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**NOMINATIONS OF ROBERT CEKUTA; RICHARD
MILLS; JESS BAILY; MARGARET UYEHARA**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

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

Robert Francis Cekuta, of New York, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan
Richard M. Mills, Jr., of Texas, to be Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Armenia
Jess Lippincott Baily, of Ohio, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia
Margaret Ann Uyehara, of Ohio, to be Ambassador to Montenegro

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher Murphy, presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy and Johnson.

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

Senator MURPHY. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will now come to order.

Good morning. Welcome to our nominees and their families, other guests who are joining us here today.

We are considering the nomination today of Robert Cekuta to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Richard Mills to be Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia, Jess Baily to be Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, and Margaret Ann Uyehara to be our Ambassador to Montenegro.

To begin with, Senator Johnson and I will give brief opening statements. I will very quickly introduce our nominees with short bios, and then the floor shall be yours.

One year ago, this likely would have been a very different hearing. Many of the questions would be the same: the frozen conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the name issue in Macedonia, the status of Montenegro's NATO accession. But today, even those questions are going to be informed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, by the realization that Russia does not view its neighbors as sovereign, independent states who will determine their own destinies. There has been a paradigm shift in Euro-

pean security, and we are unlikely to go back to business as usual any time soon.

As a result of this shift, you can expect that Congress is going to be more engaged in many of the challenges that you are going to be taking on in your new assignments. This includes energy security, economic development, NATO and EU integration, good governance and respect for ethnic minorities.

The Balkan region in particular deserves additional U.S. attention and resources. Montenegro is close to attaining NATO membership, and I encourage you to help them get over the finish line. In the meantime, we look forward to seeing progress in areas such as press freedom and the rule of law. Macedonia has contributed significantly to NATO operations in Afghanistan, and they too deserve an opportunity to join the alliance. The so-called name issue has persisted for too long. It is holding back the Balkans' Euro-Atlantic integration. Unresolved ethnic tensions in Macedonia are a potential flashpoint, and I hope that our next Ambassador will find ways to promote reconciliation.

Moving to our nominees from the Caucasus, Armenia is further behind in terms of economic growth and political independence from Moscow, and it was disappointing to see Armenia cast one of the few votes against condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea. Nevertheless, we should continue to find ways to work with Armenia, strengthen their democracy, help them reduce their regional isolation. Ultimately the United States benefits from having a strong, independent, prosperous partner in Armenia.

Azerbaijan is an increasingly important partner in this area particularly when it comes to energy security. And I am pleased that our nominee has significant experience on this particular subject. While there are lots of areas that we are going to work with, one area that I hope that you will not neglect is the importance of an active civil society and a peaceful political opposition. Senator Johnson and I have both worked together on raising concerns about a growing crackdown on civil society activists, and my colleagues and I here in the Senate are going to continue to raise those concerns.

We are glad that you are all here. We look forward to your testimony, and let me turn it over to Senator Johnson for opening remarks.

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

Senator JOHNSON. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. You have done your usual good job of summarizing the issues with the four countries.

I just want to thank the nominees for coming here to testify today and thank you for your willingness to serve. Being an ambassador of the United States is a serious responsibility. I certainly hope that you will convey our intentions to the country, that you will be representing the United States. I believe the United States is, although not perfect, a phenomenal force for good in the world, and we want to help people. Your jobs as ambassadors are to convey that to the peoples of those countries, but also to make sure that we here in Congress and America in general understand the

issues and the viewpoints of the countries that you will be representing America to. So it is kind of a dual role. It is very similar to business. You have a sales guy. He is certainly representing your products to the customer but he is representing the customer back to the company.

So, again, I just want to thank you for your willingness to serve and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

I will introduce you from our right to left and then you can give testimony in that same order.

First, Robert Cekuta is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service. He has served most recently as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Energy Resources of the Department of State. Mr. Cekuta has developed a deep energy expertise and broad experience in fostering democratic and free market reforms, which are going to be key issues in Azerbaijan. He played a critical senior management role in establishing the new Energy Bureau where he has developed programs advancing global energy security, while overseeing initiatives to fight corruption and build good governance and accountability when it comes to oil and gas production.

Mr. Cekuta earned his bachelor's degree from Georgetown, a master's degree from the Thunderbird School of Global Management, and a master's degree from the National Defense University.

Richard Mills, Rick Mills, is our nominee to the Republic of Armenia, another career member of the Senior Foreign Service. Most recently he served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Beirut. Mr. Mills has served with distinction at some of the most difficult and important posts in the Foreign Service. Known for raising morale within his assigned missions and engaging local media and officials to effectively articulate U.S. policy, Mr. Mills will bring essential skills to the task of furthering bilateral relations with the Government of Armenia, an important U.S. partner in Eastern Europe.

Mr. Mills earned his bachelor's degree from Georgetown as well, a J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law, and a master's degree from the National Defense University.

Jess Baily, a good friend of members of this committee, is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service as well. Most recently served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Turkey where he skillfully managed a complex mission in a NATO ally in the heart of a critical region. His years of experience in Europe, his strong inter-agency and management skills, and his public diplomacy expertise will enable him to further bilateral relations with the Government of Macedonia and engage effectively with the Macedonian public.

Mr. Baily is the only member of this panel who was wise enough to get his undergraduate degree in Connecticut from Yale University, and he has his master's degree from Columbia, which is located, I think, in a State near Connecticut. [Laughter.]

Margaret Uyehara is another career member of the Senior Foreign Service. Most recently she served as Executive Director to the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and the International Organization Affairs in the Department of State. She has three decades of experience managing Department of State staff and resources in the Balkans, in Washington, and around the world. She

is going to bring these essential skills to the tasks of developing a cadre of largely entry-level officers at the Embassy in Montenegro and to further bilateral relations with the Government of Montenegro, a key U.S. partner in the Balkans.

Ms. Uyehara earned her bachelor's degree at Kalamazoo and also studied at Georgetown University.

Margaret, I understand that you have four of your five children—three of your five children today. As the father of two young ones myself, I am ready to vote for you simply based on your impressive family management experience alone.

Thank you all for being here. Why do we not start with you, Mr. Cekuta, and move down the row?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. CEKUTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, for the privilege of appearing here as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Azerbaijan. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify and am humbled by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and with all Members of Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Azerbaijan.

I would like to introduce my wife, Anne, who has joined me. Our daughter, Margaret, our sons, Matthew and Stephen, are unfortunately unable to be here today.

For over 36 years, I have been dedicated to promoting U.S. foreign policy interests around the world. As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the State Department's Energy Resources Bureau, for example, I worked to advance U.S. energy policy in complex regions from the Middle East to the Caucasus to Ukraine. My unwavering focus throughout my career has been to advance U.S. interests, including universal values of democracy, strong rule of law, and the protection of human rights and dignity.

Many of you have been personally engaged on developments in Azerbaijan. It is a country with a rich history and with the potential for a bright and prosperous future. Our relationship is important not just to our two countries, but to Azerbaijan's neighbors and to the wider region. We stand only to gain from a stable, democratic, peaceful, prosperous Azerbaijan strategically linked to the United States and to our European friends and allies.

Since establishing diplomatic relations, we have worked with Azerbaijan on three equally important areas, each of which is key to its full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community: security, energy, and democracy.

The United States has long recognized Azerbaijan as a stalwart partner on international security. After the attacks of September 11, then-Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev was among the first to extend support and to offer close cooperation to combat terrorism. That cooperation continues. American and Azerbaijani troops served together in Kosovo and Iraq. They serve together now in Afghanistan where Azerbaijan has shown a sustained commitment to the international effort, including its part of the Northern Distribution Network for supporting NATO's operations.

If confirmed, I will also work to enhance our security cooperation in other areas, including border security, nonproliferation, and countering human trafficking.

The United States and Azerbaijan have also cooperated for over 20 years on energy. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and progress on the Southern corridor for gas are powerful symbols of Azerbaijan's commitment to global energy security, a key element of our efforts to diversify energy routes and sources for European markets. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Azerbaijan to diversify its energy routes and bolster its critical energy infrastructure protection.

Just as we continue cooperating on energy and security, we must work with Azerbaijan to advance democratic institutions and processes and to strengthen the rule of law.

Azerbaijanis point to the 1918 constitution to say they were the Muslim world's first democracy and that women could vote in Azerbaijan before they won that right here in the United States. That constitution and republic fell in 1920, but it set a tradition of which Azerbaijanis can be proud.

Azerbaijan lives in a very difficult neighborhood. It must maintain its security and stability, but these can only come with a strong commitment to democratic principles, including respect for the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. This is an area of great concern to the administration, as I know it is for you and for your colleagues here in Congress. If confirmed, I will work ceaselessly with Azerbaijanis to build the strong democracy and economy they want and deserve.

Finally and no less importantly, Azerbaijan is a pivotal player in the region's peace and stability, and there is no higher priority for achieving a more secure and prosperous future for the Caucasus than the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As cochair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States continues helping all sides achieve a peaceful, lasting negotiated settlement for the conflict based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the U.N. charter, including the non-use of force or threat of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The United States has made major efforts to facilitate a settlement. On September 4, the Secretary met with the two Presidents at the NATO summit to discuss a way forward. We publicly commended the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan for these important steps, and we encouraged them to continue to discuss elements of a settlement. Such meetings must continue. Only a negotiated settlement can lead to a long-term peace and stability in the region. If confirmed, I will support the administration's commitment to achieving this goal.

As President Obama stated in June, "True democracy, real prosperity, lasting security—these are neither simply given, nor imposed from the outside. They must be earned and built from within." If confirmed, I will do all I can to work with Azerbaijanis to build a strong, vibrant, modern democracy and sustainable, diversified economy they want and deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cekuta follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT F. CEKUTA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, and distinguished members of the committee, for the privilege of appearing here today as President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Azerbaijan. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify this afternoon, and am humbled by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and all Members of Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Azerbaijan.

I would like to introduce my wife, Anne, who has joined me here today, along with my daughter, Margaret. My sons, Matthew, who is working in Maine, and Stephen, who has just started university, are unfortunately unable to be here.

For just over 36 years, I have been dedicated to promoting U.S. foreign policy interests across the world. Most recently, as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the State Department's Energy Resources Bureau, I have worked to advance U.S. energy policy in some of the most complex regions from the Middle East to the Caucasus to Ukraine. The core objective of my work has been boosting our energy security and diversifying our supply.

In this and all my previous assignments, my work has been defined by an unwavering commitment to advancing U.S. interests, including universal values of democracy, strong rule of law, and the protection of human rights and dignity. As Deputy Chief of Mission in Tirana, I advocated judicial independence, expansion of the operating space for civil society, and supported electoral reform in Albania. If confirmed, I will bring all of these experiences to bear in the service of advancing these and other core U.S. interests in Azerbaijan.

Many of you have been personally engaged on developments in Azerbaijan. Senator Cardin just led an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation to Baku in June and chaired a hearing on Azerbaijan prior to that trip. Azerbaijan is a country with a rich history and has the potential for a bright and prosperous future. Our relationship with Azerbaijan is important not just to our two countries, but to Azerbaijan's neighbors and the wider region. The United States and Azerbaijan stand only to gain from a stable, democratic, peaceful, prosperous Azerbaijan strategically linked to the United States and our European friends and allies.

In the 22 years since the United States and Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations, we have worked with Azerbaijan on three equally important areas—security, energy, and democracy—necessary for the country's full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. Allow me to speak to each of these three areas briefly.

The United States has long recognized Azerbaijan as a stalwart partner on international security. We remember that following the attacks of September 11, 2001, then-Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev was among the first to extend a hand of support and to offer his country's close cooperation in our efforts to combat terrorism. That cooperation continues. American and Azerbaijani troops served together in Kosovo and Iraq. They serve together now in Afghanistan where Azerbaijan has shown a sustained commitment to the international effort including its role as a transportation route in the Northern Distribution Network for supporting NATO's operations. Thousands of flights have crossed Azerbaijan's airspace en route to Afghanistan, and thousands of containers have departed Baku in support of the International Security Assistance Force.

If confirmed, I will also work to enhance our security cooperation in numerous other areas, including border security, nonproliferation, and countering human trafficking. Later this month nonstop flights will begin between Azerbaijan and the United States, following several years of cooperation in bolstering Azerbaijan's civil aviation safety and security capacity.

The United States and Azerbaijan have also enjoyed more than 20 years of cooperation on energy security. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the progress on the Southern corridor for gas represent powerful symbols of Azerbaijan's commitment to global energy security—a key element of our efforts to diversify energy routes and sources for European markets. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Azerbaijan to diversify its energy routes and bolster its critical energy infrastructure protection.

But, just as we continue our security and energy cooperation, we must also continue our efforts to work with Azerbaijan on advancing democratic institutions and processes, and strengthening rule of law. Both are essential to ensure long-term stability and to help Azerbaijanis unleash the full potential of their country. Democracies only thrive when they are bolstered by an independent judiciary, respect for the rule of just laws, a free media, a vibrant civil society, pluralism, competitive,

democratic electoral processes, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of assembly, association, expression, movement, and religion.

Azerbaijanis point to their 1918 post-Tsarist constitution to say they were the Muslim world's first democracy and that women had the right to vote in Azerbaijan before they won that right in our country. That constitution and republic fell in 1920, but it is a tradition of which Azerbaijanis can be proud. Recently, Azerbaijan decided to continue a well-publicized program to decrease corruption at lower levels of public administration. The government established six administrative service centers in Baku and the regions, which function as one-stop centers for government services from nine ministries, where Azerbaijanis can obtain documents such as birth certificates and marriage licenses. However, much more needs to be done to combat corruption and protect those who identify it.

