan Government, communities, and companies involved find a sustainable way to deal with these types of conflicts.

If confirmed, I will support all parties in their efforts to reach an agreement, if the parties believe that would be helpful.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to encourage companies to advance and respect human rights?

Answer. In Guatemala, the U.S. Government has prioritized the promotion of respect for human rights. If confirmed, I will work to ensure all companies—foreign and domestic—integrate respect for human rights into their business practices, guided by the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We are already doing this in Guatemala under the CAFTA–DR Enforcement Plan, which seeks to protect the human and labor rights of domestic employees. Given the large extractives industry in Guatemala, we will encourage companies and the Government of Guatemala to join the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, an initiative that guides companies on providing security for their operations in a manner that respects human and labor rights.

If confirmed, I will encourage continued dialogue between government, private sector, and civil society representatives to provide an avenue to address concerns relating to the respect for human and labor rights in Guatemala, through the Voluntary Principles, among other mechanisms.