We recognize that Azerbaijan lives in a very difficult neighborhood and must maintain its security and stability, which the United States strongly supports. But we also recognize that the security, stability, and prosperity that Azerbaijan seeks can only come with a strong commitment to democratic principles, including respect for rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Those are critical components of security and stability for any country. This is an area of great concern to this administration, as I know it is for you and your colleagues in Congress. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to work with Azerbaijanis to build the strong, vibrant, modern democracy and sustainable, diversified economy that they want and deserve.

Finally, but no less importantly, Azerbaijan is a pivotal player in the region's future peace and stability. And there is no higher priority today for achieving a more secure and prosperous future for the Caucasus than the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As a cochair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States continues to assist all sides as they seek to achieve a peaceful, lasting negotiated settlement of the conflict based on the U.N. Charter and relevant documents, and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including the nonuse of force or threat of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The Secretary of State and Ambassador Warlick have made major efforts to facilitate a settlement. On September 4, Secretary Kerry met with the Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales to discuss a way forward in peace negotiations. We publicly commended the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan for these important steps, and we encourage them to continue to discuss elements of a settlement.

Such meetings must continue, as only a negotiated settlement can lead to long-term peace and stability in the region. If confirmed, I will support the administration's commitment, at the highest levels, to achieving this goal. In this, I will support the efforts of the U.S. cochair, Ambassador James Warlick, as we work closely with the sides to reach a settlement.

As President Obama stated in June in Warsaw, "True democracy, real prosperity, lasting security—these are neither simply given, nor imposed from the outside. They must be earned and built from within." If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to work with Azerbaijanis to build the strong, vibrant, modern democracy and sustainable, diversified economy that they want and deserve. And I will work to advance our relationship in ways consistent with our shared interests and our shared values.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Mr. Mills.

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD M. MILLS, JR., OF TEXAS, TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

Mr. MILLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Johnson.

Twenty-three years ago, I served as the Department of State's first desk officer for the newly independent Armenia. So it is a particular honor for me to be before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia.

With me today is my wife, Leigh, a retired Foreign Service officer who has been my partner throughout this two-decade career from desk officer to this hearing.

Mr. Chairman, the goal of our Armenian policy is straightforward: a free and prosperous Armenia at peace with its neighbors. Achieving this goal means helping Armenia strengthen its democracy and fight corruption, liberalize its economy, resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully through the Minsk Group process, and to reconcile with its neighbor Turkey through a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the sufferings of the Armenian people. If confirmed, these will be my priorities.

Like you, Mr. Chairman, while we have been clear about our disappointment over some of Armenia's recent decisions such as its vote in the U.N. General Assembly with Russia against upholding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the U.S. Government's commitment to a strong bilateral relationship with Armenia remains unchanged. Armenia's decision in September 2013 to end its negotiations with the EU on a comprehensive free trade area and to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union I think underscored the need to achieve our goals of decreasing Armenia's regional isolation and bolstering its economic and security independence. If we achieve that, this will give Armenia greater ability to build economic and security relationships with a range of partners, including not only Russia, but its immediate neighbors, the Europeans, and the United States as well. We are stressing, since Armenia's decision, that strengthened economic collaboration with the United States and Europe can complement Armenia's future membership in the Eurasian Economic Union.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of Armenia and Turkey's signing of the protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations and the development of bilateral relations. We continue to emphasize the importance of proceeding with final approval of these protocols, without preconditions or linkage to any other issues. We have been clear that responsibility for moving forward now lies with the Turkish Government, and we continue to press at the highest levels for Turkish movement and ratification of the protocols.

Efforts toward Turkish-Armenian reconciliation are especially important at this time, as I know you know, because the United States and the world will stand in solidarity with the Armenian people next year to mark the centenary of one of the 20th century's worst atrocities when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. In advance of this tragic anniversary, it is important that Turkey engage with Armenia to achieve a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts so that the two nations can begin to forge a productive relationship.

The protracted conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh continues to be a source of concern to the U.S. Government, as you heard from my colleague. The administration is committed to a peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group process. Secretary Kerry delivered this message when he met with the Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales on September 4. If confirmed, I will coordinate with Ambassador James Warlick, the U.S. cochair of the Minsk Group, on how

Embassy Yerevan and I can assist the administration's efforts to facilitate followup meetings in the months ahead.

Our goal of a free and prosperous Armenia equally requires work inside Armenia itself. There are many fronts in this effort: progress on democratic and economic reforms, increased respect for human rights, and combating corruption. If confirmed, I will build on my predecessor's public and private advocacy these issues, as well as work to effectively implement targeted U.S. assistance programs that can focus on the development of civil society and judicial independence.

In addition, I will continue our efforts to advance market reforms with the goal of increased bilateral trade and investment to the benefit of both countries.

My work 23 years ago introduced me to Armenia, its inspiring history, and its capacity for political and cultural renewal. If confirmed, I look forward to enhancing my understanding of the country and to working closely with the members of this committee and with the Congress as a whole in representing my fellow Americans as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mills follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD M. MILLS

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

Twenty-three years ago, I served as the Department of State's first desk officer for newly independent Armenia, so it is a particular honor for me to be before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. With me today is my wife, Leigh, a retired Foreign Service officer, who has been my partner throughout my two-decade, professional journey from desk officer to this hearing. It means a great deal to me that she was able to join me here today and, if I am confirmed, will be with me in Yerevan.

My parents blessed me with curiosity about the world and a conviction that a public service career dedicated to promoting understanding of the United States and our values would be a fulfilling one. My parents were my inspiration to join the U.S. Foreign Service. Even though they were not able to travel from Texas to be here today, they are both certainly here with me in spirit.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will build upon the achievements of my predecessors and continue the Obama administration's commitment to achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives for Armenia.

The goal of our Armenian policy is simple: a free and prosperous Armenia, at peace with its neighbors. Achieving this goal means helping Armenia strengthen its democracy and rule of law; liberalize its economy, expand trade, and attract diversified foreign investment; resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully through the Minsk Group Process; and to reconcile with its neighbor Turkey through a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the painful elements of the past. If confirmed, these will be my priorities.

While we have been clear about our disappointment over some of Armenia's recent decisions, such as its vote in the U.N. General Assembly with Russia against upholding Ukraine's sovereignty that put Armenia at odds with the overwhelming majority of the international community, the U.S. Government's commitment to a strong bilateral relationship with Armenia remains unchanged. Armenia's decision, in September 2013, to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union and to end its negotiations with the European Union on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, served to emphasize the need to achieve our goals of decreasing Armenia's regional isolation and bolstering its economic and security independence. This would give Yerevan greater ability to build economic and security relationships with a range of partners, including not only Russia, but its immediate neighbors, the EU, and the United States as well. We have stressed since Armenia's decision that strengthened economic collaboration with the United States and Europe can complement Armenia's future membership in the Eurasian Economic Union.

Important to reducing Armenia's isolation and bolstering its economy is timely progress toward reconciliation with neighboring Turkey. This year marks the fifth anniversary of Armenia and Turkey's signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations. We continue to emphasize the importance of proceeding with final approval of these Protocols, without preconditions or linkage to other issues, and have been clear that responsibility for moving forward lies with the Turkish Government. The administration will continue to press at the highest levels for Turkish ratification of the Protocols. While the Protocols remain the administration's preferred path to normalized relations, the process outlined in the Protocols has stalled. The pressing need for reconciliation between the two states requires that both sides consider other confidence-building measures that they could take now pending progress on the Protocols.

Efforts toward Turkish-Armenian reconciliation are especially important at this time, as the United States and the world will stand in solidarity with the Armenian people next year to mark the centenary of one of the 20th century's worst atrocities, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. In advance of this tragic anniversary, it is important that Turkey engage with Armenia to achieve a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts so that both nations can begin to forge a relationship that is peaceful, productive, and prosperous.

The protracted conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh continues to be a source of concern to the U.S. Government, especially as the loss of life on both sides of the line of contact has tragically and sharply increased over the last few months. The administration is committed to a peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group process. Secretary Kerry delivered this message when he met with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales on September 4 to discuss a way forward in peace negotiations. If confirmed, I will coordinate with Ambassador James Warlick, the U.S. cochair of the Minsk Group, on how Embassy Yerevan and I can assist the administration's efforts to facilitate followup meetings in the months ahead.

As important as it is to assist Armenia to build relations with all of its neighbors and secure a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, our goal of a free and prosperous Armenia equally requires work inside Armenia as well. There are many fronts in this effort: enhanced progress on democratic and economic reforms; increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and strengthened rule of law and systemic reforms to combat corruption that address the real concerns of Armenian citizens and international investors. If confirmed, I will build on my predecessor's advocacy on these issues and work to implement targeted U.S. assistance programs that place a strong emphasis on the development of civil society, good governance, and judicial independence.

Our military cooperation with Armenia is strong and deepening. As a result of that military cooperation and U.S. support, Armenia is expanding its peacekeeping commitments with the U.N. in the Middle East, in addition to its long-standing efforts in support of the peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and with ISAF in Afghanistan.

In addition, I will continue our efforts to deepen economic ties, increase trade and investment, and advance market reforms, with the goal of increased bilateral trade and investment to the benefit of both countries. We have had success working with our Armenian partners in the U.S.-Armenia Task Force (USATF) to strengthen the business and investment environment in Armenia and are considering whether to begin negotiations with Yerevan on a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. There are opportunities for significant trade and investment in Armenia, especially in the country's information technology sector. But before Armenia can unleash the full potential of U.S. and foreign business interest, there must be progress on issues such as intellectual property rights protection, customs reform, and respect for contracts, so if confirmed these will be priorities as the Embassy works to strengthen the rule-of-law inside Armenia. There are also opportunities to leverage public-private partnerships, especially drawing on the resources and knowledge of the Armenian-American diaspora, to augment what is overall a decreasing foreign assistance budget for Armenia. If confirmed, I will continue my predecessor's focus on pursuing such partnerships.

Mr. Chairman, I want to close by assuring you that, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you, with members of this committee, and with the Congress as a whole in representing my fellow Americans as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. And, in accordance with the Foreign Service's own values and traditions, I will, if confirmed, report candidly and objectively to Wash-

ington about developments in Armenia and provide recommendations for action that I believe are in the best interests of the United States.

My work 22 years ago introduced me to Armenia, its inspiring history, its capacity for political and cultural renewal, and its potential to be a catalyst for regional economic development. If confirmed, I look forward to enhancing my understanding of the country and the region by working with you, the Armenian Government, the Armenian people, and the Armenian-American community.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Mr. Baily.

**STATEMENT OF JESS LIPPINCOTT BAILY, OF OHIO, TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Mr. BAILY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, I am honored to appear to you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of United States Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia. And I am grateful for the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, this committee, and the Congress to advance and protect United States interests in Macedonia.

I am proud to be accompanied today by my wife, Capie, a former Foreign Service officer; our son, Noah, a college sophomore in Connecticut and Navy ROTC student; and my sister, Mary Wheeler. Unfortunately, my parents, Joan and Oliver Baily, who did so much to nurture my enduring curiosity in the world were not able to attend today. My family has provided me unwavering support through 29 years of moves around the world, often in challenging places. To Capie and Noah, thank you for sharing with me the joys and the hardships of this fantastic and rewarding career.

Having returned 2 weeks ago from serving for 3 years in Turkey, I am as aware as you of the worrisome set of challenges which require effective U.S. diplomacy. As Russia sows conflict in Ukraine and ISIL terrorizes fragile societies and preys on vulnerable recruits, the United States must fortify relationships with friends and partners to achieve our shared goals of peace, prosperity, and security. And while Macedonia has not yet achieved full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, we share the goal of forging a Europe whole, free, and at peace, and we confront global challenges together.

Macedonia has been a steadfast partner in international security operations. This past July, Macedonia deployed its 17th rotation of troops in Afghanistan and has affirmed its willingness to stay beyond 2014. At the U.N., Macedonia has supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And earlier this month, Macedonia's Parliament passed legislation to address the problem of foreign fighters. It is in the United States interest that we continue to help this committed friend and partner achieve readiness for NATO and EU membership.

Mr. Chairman, we are all familiar with the long-standing dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the former's name, and the resulting stagnation in Macedonia's NATO and EU accession processes. If confirmed, I pledge to bring my diplomatic experience to bear on helping Macedonia to work with Greece to find a mutually agreeable solution to this issue. Such a resolution would increase

security and stability in Macedonia, in the Balkan region, and across Europe.

And even as we encourage resolution of the name issue, our Embassy in Skopje works daily to increase security, promote the rule of law, and media freedom, combat terrorism, and expand trade and investment. My experience in leading multiagency missions and in working with Europe and the United Nations has prepared me to help Macedonia confront the challenges it faces today. Among these is full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the civil conflict in 2001. And although the largest ethnic Albanian party is in the ruling coalition, gaps persist between ethnic Albanian and Macedonian populations. If confirmed, I would build on the efforts of our Embassy to encourage all parties to bridge ethnic divides and seek a common future.

And while Macedonia has developed strong democratic structures, the United States, the European Union, and most importantly Macedonian citizens have expressed concerns about freedom of the press, the independence of the judiciary, and corruption. The United States is already a partner in addressing these issues, and should I be confirmed, I will engage with the leaders and the public on Macedonia's reform agenda and not only because that agenda advances its membership in European institutions. A free media, an independent and impartial judiciary, and a transparent government strengthen the democracy and promote the prosperity to which Macedonians rightly aspire. Along with Macedonia's economic reforms, they are critical to opening up new opportunities for bilateral trade and investment.

And of course, while working on these issues, I will always remember that my top priority is to serve and protect U.S. citizens, whether colleagues working in the mission, Peace Corps Volunteers, U.S. investors and exporters, or your constituents in need of help.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, thank you very much for this opportunity to appear today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Baily follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JESS LIPPINCOTT BAILY

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of United States Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, and I am grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and Congress to advance and protect U.S. interests in Macedonia.

I am proud to be accompanied by my wife, Capie, a former Foreign Service officer; our son, Noah, who just began his sophomore year as a Navy ROTC student at Yale; and my sister, Mary. Unfortunately, my parents Joan and Oliver Baily, who did so much to nurture my enduring curiosity about the world, were not able to attend. Diplomatic service is a team effort. My family has provided me unwavering support through 29 years of moves around the world, often in challenging places and uncertain times. To Capie and Noah, I owe my enduring thanks for sharing with me the joys and hardships of this fantastic and rewarding career.

Having returned last week from serving 3 years as Deputy Chief of Mission in Turkey, I am as aware as you that we face a worrisome set of global challenges in which effective diplomacy is essential to defeating the forces that threaten democracy and peace. As Russia sows conflict in Ukraine and ISIL terrorizes fragile societies and preys on vulnerable recruits internationally, the United States must fortify relationships with friends and partners to achieve our shared goals of peace,

security, and prosperity. While Macedonia has not yet achieved full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community—and certainly work remains to be done as it continues down that path—we share the goal of forging a Europe whole, free, and at peace and confront together global challenges.

Macedonia has been a steadfast partner in international security operations: this past July, 153 Macedonian soldiers deployed in the country's 17th rotation to Afghanistan to provide force protection at International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul. Macedonia is one of the highest per capita contributors to ISAF. It has affirmed its willingness to stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014; and it supports the EU peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the U.N. mission in Lebanon. In March, Macedonia voted in favor of the U.N. General Assembly resolution supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. And earlier this month, Macedonia's Parliament passed legislation to address the problem of foreign fighters. As our committed friend and partner, Macedonia deserves our assistance in achieving readiness for NATO and EU membership. It is in the United States and Europe's interest that we continue to lend that help.

Mr. Chairman, we are all familiar with the long-standing dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the former's name and with the resulting stagnation for Macedonia's NATO and EU accession processes. If confirmed, I pledge to bring my diplomatic experience to bear on helping Macedonia as it works with Greece to find a mutually agreeable solution. When Macedonia and other countries of the Western Balkans gathered in Berlin 2 weeks ago, they declared that this dispute "must urgently be resolved by a willingness to compromise on all sides." Six years have passed since NATO's Bucharest Summit Declaration promised an invitation to Macedonia as soon as the name issue was resolved. A resolution will be a key step toward increased stability and security in Macedonia, in the Balkan region and across Europe.

Even as we encourage resolution of the name issue, our Embassy in Skopje works daily to increase security, promote the rule of law and fundamental rights, combat terrorism, and expand trade and investment—in partnership with our European allies. My experience in leading complex missions in Ankara and Erbil and in working with Europe and the United Nations has prepared me to help Macedonia confront the challenges it faces today. The 13th anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the civil conflict in 2001 by providing a plan for ensuring equal rights for citizens of all ethnicities, just passed, but there is more work to be done on implementation of the agreement. Although the largest ethnic Albanian party is in the ruling coalition, gaps persist between the ethnic Albanian and Macedonian populations, as evidenced by protests this summer. If confirmed, I would build on the efforts of our Embassy team to encourage all parties to bridge these ethnic divides and to call on leaders from both sides to increase interethnic communication and understanding.

And while Macedonia has developed strong democratic structures, the United States, the European Union, other friends of Macedonia, and—importantly, its own citizens—have expressed concerns about the freedom of the Macedonian press, the independence of the judiciary, and the transparency of government finances. As Assistant Secretary Nuland said at the Croatia Forum in July, "as we look to shore up the values at the core of the transatlantic community, the fight against corruption and democratic backsliding must now be an equally frontline concern." The United States is already a partner in confronting these challenges. Should I be confirmed, I will engage with leaders and the public on Macedonia's reform agenda, and not only because that agenda advances its European Union candidacy. A free media, an independent and impartial judiciary, and transparent government decisions strengthen the democracy and promote the economic prosperity to which Macedonians aspire. Along with Macedonia's economic reforms, they are critical to opening up new opportunities for bilateral trade and investment, another U.S. priority.

Of course, while working to help Macedonia reinforce its democratic institutions and achieve its full Euro-Atlantic aspirations, I will always remember that my top priority is to serve and protect U.S. citizens, whether colleagues working in our mission, U.S. investors and exporters, or your constituents in need of help. Such service remains a core task of our overseas missions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you very much for this opportunity to appear today. I look forward to working with you if confirmed and to answering any questions you may have for me.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.
Ms. Uyehara.

**STATEMENT OF MARGARET ANN UYEHARA, OF OHIO, TO BE
AMBASSADOR TO MONTENEGRO**

Ms. UYEHARA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Johnson.

It is a great honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Montenegro. I deeply appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this committee and Congress to protect and promote U.S. interests in Montenegro.

My husband and best friend, Michael, also a career Foreign Service officer, is not here today, but he is no doubt watching from Belgrade streaming live where he just began a new assignment with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

My son, Andrew, and my daughter, Leilani, who is teaching English in Japan, are also not here, but they are here in spirit.

But I am delighted to have my other three children with me: my daughter, Malia, an undergrad at the University of Virginia; my son, Chris, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina; and most importantly—sorry, kids—my son, a captain in the U.S. Army who just returned from a yearlong deployment in Kuwait and surprised the heck out of me on Saturday night, by the way. It is on YouTube.

I could not be prouder of all of them and grateful for their love and support and indeed the support of all of my colleagues, many of whom are sitting right back behind me this morning.

Today's hearing marks a pivotal moment in my 32-year Foreign Service career. In my current position as Executive Director for European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organizations, I lead a team responsible for the support of 79 overseas posts with over 26,000 people and an annual operating budget of over \$700 million. This team is the operational backbone of our foreign policy in the region and at the world's key international organizations. Over the years, I have worked to increase efficiency and contain costs, all the while ensuring that our diplomats have the resources necessary to represent our interests abroad. I believe my decades of experience will enable me to be an innovative and effective leader of our mission to Montenegro and a partner to the Montenegrin Government and its people as they progress on their path toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

If confirmed, my top priority will be ensuring that Montenegro attains full partnership in the Euro-Atlantic community. A democratic and prosperous Montenegro that meets the requirements for NATO and EU membership will be a stronger, more capable partner for the United States. Montenegro has been steadfast in its commitment to becoming a NATO ally and has already shown that it is a dedicated security partner by deploying forces in NATO, EU, and U.N. missions from Africa to Afghanistan. Importantly, in the wake of the current crisis in Ukraine, Montenegro sent a powerful signal by voting with the United States and the overwhelming majority of the international community on the U.N. resolution condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine and publicly supporting the EU sanctions.

Recognizing this commitment to Euro-Atlantic values, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed this past June to begin an intensified and focused dialogue with Montenegro to assess its readiness for NATO membership and promised to review its progress no later than the end of 2015. This decision recognizes the great strides Montenegro has already made and how very close it is to the finish line. If confirmed, I will work closely with Montenegro as it focuses on the areas that are instrumental to eventual NATO membership.

But our shared interests extend far beyond security. Montenegro's continued economic growth and prosperity yield direct benefits for U.S. investment, exports, and jobs. Major U.S. companies are doing business in Montenegro with several important projects on the horizon. But there is room for even greater growth. If confirmed, I will work with Montenegro's already active business community to strongly advocate for U.S. businesses. Together, I am confident that we can further enhance the economic ties that bind our two nations and help create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

A key element in the United States-Montenegrin economic and security relationship is the guarantee of transparent and accountable public institutions steeped in the rule of law. Montenegro has worked to root out its corruption. It is forming a fully independent special prosecutor's office to fight organized crime and has established a new preventive anti-corruption agency. But more can be done. And the United States is a strong partner in these efforts. If confirmed, my team and I will continue that collaboration to advance the goal of a Montenegro that is a democratic source of stability in the Balkans.

And finally, if I am confirmed, I pledge to place the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Montenegro and our mission above all else and to provide excellent services to all U.S. citizens in Montenegro.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, our relationship with Montenegro is an important one, built on shared commitment to Euro-Atlantic values, security, prosperity, democracy for all Americans and Montenegrins. And if confirmed, I pledge to work with you to further advance those values in the service of our common strategic goal: a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to answering any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Uyebara follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARGARET ANN UYEHARA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. It is a great honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Montenegro. I deeply appreciate the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this committee and Congress to protect and promote U.S. interests in Montenegro.

My husband and best friend, also a career Foreign Service officer, is not able to be here today but he is no doubt watching from Belgrade, where he just began a new assignment. But I am delighted to have my daughter, Malia, an undergrad at UVA, with me. My other four children could not be present, but they are here in spirit. My sons, Andrew, and Ryan, a Captain in the U.S. Army, is returning today from Kuwait where he has just finished a tour of duty with a Patriot missile unit, defending our freedom. Leilani is teaching English in Japan, and Christopher is earning his Ph.D. I could not be prouder of all five of them and grateful for their

love and support. Lastly, I am touched by the presence of a great number of my other family here today: my Foreign Service family of colleagues.

Today's hearing marks a pivotal moment in my 32-year Foreign Service career, 12 years of which I have spent either in Europe or working directly on European issues. In my current position as Executive Director for European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organizations, I lead a team responsible for the management and support of 79 overseas posts, which translates to a team of over 26,000 people worldwide, through an annual operating budget of \$700 million. This team is the operational backbone of our foreign policy in Europe and Eurasia and our representation at the world's key international organizations. Over the years, I have worked to increase efficiency and contain administrative costs overseas, all the while ensuring that our diplomats have all the resources necessary to effectively represent our interests abroad. And serving in positions around the world, from Tokyo to Kiev, I have witnessed first-hand the important role the United States plays in working with countries as they strengthen their security, grow their economies, and fortify their democratic institutions. I believe that my decades of experience will enable me to be an innovative and effective leader of our mission to Montenegro and partner to the Montenegrin Government and its people as they progress on their path toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

If confirmed, my top priority will be ensuring that Montenegro attains full partnership in the Euro-Atlantic community. A democratic and prosperous Montenegro that meets the requirements for NATO and EU membership will be a stronger, more capable partner for the U.S. Montenegro has been steadfast in its commitment to becoming a NATO ally, and has already shown that it is a dedicated security partner by deploying forces in support of NATO, U.N., and EU missions from Africa to Afghanistan. Montenegro is currently providing force protection in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force. And it enjoys an enduring partnership with the Maine National Guard through our State Partnership Program. Importantly, in the wake of the current crisis in Ukraine, Montenegro sent a powerful signal by voting with the United States and the overwhelming majority of the international community on the U.N. resolution condemning Russia's actions in Crimea, and publicly supporting EU sanctions against Russia.

Recognizing this commitment to Euro-Atlantic values, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed this past June to begin an intensified and focused dialogue with Montenegro to assess its readiness for NATO accession, and promised to review Montenegro's progress no later than the end of 2015. This decision is a recognition of the great strides Montenegro has already made and of how close they are to the finish line. If confirmed, I will work closely with Montenegro as it focuses on the areas that are instrumental to eventual NATO membership.

Our shared interests extend beyond security. Montenegro's continued economic growth and prosperity yield direct benefits for U.S. investment, exports, and U.S. jobs. Major U.S. companies are doing business in Montenegro with several important projects involving U.S. companies on the horizon. But there is room for even greater growth. In particular, Montenegro's energy sector presents opportunities for hydroelectric power expansion and off-shore oil and gas exploration. If confirmed, I will work with Montenegro's already active business community, including the American Chamber of Commerce and U.S.-Montenegro Business Council, to strongly advocate for U.S. business in Montenegro. Together I am confident that we can further enhance the economic ties that bind our two nations and help to create new jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

A key element in the U.S.-Montenegrin economic and security relationship is the guarantee of clean, transparent accountable public institutions steeped in the rule of law. The fight against corruption must be at the front lines of this effort. Montenegro has worked to root out corruption. It is forming a fully independent Special Prosecutor's Office to fight organized crime and corruption and has established a new preventive anticorruption agency. But more must be done.

The United States is a partner in these efforts. We are providing law enforcement and prosecutorial training to the Government of Montenegro to help in this critical work. And next week, in fact, Montenegro's top jurist—the President of the Supreme Court of Montenegro—will be here for meetings at the U.S. Supreme Court. If confirmed, I will continue our collaboration aimed at bolstering rule of law and fighting corruption. I will work with my team to advance the goal of a Montenegro that is a democratic source of stability in the Balkans.

Finally, if I am confirmed for this position, I pledge to place the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Montenegro and our mission above all else, and to provide excellent service to all U.S. citizens in Montenegro.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, our relationship with Montenegro is an important one—built on our shared commitment to security, prosperity, and

democracy for all Americans and Montenegrins. If confirmed, I pledge to work with this committee to further advance these values in the service of our common strategic goal: a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much.

Where is Ryan? Ryan, we have a great deal of gratitude for all of the children of diplomats. We know the sacrifice that you make. But you are rising above and beyond the call. Thank you very much for your service. Thank you for being here. Thank you for surprising your mom.

Let me start with Mr. Cekuta and Mr. Mills and dig a little bit deeper into the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Russia has, at times, taken steps to destabilize the conflict in large part by providing military support and arms to both sides of it and then has also tried to play a role as a mediator as well. I would love for both of you—I will ask you, Mr. Cekuta, first and then Mr. Mills. What is your understanding of Russia's sincerity about trying to play a role to bring this conflict to an end? What are Russia's interests in this conflict remaining frozen, semifrozen versus their interests in trying to gain some resolution? And is there any prospect, amidst the tensions that exist over Ukraine, for the United States and Russia to work together, to the extent that we do have common interests? So a multipart question.

Mr. CEKUTA. Thank you, Senator. Those are very important points and things which we will need to be considering if we are confirmed in this job.

The United States, along with Russia and France, have been cooperating working together as co-chairs of the Minsk process to find a way forward on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, to find a solution to that issue. Our cochair, Ambassador Warlick, has been working closely with his counterparts in this process. I note that President Putin organized a meeting earlier this past summer in Sochi with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents. But I also would note that the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents met last November under the auspices of the Minsk Group process, met with Secretary Kerry this past September 4th on the margins of the NATO summit.

The Minsk Group process is the one that seems to have the greatest—which enjoys the confidence of all the parties and which seems the best way forward. And I think, Senator, if confirmed, this will be the area where I would see working closely with Ambassador Warlick to move this process ahead and find a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Thank you.

Mr. MILLS. Mr. Chairman, I would just echo what Bob has said. Just I would underscore Ambassador Warlick in all his discussions with me has emphasized that he works well with his Russian co-chair and they have been an active participant in the Minsk Group process.

As Bob said, meetings with Presidents can be helpful in moving the negotiations along, but we are being very clear to both sides that the Minsk Group process remains the best process and mechanism for reaching a solution on this issue because it is the process that the two parties have the most confidence in.

I think in terms of arms being provided into the region, we are concerned about arms that come from anywhere that could destabilize the situation. And so we watch that and monitor that very, very carefully.

It will be, obviously, a priority for both Bob and I to remain in contact ourselves, but to work with Ambassador Warlick to move the issue forward.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Baily, you touched on some recent concerns raised about ethnic tensions within Macedonia, and of course, ethnic reconciliation is a key element of the lasting regional peace in the Balkans. And so you have got a Slavic majority and an Albanian minority. You have got reports of rising tensions. You have got, as you mentioned, the Ohrid Agreement.

What is your understanding of where the Ohrid Agreement stands? I know you are not there yet, so you are not deeply enmeshed in this process. But you talked broadly about what our mission can do there to try to get at this maybe increasing problem. Maybe provide us a little bit more specificity as to what the United States can do possibly within the context of that agreement to try to make the situation better, not worse.

Mr. BAILY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a good observation.

The Ohrid Agreement, as you know, ended a civil conflict and sought to bring active participation by the Albanian minority into both the governance of the country as well as its economy and give it a future within Macedonia. In many respects, there has been important progress. As I mentioned, the leading Albanian party is now part of the governing coalition. There is more local governance at a local level so that people have more control over their lives, but there is a lot more to do. As we saw in the demonstrations that occurred this July after a verdict, many Albanians have questions about the fairness of the judiciary. And so that is an area where we are working very actively to increase trust in the judiciary not only for just ethnic Albanians but for Macedonian citizens at large.

We are also working in many areas, public diplomacy through our Peace Corps programs to build a sense of a common future and of tolerance between the ethnic Albanian and Macedonian populations. I would note that, of course, within the fabric of Macedonian society, there are more than Slavs and Albanians. There are Turks. There are Roma and others. So this is a microcosm in many ways of the richness of the Balkans. And to get all those populations to see a common future, I think the United States has an important role given our own history and our own set of values in this.

Senator MURPHY. You mentioned the lack of faith in the judiciary. In 2005 when Macedonia was originally considered for EU candidate status, they were considered a real success story within the western Balkans. And since then, there have been significant reports of backsliding in terms of their commitment to democracy and the integrity of their institutions.

Again, I am asking you a question that you may not have a handle on until you are there, but do we have any sense of what has been the precipitating cause of some of the deterioration of their democratic institutions and judicial institutions?

Mr. BAILY. I think one of the primary causes is a sense of greater politicization of some of these institutions, including the judiciary, including the media. And so the United States does have efforts in our assistance programs, in our public diplomacy programs to address those. We have increased training within the judiciary, introduced things like sentencing guidelines to ensure fairness, auto case management so that you can avoid perhaps politicized case assignment, codes of ethics and so forth. But fundamentally we think that it is important to have a strong and free and impartial media as well to serve as an important check on political power. That is another area where we are working. I look forward to looking into all these things and to find out how we can be more effective.

Senator MURPHY. I will save my questions for Ms. Uyehara for the second round.

Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Certainly as the chairman and I have traveled together in Eastern Europe, a recurring theme always is corruption in government. You see where the Eastern European countries have rooted out the most corruption, are the ones that are more successful, places like Poland.

Ms. Uyehara, you mentioned an anticorruption process in Montenegro. We met an incredibly courageous young woman in Romania, head of their special corruption prosecution group. She was under a death threat. We found it extremely important that the United States support those efforts. Can you speak to that in terms of what your intentions would be within Montenegro to support their anticorruption efforts?

Ms. UYEHARA. Thank you very much, Senator. That is a great question and it is certainly a very, very important issue for us, all of us on this panel, but throughout particularly the area and in Montenegro. Corruption is a horrible thing. To speak very bluntly, it corrodes society. It undermines people's faith and confidence in public institutions, and it prevents the kind of economic growth and development that all of our countries definitely need particularly in this environment.

Montenegro, from my reading and preparing for this hearing, very much recognizes that it needs to do more in this regard. We have a very robust and very targeted rule of law program with two very excellent resident legal advisors in Montenegro and work very closely with all members and levels of the judiciary, the police force, and the prosecutors to try to reform those institutions and to try to make them more accountable and transparent. Certainly if I am confirmed, Senator, I will do everything I can to make sure that we have a very targeted, focused effort that yields the greatest possibility of results, and I will work very closely with all levels of society and nongovernmental institutions, as well as the Montenegrin Government, to make sure that they have a more robust society and respect the rule of law, sir.

Senator JOHNSON. Okay. I appreciate that. I think those individuals fighting against corruption in those countries really do value the leadership of America, the support of America. So I would certainly encourage that activity.

Mr. Mills or Mr. Cekuta, either one of you or both of you can answer this question. I would like to be brought up to speed in terms of the history of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. What issues were at the heart of it? What issues may have been resolved? What issues still remain unresolved in the process? Let me start with you, Mr. Mills.

Mr. MILLS. The conflict is over 20 years old, Senator, as you know. It involves competing claims to the Nagorno-Karabakh territory. Warfare back and forth in the early 1990s resulted in Armenia assuming responsibility for the territory. And its cease-fire was imposed in 1994. There is a line of contact between the two sides. The Minsk Group process was created to resolve the future status of this territory. We have had some breakthroughs in the past, but we have not been able to get the two sides to reach a final solution.

I think there is wide recognition that any settlement will require respect for basic principles contained in international law, the U.N. charter, and the Helsinki Final Act. And three principles will be key to any settlement: nonuse of force, nonthreat of use of force; respect for territorial integrity; and respect for the self-determination of peoples. Any solution requires involvement of all those three principles and it will require agreement from all the parties involved.

I think Ambassador Warlick himself laid out the elements for a solution in his speech he gave at the Carnegie Institute here in Washington in May. So I would refer you to those as very useful. They have gotten a lot of attention in both countries. And the process is moving forward. Ambassador Warlick is actually in Yerevan today building on the meeting that the Secretary had with the two Presidents on September 4. And he himself was quoted in the papers this morning as saying that he believes there is a window of opportunity now for the sides to move forward. Ultimately, though, it will require compromise from both sides and preparing peoples on all sides for compromise based on those principles.

Senator JOHNSON. What I am hearing is none of the issues have been resolved. There has been a framework. There are discussions going on, but the heart of the issues is still there and it is going to require compromise. Nothing has been resolved. Is that basically true, Mr. Cekuta?

Mr. CEKUTA. Thank you, Senator.

I think I agree with what Rick said, and I think the point here is that from talking to Ambassador Warlick and our understanding where he sees the situation right now and what he has put forward in his Carnegie statement back in the spring, the outlines for an agreement seem to be there. And the principles for reaching that agreement are sort of in place. The question now is bringing the two sides together. And this is what can be done from the Minsk Group. This is what the Secretary was trying to do in the meetings in Wales earlier this month and where Jim is working right now to try to bring this together.

One of the things which I think is important to bear in mind is that there is no military solution to this conflict, that it really is something that needs to be worked out and it can be worked out. And so one of the things, I think, for both Rick and for me to be doing will be working with Jim, working with the Minsk Group to

try to help build the framework for an agreement that could bring peace to this part of the world.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you. I am almost out of time. I will just wait for a second round, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Ms. Uyehara, I want to talk to you about Montenegro's potential NATO membership. We talked about this privately. I am a believer that Montenegro is ready and could have been offered a plan for membership in Wales. And my frustration has been that it has not appeared clear to me that Montenegro has been told in explicit enough terms exactly what they need to do from here until now, as you mentioned, 2015 when a decision will be made up or down.

What is your understanding of the communication that has been made to Montenegro as to what they need to do, and what is the role of our Embassy to try to get them from here to there in time for this decision to be made next year?

Ms. UYEHARA. Thank you very, very much, Senator.

As I mentioned in my testimony, certainly assisting Montenegro in its quest for full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community and to fulfill its aspirations to join NATO will be one of my top foreign policy priorities, if I am confirmed as Ambassador. And I agree with you, Senator. We need to do everything we can to help them ensure that they are ready when NATO and the NATO allies decide that they want to offer them a place in that community.

In June, the NATO Foreign Ministers offered to begin an intensified and focused dialogue with Montenegro. That includes a number of visits both to Montenegro and of Montenegrins coming to Brussels to discuss exactly what the criteria are and what they need to do. The NATO Foreign Ministers identified four areas where there needed to be continued progress, and those areas include defense and intelligence sector reforms and bolstering public support for NATO, as well as the rule of law issues that we have talked about previously.

I am personally very excited. This offers a great opportunity for Montenegro to showcase its successes and really to demonstrate its strong and sustained track record of reforms.

If I am confirmed, I will definitely work very closely with the Montenegrin Government and with our allies to ensure that Montenegro knows exactly what it needs to do and is ready to get across the finish line.

Senator MURPHY. You talked about public support. Montenegrins have a very clear memory of the damage done by NATO bombing in the 1990s, but this is clearly a place where our Embassy, where our Ambassador can make a difference in trying to build public support for a new NATO mission. I would assume that that is a place that you can be of help.

Ms. UYEHARA. Thank you, Senator. Absolutely. I very much look forward, if I am confirmed, to getting out and taking every public speaking opportunity and every public diplomacy opportunity there is. I tend to be a bit of an extrovert, and I think this would be a great—both in my role and personally, I look forward to meeting as many people as I can really talking about the benefits of NATO membership, as well as the responsibilities, the very important responsibilities, that go with it.

Senator MURPHY. I will just end not in the form of a question but as my one editorial comment of the hearing, which is that as we seek to craft a unified transatlantic response to Russian aggression, I believe it is critical in order for us to maintain the commitment of open doors that NATO historically has had. If the message is sent forth that the doors are shut and that countries like Montenegro and Georgia that, while they have obstacles, I believe are ready for membership action plans, do not have a pathway into NATO, then it rewards the kind of tactics that Russia is using to try to destabilize countries from inside. This is exactly what Russia wants. Russia wants an EU and a NATO that has no interest in continuing to expand partnerships. And I think that this is important for the future of the bilateral relationship, that we would be strong players in bringing Montenegro across the finish line. But I think that this is a critical component of a larger strategy to answer this new security paradigm inside Europe.

Mr. Cekuta, just one more question for you. I want to draw on your experience in energy security and have you just talk a little bit about the prospects for TAP and its potential ultimately for enlargement—it is only about 2 percent of Europe's energy needs but could be larger—and then the future prospects of a trans-Caspian pipeline that can bring gas through Azerbaijan from Turkmenistan into Europe. What are the prospects for these pipeline projects to make a difference in Europe, and what can we do to help them along?

Mr. CEKUTA. Thank you, Senator. It is also a particularly timely question because this weekend we will see the ceremonial groundbreaking, if you will, for construction of the Southern Corridor of the new pipeline from Azerbaijan across through Turkey to Italy.

In terms of energy diversification, Azerbaijan is—well, it is the country which actually did have the first oil well. It has tremendous energy resources. More work will need to be done to develop them in the area I would see where it would be a great focus for the Embassy both in terms of the broader security picture, as well as an area where we could be working with U.S. companies both in terms of oil companies but also the services companies, the technology companies that can help provide what is needed for a country to develop its energy resources.

The United States has been long engaged with Azerbaijan and with other European countries in terms of diversifying routes and diversifying sources of energy. This is one of the things which has become increasingly important I think particularly in the recent months and an area of great focus for the United States and something where I know in my former work in the Energy Bureau, my boss, Ambassador Pascual, was focused very much on engaging with the European Union, with the countries in the region to find ways forward and an area where I think we will continue to be engaged. Diversification of energy and those resources is going to be important for the well-being and for strengthening the European economy and for the ability of those countries to be able to stand up and conduct the foreign policies they want to do.

Senator MURPHY. Lastly, Mr. Cekuta, I hope that at the top of your list, we will be raising concerns with the Azerbaijan Govern-

ment regarding the number, the increasing number of individuals whose imprisonments have very troubling political overtones. Senator Durbin, Cardin, and I recently sent a letter to President Aliyev expressing concerns. We are particularly concerned with two individuals, Leyla and Arif Yunus, who are leaders of the Democracy Unit but may both be in failing health. I hope that you will raise those specific concerns regarding those prisoners but make the more general issue one of top concern while you are there.

Mr. CEKUTA. Thank you, Senator.

As I noted, there are three pillars we need to be working on in our relationship with Azerbaijan: security, energy, and democracy, rule of law. And you have put your finger on one of the areas that is really important. I very much share your concerns. It will be one of the things which I will look into when I get there. It is an area that we will work on, but I need to get on the ground and understand it a little bit better. But thank you very much, Senator, for making that expression.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Baily, I just had to take advantage of the fact that you have recent experience in Turkey. As we are facing a very real threat from ISIS, both regionally as well as worldwide, including here in America and the West, I am very supportive of President Obama's desire to assemble a coalition of the willing. I think I share the disappointment that Turkey did not step forward and offer a full partnership in allowing us to, for example, use the Incirlik Air Base for potentially launching strikes.

Can you just give us some insight in terms of what Turkey was thinking, why they would be reluctant to do so as a full member of NATO, also being, I would think, threatened and concerned about the growth of ISIS?

Mr. BAILY. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

As you noted, Turkey is a tremendously important partner of the United States in dealing with Syria, in combating terrorism. They have taken in millions of Syrian refugees and displaced persons. They are working to try to secure their border to stop the flow of foreign fighters. They have several of their diplomats who are right now held hostage by ISIL forces in Mosul. And we have had a number of strong partnerships with Turkey in combating these.

Secretary Kerry, as you know, was just out in Ankara last Friday, and I think he will be testifying later today before this committee. I can give you my view. I think he can give you a fresher view from speaking with President Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu and other Turkish leaders. So I will leave it to the Secretary, I think, to give a fuller assessment of where we are today with Turkey.

Senator JOHNSON. I understand that, and I will potentially ask that question of the Secretary. You have been there. And this is just a genuine desire to understand what their thinking is.

Listen, I am pretty sympathetic with the fact that they have 40 diplomats who are being held hostage right now. Is that why they are being restrained here? Quite honestly, that would make some sense. I am just trying to understand.

Mr. BAILY. That is certainly one of the issues, sir, that has them concerned, as it would any government. I think they also probably want to fully understand the long-term strategy going forward not only with regard to ISIL but with regard to the Assad regime. I think that is also a concern. So from my experience in working with Turkey, I think we have a good dialogue, and I think together we have a long history of coming together with common solutions. So I am confident that Turkey has condemned ISIL, has condemned al Nusrah, and will be a partner and is a partner in this effort.

Senator JOHNSON. I certainly have been disappointed over the last few years with the direction that Turkey has moved. Internally in terms of a free, democratic society, moving more toward more autocratic rule, more Islamic. And to me, this is just another symptom or a symbol of that movement away from a strong western democracy toward a different form of government, more autocratic. Am I incorrect in that perception?

Mr. BAILY. Sir, we would share many of the perceptions you have just said particularly in terms of checks and balances within the system, concerns that we have expressed regarding freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. We detail those in reports publicly. We bring those up in conversations privately. I think that Turkey has a strong history of secular democracy, and so I think there are many in Turkey who are also sharing those concerns and it is important to work with them on these issues as well.

Senator JOHNSON. What is the best way to work with them? How can we shape them? How can we pull them back in a better direction? Let us put it that way.

Mr. BAILY. Well, I think you would look to what Turkish leaders have said. They want to have the highest standards of democracy. They are a candidate member of the European Union. They are a member of other European institutions. And so I think one of the ways we can do that is to remind Turkish leaders, to remind the Turkish people of the very values to which they aspire. I think that is an important role. And I think it is one that is shared by many, many Turks. Some of these issues in terms of religious expression and other issues within Turkey have a long history and have a different history than in this Nation. So I think that is an important way to do it. But these are values that Turks share. I have come to know that over 16 years and working there.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

I just want to close out by, again, thanking the nominees here for serving your Nation over a number of years. I think the chairman probably shares my view. I have been involved in the Foreign Relations Committee now for only a little over a year and a half. I have been, as we have traveled around, just incredibly impressed with the quality, the dedication, and the professionalism of the members of our Foreign Service. I think all four of you represent that dedication, that quality of individual, that type of commitment to your profession. So I just want to thank you for your willingness to serve. God bless you and I wish you the best of luck in your posts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. A well-said wrap-up. We are going to potentially give you some homework assignments in that we are going to close the record at 5 o'clock today. So if there are any additional questions for the record from our colleagues, we would appreciate you turning them around very quickly so that if there is a chance to get you on the agenda for tomorrow, we are available to take advantage of it. I cannot promise that that will happen, but we are going to expedite the formal closing of this hearing for 5 o'clock today to at least make that an available opportunity.

Thank you all for being here. Thank you to your families, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:02 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

Answer. I was deputy chief of mission in Albania in the late 1990s and worked with the Albanian Government, political figures, civil society, USAID, other donors, and the OSCE to help create or rebuild institutions to put the country back on a track toward rule of law and a market economy following the political, economic, and social disruptions resulting from the collapse of a massive set of pyramid schemes. The focus was on allaying suspicions, reforming and strengthening the laws and institutions for the conduct of elections, reinforcing the idea that allowing different views leads to a healthy, stable country, and strengthening the ability of the post-Communist Albanian media to report developments freely. While the country's progress after the 1997 crisis was not always straight-forward, the changes I and the Embassy helped put in place contributed to Albania being able today to be a member of NATO and pursue EU membership.

Promotion of human rights and democracy has been an important aspect of other subsequent jobs I've held as well. As Economic Minister Counselor in Berlin, I was the point person working with Germany to boost the country's efforts to combat trafficking in persons. As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Energy Resources Bureau, a key focus was working with other countries to strengthen rule of law and fight corruption and the so-called "resource curse" that has meant that the benefits of developing oil, gas, or other extractive industries in resource-rich countries have flowed to only a few individuals rather than helping grow the overall economy and yield benefits to the broader population. In this connection, I sat on the Board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative for more than 2 years, and worked to develop and implement the EITI's new global standard, and to support the fight against corruption in a number of countries around the world.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Azerbaijan? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Azerbaijan? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Azerbaijani authorities, consistent with Azerbaijan's constitutional and international commitments, to ensure freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, to foster an environment conducive to a vibrant and peaceful civil society, respect pluralism, and to strengthen judicial independence and due process. I look forward to working closely with all partners to ensure that civil society can conduct its work as effectively as possible.

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

Answer. It is a cause for concern that the authorities have erected challenges and obstacles for U.S.-funded and other organizations. If confirmed, I will urge the Government of Azerbaijan to create an environment in which civil society can operate

freely, and I will work closely with all partners to ensure that they can conduct their work as effectively as possible. Rule of law is critical to democratic and economic development as well as to human and national security. The Department has raised our concerns about respect for human rights and the rule of law in Azerbaijan with the government and has spoken out publicly about these concerns.

For example, during this year, we have raised our concerns bilaterally and at the OSCE Permanent Council about the arrests and sentencing of civil society activists and journalists as well as the adoption of recent legislative amendments that have restricted the activities of nongovernmental organizations in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's progress in this area would help to deepen our bilateral relationship.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Azerbaijan?

Answer. Yes, and, if confirmed, it will be among my first priorities upon arriving in Azerbaijan. I will continue the Embassy's current commitment to have Embassy officers, at all levels, meet with those outside of the government, such as civil society representatives, and independent journalists, to demonstrate our support for universal values of pluralism and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Secretary Kerry met with the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Sargsian and Aliyev, respectively, at the Wales NATO summit on September 4, 2014, regarding renewed fighting in July along the Nagorno-Karabakh line of contact. Given the importance of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and ensuring it does not turn into an all-out conflict, what is the administration currently doing to support the OSCE Minsk Group Talks? Has there been progress in the Minsk Group talks toward reaching a political settlement? What are the chances an all-out conflict will resume?

Answer. The OSCE Minsk Group has continued to engage with the sides at the highest levels and to promote dialogue to help them reach a peaceful settlement. In November 2013, Presidents Aliyev and Sargsian met for the first time in almost 2 years in Vienna, under the auspices of the Minsk Group cochair. The administration is also committed to a peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group process. Secretary Kerry delivered this message when he met with the Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales on September 4 to discuss a way forward in peace negotiations. We encourage the Presidents to continue to work with the cochair and discuss elements of a settlement.

Question. Clashes this year along Nagorno-Karabakh's Line of Conflict have been the worst since the cease-fire was signed in 1994, claiming 15 lives this summer. If confirmed, how will you respond to these new instances of aggression and provocation? What will you do to support the successive appeals by the Minsk Group and the United Nations Secretary General for Azerbaijan to withdraw its snipers from the line of contact, which Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh have agreed to do?

Answer. The United States strongly condemns violations of the cease-fire and deeply regrets the loss of life that resulted from these incidents along the Line of Contact. We have frequently, publicly, and privately, called upon both sides to take all measures to respect the cease-fire. If confirmed as Ambassador, I, too, will strongly advocate for de-escalating tensions and preparing the public for a peace the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan deserve. I will also support the U.S. cochair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassador James Warlick, in his efforts to help achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to meeting with the Armenia-American diaspora in the U.S. before you take up your post, and regularly meet and communicate with the diaspora thereafter, on progress toward lifting the Azeri blockade of Armenia and other Azeri policies that run counter to U.S. policies intended to encourage regional cooperation and economic integration?

Answer. Yes, and, if confirmed, meeting with Armenian and Azerbaijani-American diaspora groups will be among my first priorities. Long-term stability and economic prosperity in the Caucasus is dependent on the full normalization of relations among all the states in the region. The United States has long believed that opening the border between Turkey and Armenia would contribute to regional stability and economic development. If confirmed, I will strongly support the administration's efforts to pursue regional peace and reconciliation. I would make a strong case that Azerbaijan—along with Armenia and Turkey—stands to gain from a Caucasus region that is stable, secure, and at peace.

Question. By any measure, the human rights situation in Azerbaijan has deteriorated over the last year. Freedom House, in its annual Freedom in the World report,

determined that freedom declined in 2013, and has stated that the country is in the midst of what some would call the most brutal crackdown on civil society in recent history, citing arrests and attacks against the media, activists, and government critics, as well as travel bans, the freezing of bank accounts, and public smears to silence dissent. According to international NGOs, the Azerbaijani Government currently has over 100 political prisoners.

♦ If confirmed, what will you do to secure the release of these political prisoners and advocate against these myriad and worsening human rights abuses?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Azerbaijani authorities, consistent with Azerbaijan's constitutional and international commitments, to ensure freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, to foster an environment conducive to a vibrant and peaceful civil society, respect pluralism, and to strengthen judicial independence and due process. I will follow up on the U.S. Statement at the August 14 OSCE Permanent Council, which urged "the Government of Azerbaijan to halt the continuing arrests of peaceful activists, to stop freezing organizations' and individuals' bank accounts, and to release those who have been incarcerated in connection with the exercise of their fundamental freedoms." I look forward to working closely with all partners—domestic and international—to ensure that civil society can conduct its work as effectively as possible.

Question. The Djulfa Armenian cemetery, an over 1,300-year-old Armenian cemetery that used to have thousands of intricately carved tombstones, has been desecrated but has not been included in the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report or its Human Rights Report? Why has the Djulfa Armenian cemetery been excluded from these reports? If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to restore, preserve, or protect the Djulfa Armenian cemetery as a holy site?

Answer. I do not know why the Djulfa Armenian cemetery was not mentioned in the State Department's reports at the time of its desecration, but I can assure that—if confirmed—I will direct my staff to include recent developments related to this cemetery in Department reports such as the annual International Religious Freedom Report on Azerbaijan. The United States condemned the desecration of the Djulfa Cemetery and urged the Azerbaijanis to investigate the incident. Despite our repeated requests to visit the Djulfa Cemetery, local authorities have so far refused permission to do so. If I am confirmed, I will amplify our concerns to the Government of Azerbaijan. If confirmed, I also will urge the government to protect the rights and holy sites of all groups.

Question. The European Court of Human Rights recently requested that Azerbaijan explain the circumstances surrounding its refusal to repatriate to Armenia the remains of Karen Petrosyan, an Armenian and political prisoner who was taken into captivity on August 7, 2014, and died shortly thereafter while in captivity. If confirmed, will you commit to actively support the efforts of the United States, France, Russia, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure the remains of Mr. Petrosyan are returned to his family?

Answer. We lament the death of detainees in custody and call on the sides to investigate when such incidents occur. We will continue to encourage all sides to continue to work with international humanitarian organizations to repatriate remains of the deceased and call on the sides to fulfill their humanitarian obligations. The tragic loss of life in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia reminds us that there cannot be a military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Only a lasting and peaceful settlement can bring stability, prosperity, and reconciliation to the region. As a cochair of the Minsk Group, the United States remains firmly committed to working with the sides to achieve peace.

RESPONSES OF RICHARD M. MILLS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

Answer. The United States believes that ensuring respect for human rights, rule of law, and democratic processes is fundamentally important to Armenia's political and economic development as well as its internal stability and security. If confirmed, I will bring hands-on experience in these areas gained from many of my previous tours, but especially from my work in post-Soviet St. Petersburg in 1993–95 and in Baghdad from 2009–10.

In St. Petersburg, I identified nascent civil society groups, focused on good governance and human rights, whose work could benefit from U.S. Government support, worked to obtain appropriate program funding and training for them, and provided these new organizations with guidance on identifying other possible sources of support in the United States. I built partnerships among these groups to increase their leverage and influence, using the consulate's convening power to chair regular meetings in which they came together to pursue strategies to move forward legislation or to create public campaigns to reach a broader public in northwest Russia. As the Democracy Advisor at Embassy Baghdad I managed approximately \$100 million in State Department-funded programs designed to build grassroots, democratic infrastructure and support Iraqis working to protect human rights. A particular focus of my work was to promote an Iraqi parliamentary election process in 2010 that was free, fair, and carried out in accordance with international standards. I targeted our programs to train Iraqi media on the principles of balanced election reporting, ensure local community and constituent issues were part of the political debate, and provide Iraqi civil society and political parties with poll watching capability, using new social media techniques. In addition to meeting with activists across Iraq, I worked with colleagues at the Embassy, USAID and other U.S. Government agencies to bring concerns about the election process to the attention of Iraqi officials and media for resolution. The international monitors that traveled to Iraq to monitor the 2010 election process and voting praised them for meeting international standards, transparency, and media coverage. This experience will inform my efforts to work closely with Armenian political parties and Government to help foster the same kind of positive process in advance of parliamentary elections in 2017.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Armenia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Armenia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. If confirmed, strengthening democracy and human rights in Armenia will be a high priority. Despite some positive steps in areas such as freedom of association and the press over the past 5 years, much remains to be done in Armenia. I will continue to regularly highlight in my discussions with Armenian officials the importance of democratic reform, including strengthening the rule of law bolstered by an independent judiciary, combating corruption, and conducting democratic electoral processes.

In addition, I will continue to emphasize Embassy engagement and public solidarity with those outside of the government, such as opposition party leaders, civil society representatives, and independent journalists, to demonstrate our support for the universal values of pluralism and fundamental freedoms. I will actively seek partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals to advance our democracy and human rights goals, and, if confirmed, want to explore with the Armenian-American community ways it can enhance its ongoing contributions to strengthening judicial independence, ensuring freedom of assembly and expression, and supporting an open, vibrant, and prosperous society.

Among the goals of all these efforts will be to work with Armenian political parties and the government to help foster Armenian parliamentary elections in 2017 that meet international standards and reflect fundamental freedoms. As a first step, I will encourage the government to work closely with the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to implement the electoral reforms ODIHR proposed following Armenia's last parliamentary elections in 2012 and Presidential election in 2013.

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

Answer. Despite some positive steps in areas such as freedom of association and of the press over the past 5 years, much remains to be done in Armenia.

Systemic corruption is Armenia's primary obstacle to its democratic development. Corruption is too common in Armenia and hinders economic growth, undermines public confidence in government and the rule of law, and fosters cynicism about the efficacy of democratic change. It is positive, however, that President Sargsian and newly appointed Prime Minister Abrahamyan have spoken publicly about the need to combat corruption in order to stimulate the economy and enhance Armenia's growth as a society. If confirmed, I intend to follow up on their pledges to address the issue.

The Armenian Government has taken some steps to address corruption and is working on a new anticorruption strategy. These steps have produced some mean-

ingful progress, as evidenced by Armenia's improved score on the Millennium Challenge Corporation's corruption index in FY14 over the previous year. In addition, USAID, through technical assistance and local government support, is implementing programs to increase the level of transparency and accountability in government by supporting procurement reform initiatives and efforts to improve public access to government-held information.

If confirmed, I am committed to working with the government and civil society to help them each move forward, and cooperate where necessary, to address corruption and promote democratic governance.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Armenia?

Answer. Yes, and, if confirmed, it will be among my first priorities upon arriving in Armenia. I will continue the Embassy's current commitment to have Embassy officers, at all levels, meet with those outside of the government, such as opposition party leaders, civil society representatives, and independent journalists, to demonstrate our support for universal values of pluralism and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Secretary Kerry met with the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Sargsian and Aliyev, respectively, at the Wales NATO summit on September 4, 2014, regarding renewed fighting in July along the Nagorno-Karabakh Line of Contact. Given the importance of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and ensuring it does not turn into an all-out conflict, what is the administration currently doing to support the OSCE Minsk Group Talks? Has there been progress in the Minsk Group talks toward reaching a political settlement? What are the chances an all-out conflict will resume?

Answer. The OSCE Minsk Group has continued to engage with the sides at the highest levels and to promote dialogue to help them reach a peaceful settlement. In November 2013, Presidents Aliyev and Sargsian met for the first time in almost 2 years in Vienna, under the auspices of the Minsk Group cochairs. The administration is also committed to a peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group process. Secretary Kerry delivered this message when he met with the Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales on September 4 to discuss a way forward in peace negotiations. We encourage the Presidents to continue to work with the cochairs and discuss elements of a settlement.

Question. It is estimated that Russia supplies Armenia with nearly 80 percent of its energy needs. What assistance is the U.S. providing to Armenia to help it diversify its energy portfolio and decrease its dependence on Russia? Russia, under the Presidency of Vladimir Putin, has placed a high priority on exercising its military and economic influence in Armenia. If confirmed, how will you counter Russia's growing influence in the country?

Answer. The U.S. has provided approximately \$82 million since 1993 through the Department of Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission to upgrade the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (ANPP) and to ensure the safest possible operation until its closure. For example, the U.S. began providing training to the Armenian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (ANRA) on internationally recognized approaches to performing nuclear power plant safety analyses and funded equipment upgrades at ANPP. USAID has also provided approximately \$85 million in assistance since 1992 on energy efficiency and energy regulation. Currently, USAID is funding a \$5.6 million program on clean energy and water to promote alternate energy sources, as well as supporting Armenia's energy security and regional integration.

The best way to counter Russia's influence in Armenia is to maintain our effort to decrease Armenia's regional isolation and bolster its economic and security independence. We will make clear to the Armenian people, business community, and officials that the door to strengthened economic collaboration with the United States and Europe remains open. We will continue to work with our Armenian partners to continue its democratic and economic reforms and preserve the progress made in the Eastern Partnership over the past 3½ years, in addition to the reforms made through the U.S.-Armenia relationship, spanning over 20 years.

Question. If confirmed, you will be Ambassador to Armenia during the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. On this 100th anniversary, as a representative of the government and people of the United States, a nation that is home to well over a million Americans whose families were decimated by the Genocide, how will you demonstrate America's uncompromising commitment to forcefully condemn and properly commemorate all instance of genocide, regardless of foreign pressures or political considerations?

- ◆ Will you commit to participating in events to recognize the Armenian Genocide's 100th anniversary?

In your written testimony, you state that 2015 will "mark the centenary of one of the 20th century's worst atrocities, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire," and that "it is important that Turkey engage with Armenia to achieve a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts so that both nations can begin to forge a relationship that is peaceful, productive, and prosperous."

- ◆ What do you characterize as a "full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts?" If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Turkey to fully recognize the Armenian Genocide?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the tradition of officially participating in the memorial event in Yerevan every April. The event will have special resonance in 2015, as Armenia and the world will mark the centenary of one of the 20th century's worst atrocities, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. I will work to identify ways that the Embassy can amplify our message to the Armenian people that the United States stands in solidarity with Armenia at this time of remembrance and acknowledgement of the facts of that terrible time.

To achieve full reconciliation, Turkey must come to terms with its past. Delays in fully addressing this history only add to the pain experienced by many Armenians and Armenian-Americans. Enhancing contacts could begin to build trust, which is the necessary first step to reconciliation. If confirmed, I will work to continue to promote not only government-to-government discussions, but also people-to-people contacts, cultural and economic partnerships, and other cross-border and regional initiatives.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to meeting with the Armenia-American diaspora in the U.S. before you take up your post in Yerevan, and regularly meet and communicate with the diaspora thereafter?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I intend to meet with representatives of the Armenian-American diaspora community as part of my preparations before departing for Yerevan. I will continue the practice of my predecessors by communicating regularly, including meetings whenever possible, with members of the diaspora during my tenure as Ambassador to Armenia.

Question. This year marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations by Armenia and Turkey. As you reference in your written testimony, the process outlined in the Protocols has stalled. If confirmed, what will you do to put pressure on Turkey to normalize relations with, and end its blockade of, landlocked Armenia, which destabilizes the region and prevents Armenia's further development?

Answer. We support the work done by both Armenia and Turkey to normalize relations. In particular, we strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian people to work through this painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. We continue to emphasize the importance of proceeding with final approval of these Protocols, without preconditions or linkage to other issues, and have been clear that responsibility for moving forward lies with the Turkish Government. And we continue to encourage both Turkey and Armenia to pursue direct talks that would facilitate normalization. Armenia has reached out recently by sending Foreign Minister Nalbandyan to President Erdogan's inauguration. Facilitating Armenia's regional integration by opening its border with Turkey is a priority for the United States. If confirmed, this would be one of my key priorities as Ambassador—not only by supporting government-to-government discussions—but by promoting people-to-people contacts and partnerships, and other cross-border and regional initiatives. Contact begins to build trust, and trust is the necessary first step to reconciliation and conflict resolution. Clearly, the status quo is not helpful to anyone.

RESPONSES OF JESS LIPPINCOTT BAILY TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

Answer. Promoting human rights and democracy has been a central part of my career, not only in the public diplomacy positions I have held, but also when I worked on policy issues before the U.N. Security Council and when I held leadership positions in Turkey and Iraq. My most important actions include promoting independent media in Senegal, where state press organizations dominated; providing grants to emerging civil society organizations in Turkey in the 1990s when government restrictions hindered their growth; and helping the Kurdistan Regional Government improve the rule of law and its judicial system, assisting a variety of organizations to highlight concerns about freedom of expression and media in Turkey.

In addition to specific programs and activities, as an American official, I have also engaged activists, government critics, and ethnic and religious minorities as important voices in their societies. Our actions as U.S. Government officials convey respect and often provide hope to people working against difficult odds. I know this from conversations with the individuals whom I have helped, from a struggling opposition editor in Senegal in 1988 to an academic imprisoned in Turkey in 2013. Finally, I am particularly gratified to have led Mission Turkey's efforts to establish a U.S. Government structure to coordinate assistance to Syrian civilians in Turkey and in Syria. This team delivered humanitarian aid to millions of displaced and injured Syrians and strengthened the ability of civil society and local government councils to deliver much-needed services.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Macedonia? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Macedonia? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. The Government of Macedonia generally respects the human rights of its citizens, but as the State Department Human Rights Report has documented, we have identified concerns, including the rule of law, interethnic relations and minority rights, and media freedom.

Politicization of the judicial system undermines courts' independence, transparency, and respect for human rights, including the appearance of selective prosecution of the government leaders' political enemies. Tensions between ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian populations and their respective political parties continue to complicate individuals' opportunities for education, employment, and political participation. Interethnic tensions have exacerbated, and been exacerbated by, several recent high-profile court cases.

Promoting media freedom has been a key U.S. priority in Macedonia, and is of particular interest to me as a public diplomacy officer who has worked on media issues throughout my career. Most media outlets are owned by or have strong ties to political parties. Government spending on media advertising can exert heavy influence over media content.

If confirmed, I will continue to place a premium on the Embassy's human rights and democracy promotion. I will also work closely with the OSCE and EU missions in Macedonia, which have programs in these areas that complement U.S. efforts. As a signatory to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the United States coordinates closely with the EU, OSCE, NATO, and others to encourage continued reforms in Macedonia, and should I be confirmed, I would continue our work through these invaluable partnerships. U.S. assistance is now primarily geared toward rule of law, democracy and good governance (including support for independent media), economic growth, education, border security, and military reform. I would lead Embassy Skopje in urging the Government of Macedonia to address rule of law issues, especially official interference in the judiciary, while maintaining an overall cooperative relationship.

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

Answer. The potential obstacles to addressing the human rights issues will be their long-standing and pervasive natures. It will require sustained effort by the Macedonians themselves, and continued strong advocacy from the United States and other leading international community partners, to address these concerns. Macedonia's multiethnic coalition government has made some reform progress, but the pace has slowed. Despite regular pro-reform rhetoric, coalition partners VMRO-DPMNE and DUI have enacted few meaningful reforms in recent years. Macedonia is proceeding with the legislative and practical implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, including working toward equitable representation of minorities in state structures and decentralization of authority to the municipal level; however, accusations are common from minority ethnic groups, particularly ethnic Albanians,

that the government is not doing enough to implement the agreement. Of particular concern are the areas of rule of law and media freedom, but I would continue to encourage increased judicial independence, which would boost the currently low level of public trust in the judiciary. Additionally, Macedonia has passed many laws that should improve the investment climate and interethnic relations, and accomplish other necessary reforms, and the Embassy continues to encourage their full implementation. Still, reliable implementation of existing laws is needed.

Notably, Macedonia has sustained its Tier 1 in the State Department's annual TIP reports since 2011. Aside from Slovenia, Macedonia is the only country in the Balkans to hold a Tier 1 status. The Government of Macedonia fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. We consider this a success story in our bilateral relationship, as last year the Government of Macedonia identified more victims of trafficking and adopted a budget for the implementation of the national action plan for 2013. However, the government decreased law enforcement efforts by investigating and convicting fewer offenders. We have recommended additional law enforcement efforts to combat TIP, and improved victim identification and protection, and have encouraged the government to work closer with nongovernment organizations to achieve this goal.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Macedonia?

Answer. As I have throughout my Foreign Service career, I would welcome and seek out opportunities to engage with human rights and other NGOs both in the U.S. and Macedonia. Should I be confirmed, I would continue the excellent ongoing collaboration between our Embassy in Skopje and NGOs in Macedonia, from the grants our Public Affairs Section gave to the Holocaust Fund of the Jews from Macedonia this past year, to the planned support of youth LGBT through the BeLonG project as a way to prevent bullying, with the long-term goal of fostering inclusiveness and tolerance in schools. Our Embassy also already partners with some excellent NGOs that focus on human rights issues, whose work I hope to further build upon, including Open Gate La Strada on antitrafficking, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, and HERA, which works toward advancing sexual and reproductive rights.

Question. Macedonia has asserted its right to use and be recognized by its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia, since its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Greece, whose largest province is also called Macedonia and whose heritage provides legitimate claims to use of the name, has requested that Macedonia include a geographic qualifier, such as Northern Macedonia, to distinguish itself.

- ◆ How would you characterize Greece's claims to the name Macedonia? If confirmed, will you support efforts to resolve the name dispute during your tenure as Ambassador to Macedonia?

Answer. The United States strongly supports the ongoing U.N. mediation effort, led by Matthew Nimetz, to settle the issue in the near term. We also continue to support active engagement between Athens and Skopje. We encourage both governments to be flexible and cooperative in this process. We will embrace any mutually acceptable solution that emerges from the negotiations.

Regional stability in Southeast Europe is a U.S. priority. Greece and Macedonia are both important partners in that regard. The status quo prevents the full integration of Macedonia into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

We look to political leaders of both countries to exercise leadership. This dispute is more than 20 years old. It is in both parties' interest to finally bring this issue to a close. If I am confirmed, I will continue to emphasize in my dealings with Macedonian authorities that flexibility and compromise are absolutely necessary.

RESPONSES OF MARGARET ANN UYEHARA TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to promote human rights and democracy? What is the impact of your actions? Why were your actions significant?

Answer. Throughout my career, I have worked diligently to ensure that our efforts to promote human rights and democracy have had the resources necessary to be efficient and effective. As Executive Director for European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organizations (EUR-IO/EX), I have been a staunch supporter of U.S. Government policies for the OSCE, particularly the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and its efforts to promote democracy and

the rule of law throughout the OSCE region and beyond. Specifically, my office provided funding for our contributions to ODIHR, including our support for Election Observation Missions (EOMs) throughout Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia.

In the past year, EUR-IO/EX established six new Foreign Service positions in Kiev and sent over 100 people on temporary duty deployments to ensure that Embassy Kiev had adequate staff—including a senior Assistance Coordinator—to support the critical activities to support Ukraine's democracy including its crucial May 25. Separately, we also obtained the additional resources to add another full-time human rights officer within the Europe and Eurasia Bureau in Washington, to create a three-member team. This allowed us to be more responsive to the human rights challenges in the European region, including an expanded focus on anti-Semitism, Roma issues, LGBT rights, civil society, and religious freedom.

In addition, I have directed the provision of additional financial and human resources to U.S. Embassy Kosovo, which has strongly supported the development of effective democratic, political, and rule of law institutions in the aftermath of that country's independence struggle. My team ensured that Embassy Tbilisi was able to sustain its operations, another locale where U.S. support has played a leading role in advancing democracy. My office was also instrumental in helping ensure that the United States was appropriately represented in the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva. Since we joined the HRC in 2010, my office has provided creative and cost-effective staffing to ensure the advancement of U.S. policy goals in that international body.

Earlier in my career, as the Management Counselor at Embassy Kiev from 2005–08 in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, I successfully obtained the necessary resources for the Embassy to support democratic development in Ukraine. As Chief of the American Citizens Services Unit at Embassy Tokyo from 1995 to 1998, I recognized the conditions for U.S. citizen and all prisoners were of grave concern. Prisons were not heated, often leading to frostbite in the winter, and meals provided often did not give sufficient calories to U.S. citizen prisoners. I engaged vigorously with the Government of Japan to improve prison conditions and worked closely with the Embassy's political section to more appropriately detail these problems in the State Department's annual Human Rights Report. Thanks to my team's efforts, we garnered improved medical care, warmer winter clothing, and better reading materials for prisoners. One U.S. citizen, who was in solitary confinement, was not permitted even a radio in his cell. His only contact was my quarterly visits. With vigorous advocacy, he was given access to both print material and a radio.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Montenegro? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Montenegro? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. As the State Department has documented in the annual Human Rights Report, pervasive corruption—marked by nepotism, political favoritism, and weak controls over conflicts of interest in all branches of the government—represent the country's most serious human rights problem. A second major problem has been societal discrimination and violence against minorities, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, and the Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian ethnic minorities. A third major problem is the chilling effect on freedom of expression created by the continuing harassment of journalists and the failure to resolve several past cases of violence and threats against journalists and government critics.

To address these problems, I would, if confirmed, support efforts to make Montenegro's law enforcement institutions more professional, competent, and able to effectively fight corruption and bring to justice those who commit violent acts against minorities or harass journalists. I would likewise support the work of the independent human rights Ombudsman in Montenegro, and continue to support and strengthen civil society, which serves as an important watchdog over the police and justice system. In that regard, I would support the Civil Society component of our Resident Legal Advisor program, which provides grants to NGOs involved in raising public participation in, and awareness of, ongoing rule of law reform efforts. I would also ensure that the Embassy continues advocacy on this issue in public and in private, which has proved effective in drawing attention to deficiencies and encouraging better compliance with international norms.

Progress in all of these areas will require sustained efforts over time. I firmly believe that Montenegro can—with continued U.S. and EU assistance—achieve real progress in all of these areas and thus further the protection of human rights in Montenegro. My hope, if confirmed as Ambassador, is to see steady progress in mak-

ing the police and judiciary more professional and accountable, closer to Western standards, and to see stronger protection of the media.

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

Answer. The potential obstacles to addressing the human rights issues are tied up in the issues themselves: corruption, discrimination, and limits on freedom of expression are pervasive and long-standing societal ills that will take time to eradicate completely. Their entrenched nature will be our principal challenge, as will obtaining adequate funding to continue our sponsored programming. Fortunately, for fiscal year 2014, the United States is providing \$4.5 million in foreign assistance to Montenegro; assistance which will help to strengthen judicial institutions; combat trafficking in persons, organized crime, and corruption; and support exchange programs to bolster civic participation and civil society. Our targeted assistance programs showed impressive results in the past year. For example, with the help of the Embassy's Resident Legal Advisor and Senior Police Advisor, Montenegro agreed this year to establish a new fully independent Special State Prosecutor's Office, a new elite police team to support the Special Prosecutor, and a new preventive Anti-Corruption Agency. The challenge will be in helping Montenegro ensure that its reform efforts take root and strengthen.

Additionally, while the Government of Montenegro has made significant efforts to combat trafficking in persons, it does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking as established by Congress, and is thus ranked Tier 2 in the Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report. Some positive efforts highlighted in the 2014 report include the government's increase of the anti-trafficking budget; elevation of the National Coordinator position from under the Ministry of Interior to an independent agency; and the conviction of more trafficking defendants than in previous years. However, challenges remain, including limited law enforcement efforts resulting in few prosecutions and inadequate victim identification efforts.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights and other nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Montenegro?

Answer. I am fully committed to meeting with human rights and other NGOs both in the U.S. and Montenegro. I am a strong believer in the value of civil society, NGOs, and public advocacy groups as drivers of human rights protection and continuing democratic progress in many countries. Should I be confirmed, I would continue the excellent work already in progress by our Embassy in Montenegro to support the rights of the country's vulnerable populations, including women, at-risk youth, ethnic minorities, and the LGBT community. The Embassy's notable support to the LGBT community through participation in Podgorica's first Pride March and its widely covered statements of public support, as well as its work with the Red Cross to organize a youth camp for children from economically and socially vulnerable households are strong examples of the foundation on which I hope to build, if confirmed, once I am on the ground in Montenegro.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BOB CORKER

Question. According to U.S. and Azerbaijani NGOs, there are approximately 100 political prisoners in Azerbaijan. What will you do to support democracy and human rights activists at a time when the government is intensifying its crackdown on civil society? Will you maintain regular contacts with these activists and speak out publicly in their defense?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Azerbaijani authorities, consistent with Azerbaijan's constitutional and international commitments, to ensure freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, to foster an environment conducive to a vibrant and peaceful civil society, respect pluralism, and to strengthen judicial independence and due process. I look forward to working closely with all partners to ensure that civil society can conduct its work as effectively as possible.

Question. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) was forced to close its office in Azerbaijan earlier this year and IREX—a USAID contractor—is under criminal investigation. Moreover, subrecipients of IREX, the National Endowment for Democracy, and other U.S.-funded organizations have been denied access to their bank accounts and their leadership has been jailed in some cases.

- ◆ Is the current crackdown anti-American? What impact has the crackdown had on the U.S.-Azerbaijani relationship?

Answer. It is unfortunate that the authorities have erected challenges and obstacles for U.S.-funded and other organizations. If confirmed, I will urge the Government of Azerbaijan to create an environment in which civil society can operate freely, and I will work closely with all partners to ensure that they can conduct their work as effectively as possible. Rule of law is critical to democratic and economic development as well as to human and national security. The Department has raised our concerns about respect for human rights and the rule of law in Azerbaijan with the government and has spoken out publicly about these concerns.

For example, during this year, we have raised our concerns bilaterally and at the OSCE Permanent Council about the arrests and sentencing of civil society activists and journalists as well as the adoption of recent legislative amendments that have restricted the activities of nongovernmental organizations in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's progress in this area would help to deepen our bilateral relationship.

Question. The State Department has been working for some time to secure a new Embassy compound (NEC) in Baku, in order to replace the current and arguably obsolete Embassy facility. Federal efforts to obtain a NEC, however, have proven difficult in the face of host government resistance, and have usually faced the most resistance when U.S. officials, including former Ambassador Richard Morningstar, have voiced their concerns about human rights and civil society abuses in Azerbaijan.

- ◆ What specific steps would you pursue as Ambassador to accelerate the acquisition of property for use for the NEC?
- ◆ Please provide details about how you would engage with the State Department's Office of Foreign Missions, which can theoretically leverage domestic property and other interests of the Azerbaijani Government in order to leverage acquisition of the NEC.
- ◆ What additional points of leverage, political or otherwise, would you pursue in order to accelerate the Azerbaijani Government's movement toward the provision of the NEC?

Answer. Protecting American citizens—both our Embassy staff and Americans working and traveling abroad—is one of the State Department's highest priorities. The State Department has been working to secure a site on which to construct a New Embassy Compound, fully compliant with current security standards, in Azerbaijan for several years now including visits by senior Department officials. This process requires cooperation by the Government of Azerbaijan. We have identified several prospective sites for this new compound. If confirmed, I will ensure that the acquisition of property and the construction of the needed New Embassy Compound remain a priority. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan is seeking a new Embassy building in Washington, DC, and discussions on reciprocal property issues between our two governments are ongoing.

Question. Russian aggression in Ukraine has demonstrated the pitfalls associated with an overreliance on Russia to fulfill the energy demands of American allies and partners in Europe. Despite Russian pressure, Azerbaijan is currently constructing the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which will reduce Europe's dependence on Russian natural gas and increase the continent's diversity of supply.

- ◆ What else can the U.S. do to expand Azerbaijan's role in meeting Europe's energy requirements?

Answer. We will continue to work closely with Azerbaijan and other countries in the region to ensure that TANAP and the other parts of the Southern Gas Corridor are completed as quickly as possible. Further, we will encourage Azerbaijan to move swiftly to develop new fields in the Caspian. These gas fields have the potential to add significant volumes of gas to the Southern corridor beyond the gas from the Shah Deniz project, which will supply the initial gas to the Southern corridor. At the same time, we will work with both Azerbaijan and Turkey to identify other sources of gas that can be transmitted through TANAP and the Southern corridor, possibly including gas from Turkmenistan, Iraq, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Question. Azerbaijan has provided troops to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan and facilitated the transport of supplies and personnel through the Northern Distribution Network (NDN). How important is Azerbaijan's troop contribution and role in NDN to coalition efforts on the ground in Afghanistan? Will the U.S. be able to rely on Azerbaijan's cooperation moving forward? What effect would Azerbaijan's withdrawal from this form of cooperation have on U.S. national interests?

Answer. Azerbaijan has been a strong supporter of coalition operations in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan has 94 troops deployed in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Azerbaijan provides valuable overflight, refueling, and landing rights for U.S. and coalition aircraft bound for Afghanistan. As such, Azerbaijan is a key node on the Northern Distribution Network allowing nonlethal goods to transit its territory to resupply our forces in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan has also contributed to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, including a 1 million euro donation announced in January 2014.

If the Government of Azerbaijan scaled back its cooperation with the United States, it could harm our shared interests in building regional security, diversifying energy supplies, pursuing democratic and economic reforms, combating terrorism, and stemming the flow of illegal narcotics and weapons of mass destruction.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. Earlier this summer, more than 20 Armenian and Azeri soldiers were killed during fighting along the Line of Contact—the deadliest cease-fire violation since 1994. This recent violence—which reportedly began after Azeri forces attempted to penetrate Armenian lines—is deeply concerning.

- ◆ If confirmed how will you respond, both publicly and privately, to new instances of Azerbaijan's acts of aggression and provocation, which continue to increase and claim more lives?
- ◆ How will you specifically work to ensure that the Azerbaijani Government respects the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group negotiated cease-fire?

Answer. The United States strongly condemns violations of the cease-fire and deeply regrets the loss of life that resulted from these incidents along the Line of Contact. We have frequently, publicly and privately, called upon both sides to take all measures to respect the cease-fire. If confirmed as Ambassador, I, too, will strongly advocate for de-escalating tensions and preparing the public for a peace the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan deserve. I will also support the U.S. cochair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassador James Warlick, in his efforts to help achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Question. The previous two U.S. Ambassadors to Azerbaijan attempted to visit the Armenian cemetery of Djulfa to investigate the 2005 destruction of Armenian Khachkars, or burial monuments. The Azerbaijani Government officially denied both of their requests to visit the site.

- ◆ If confirmed, will you commit to attempt to travel to Djulfa to investigate the destruction of the cemetery? What steps will you take to ensure that other Armenian religious sites and monuments in Azerbaijan are protected?

Answer. The United States condemned the desecration of the Djulfa Cemetery and urged the Azerbaijanis to investigate the incident. Despite our repeated requests to visit the Djulfa Cemetery, local authorities have so far refused permission to do so. If I am confirmed, I will amplify our concerns to the Government of Azerbaijan. If confirmed, I also will urge the government to protect the rights and holy sites of all groups.

Question. Last month on Twitter Azerbaijani President Aliyev made numerous anti-Armenian statements and bellicose threats including that, “The war is not over. Only the first stage of it is. But the second stage may start too.” President Aliyev also declared that, “We will restore our territorial integrity either by peaceful or military means. We are ready by both options.”

President Aliyev has made previous public statements that “[Azerbaijan's] main enemies are Armenians of the world.” Such statements foment anti-Armenian sentiment in Azerbaijan, which exacerbates existing tensions and makes it increasingly difficult to reach a permanent peace agreement regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

- ◆ If confirmed, what will you do to work with the Azerbaijani Government to strongly counter anti-Armenian sentiment and to build toward a long-lasting peace?

Answer. The United States has repeatedly called on the Presidents of both countries to prepare their publics for a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Inflammatory rhetoric undermines our common efforts to achieve peace. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will support U.S. Minsk Group Co-Chair Jim Warlick's efforts to help the sides reach a lasting settlement to the conflict. In addi-

tion, I will be an advocate for Track II diplomacy, and will support Ambassador Warlick's efforts to work with the sides on implementing people-to-people programs, which are so important for building trust between the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Question. Congress has enacted legislation known as "Section 907" prohibiting U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan until it meets a number of conditions, including taking demonstrable steps to cease "offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." However, the recent deadly violence in Nagorno-Karabakh and the threats of war made by President Aliyev call into question the Azerbaijani Government's commitment to a lasting peace.

- ◆ Is the Government of Azerbaijan fully meeting the conditions of section 907?
- ◆ Do you support continuing to waive section 907, as the administration has done for the last several years?
- ◆ Should the U.S. Government be providing military aid to the Government of Azerbaijan at the same time that it is committing acts of aggression and threatening renewed war against both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia?

Answer. Since 2002, Presidents have waived section 907 on an annual basis, opening the door for bilateral cooperation with Azerbaijan and assistance programs in areas limited to counterterrorism efforts, border security and protection, and maritime security. All security assistance and defense cooperation with Azerbaijan is carefully considered to ensure it does not undermine efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

If confirmed, I will recommend to the administration the policies and programs that best serve the interests and goals of the United States in Azerbaijan and the region. We will pursue these policies in consultation with Congress, utilizing the resources that Congress provides.

RESPONSES OF RICHARD M. MILLS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. If confirmed, you will be Ambassador to Armenia during the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. On this important anniversary, how will you work to demonstrate America's commitment to forcefully condemn and properly commemorate all instances of genocide?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the tradition of officially participating in the memorial event in Yerevan every April, which will have special resonance this coming year, as Armenia and the world mark the centenary of one of the 20th century's worst atrocities, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. I will work to identify ways that the Embassy can amplify our message to the Armenian people that the United States stands in solidarity with Armenia at this time of remembrance and is committed to remembering so that such dark chapters of human history are never repeated. My goal will be to honor this centenary by working to achieve the U.S. Government's goal of a full and just understanding of the facts of that terrible time.

Question. In 2013, trade between the United States and Armenia totaled approximately \$192 million. What steps is the administration taking to increase trade between our two countries?

Answer. If confirmed, increasing trade to the benefit of both Armenia and the United States will be a personal priority, building on the work of my predecessors.

In the first instance, increasing trade requires addressing factors in Armenia that discourage international investment, so I will work to advance market reforms and increase the transparency of the business climate in Armenia. U.S. firms have told us that the lack of transparency regarding customs and tax administration, as well as a lack of respect for signed contracts, are significant factors discouraging investment in Armenia. I will use every opportunity to press Armenian officials to address these issues. There have been recent positive steps in the business and regulatory climate that can be built upon. We were encouraged by Armenia's implementation of civil aviation liberalization reforms, and a number of U.S. information technology companies have opened branches in Armenia, taking advantage of the skills of Armenia's work force in this sector.

In addition, if confirmed, I intend to work to provide U.S. businesses with information about opportunities involving Armenia and will work to identify new opportunities for U.S. exports to Armenia, such as the considerable opportunities for the establishment of U.S.-based franchises in Armenia. I will advocate on behalf of U.S. firms pursuing investment projects in Armenia, as well as support reforms to in-

crease business-to-business exchanges, such as the launch of a visa liberalization process.

Question. For two decades, Turkey has maintained its illegal blockade of landlocked Armenia despite public calls by successive U.S. administrations for an end to Europe's last closed border.

- ◆ How can the United States work to finally end this blockade which destabilizes the region and prevents economic development?
- ◆ If confirmed, how will you work within the State Department and with other regional governments to end this illegal blockade?

Answer. Facilitating Armenia's regional integration by opening its border with Turkey is a priority for the United States. Regional integration is in the economic interest of all the countries of the region and certainly in the U.S. interest. U.S. investment, for example, is hampered by regional divisions and closed borders.

If confirmed, working to promote open borders will be one of my key priorities as Ambassador—not only by supporting government-to-government discussions—but by promoting people-to-people contacts and partnerships, such as historical restoration projects, as well as other cross-border and regional initiatives, such as the possibility of reopening cross-border transportation and energy links. Contact begins to build confidence, and confidence is the necessary first step to reconciliation and conflict resolution. Clearly, the status quo is not helpful to anyone.

RESPONSE OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA TO QUESTION
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Over the past year the environment for civil society, the media and opposition parties has deteriorated significantly. Some groups have put the number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan at almost 100. Most recently human rights defender, Ms. Leyla Yunus, and her husband, Arif Yunus, were charged with serious crimes. They remain in pretrial detention and are in poor health.

- ◆ As U.S. Ambassador, how would you engage with the Government of Azerbaijan to improve the rule of law and respect for civil society?

Answer. Azerbaijan's progress in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms would help to deepen our bilateral relationship. The United States believes that the rule of law and democratic institutions and processes are fundamentally important to Azerbaijan's political and economic development as well as its internal stability and security. We continue to call on the Azerbaijani authorities to strengthen due process, and judicial independence, ensure freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, and support an open, vibrant, and peaceful civil society. If confirmed, I will urge the Government of Azerbaijan to create an environment in which civil society can operate freely, and I will work closely with all partners to help Azerbaijanis build the strong, vibrant modern democracy and pluralistic society they want.

RESPONSES OF ROBERT FRANCIS CEKUTA TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. Given Azerbaijan's ongoing war rhetoric, continued militarization and latest cease-fire violations what steps will you take to condemn or restrain threats or acts of aggression by Azerbaijan? Are you satisfied with the effectiveness of U.S. and OSCE efforts thus far to restrain Azerbaijan's threats and acts of aggression?

Answer. The United States strongly condemns violations of the cease-fire and deeply regrets the loss of life that resulted from these incidents along the Line of Contact. We have frequently, publicly and privately, called upon both sides to take all measures to respect the cease-fire. If confirmed as Ambassador, I, too, will strongly advocate for de-escalating tensions and preparing the public for a peace the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan deserve. The OSCE Minsk Group has continued to engage with the sides at the highest levels and to promote dialogue to help them reach a peaceful settlement. In November 2013, Presidents Aliyev and Sargsian met for the first time in almost 2 years in Vienna, under the auspices of the Minsk Group cochairs. The administration is also committed to a peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group process. Secretary Kerry delivered this message when he met with the Presidents at the NATO summit in Wales on September 4 to discuss a way forward in peace negotiations. We encourage the Presidents to continue to work with the cochairs and discuss elements of a settlement. I will also support the

U.S. cochair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassador James Warlick, in his efforts to help achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Question. If Azerbaijan follows through on its declarations to renew its aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, what would you propose as a response?

Answer. The United States has repeatedly called on the Presidents of both countries to prepare their publics for a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Inflammatory rhetoric undermines our common efforts to achieve peace. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will support U.S. Minsk Group Co-Chair Jim Warlick's efforts to help the sides reach a lasting settlement to the conflict. In addition, I will be an advocate for Track II diplomacy, and will support Ambassador Warlick's efforts to work with the sides on implementing people-to-people programs, which are so important for building trust between the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Question. Fostering regional cooperation and economic integration in the South Caucasus is the stated policy of the United States. What actions will you take to confront Azerbaijan's continued attempts to isolate Armenia and what steps will you take to foster regional cooperation and economic integration?

Answer. Facilitating regional integration is a particular priority for the United States. We work steadfastly to end Armenia's isolation both by seeking a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and by promoting reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey. We believe regional integration is in the economic interest of all three countries and certainly in our interest. In looking at the region as a whole, our strategic interests are focused on several priorities: the advance of freedom and democracy; regional security, including counterterrorism and peaceful resolution of ethnic conflicts; and economic prosperity, including energy. All would benefit from neighborly relations and regional integration of the South Caucasus.

RESPONSES OF RICHARD M. MILLS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. Do you agree with the accounts of U.S. diplomats, including Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who served as U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, regarding the attempted annihilation of the Armenian people?

Answer. I have read original source material and later histories addressing the tragic massacres and forced exile that occurred at the end of the Ottoman Empire. I have also reviewed the independently published book titled "U.S. Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1917," which contains the reports submitted by various U.S. officials at that time, including Ambassador Morgenthau and other U.S. diplomats in the Ottoman Empire. They are all important, eyewitness records of these tragic events. In addition, I have read books by historians and journalists that address the subject. The individual stories that these histories contain are horrifying; the magnitude of the terrible acts these volumes report—over 1.5 million killed or forcibly deported—is simply incomprehensible.

Question. The written statement of the United States before the International Court of Justice in 1951 stated that: "the Turkish massacres of Armenians, the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis are outstanding examples of the crime of genocide." Do you agree with this statement by the United States that the Turkish massacres of Armenians is an example of the crime of genocide?

Answer. I, like all people of good will, mourn these tragic events and the great suffering experienced by the Armenian people. I, too, grieve the loss of so many innocent lives and fully respect that the Armenian-American community and the Armenian people want their pain and loss to be acknowledged. This is why the administration—and I—acknowledge and mourn the mass killings and forced deportations of over 1.5 million Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire as one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century.

Question. Do you acknowledge and recognize the record of the United States affirming the Armenian Genocide?

Answer. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the U.S. Government—and I—certainly recognize and deplore the mass killings and deportations that occurred in 1915. I too mourn the loss of so many innocent lives and fully respect that the Armenian-American community and the Armenian people want their pain and loss to be acknowledged. As the President has emphasized in his April 24

Remembrance Day statements, the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts of what occurred in 1915 is in all our interests.

Question. What instructions were you given, if any, regarding the use of the term genocide when referring to the Armenian Genocide of 1915 prior to this hearing?

Answer. Like all executive branch officials, I have a responsibility to represent the policy of the President on this and all other issues. The President's position on this issue is well known and on the record. The administration has consistently acknowledged, as a historical fact, that 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. As the President has emphasized in his April 24 Remembrance Day statements, the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts of what occurred in 1915 is in all our interests.