

## NOMINATIONS

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THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:45 a.m., in Room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Edward J. Markey presiding.

Present: Senators Markey [presiding], Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, Risch, Romney, Young, and Cruz.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Senator MARKEY. This nominations hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here today to consider nominees for four crucial positions: the Honorable Alina Romanowski to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq; Mr. Douglas Hickey to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Finland, Mr. Steven Fagin to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen; and the Honorable Erin McKee to serve as Assistant Administrator for the United States Agency for International Development—USAID—for Europe and Eurasia.

I would like to congratulate each of you on your nominations, thank you for your service, and thank your families who have supported you and will continue to support you in your service to our country.

I understand that Senator Kaine would like to introduce Mr. Hickey for Ambassador to Finland.

But let me turn first—would the ranking member of the full committee, Senator Risch, like to say a word?

### **STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Very briefly, with the permission of Senator Kaine. I know Senator Kaine and Mr. Hickey are well acquainted.

Mr. Hickey hails from Idaho and this is a man that is well suited for the position that he has been nominated for. Like a lot of these, when we get a really good one, he did not seek it out but the request came knocking and he answered, and has an outstanding background in the business community.

But he also has very significant experience in the past on diplomatic matters. So I think you will find him really qualified for this job.

And right now, this is an important position that we are talking about. Finland, we all know, is not a member of NATO. They are having second thoughts, for obvious reasons, and I think all the encouragement that we can give them, particularly now when the person—the entity that does not want them—does not want Finland there cannot do much about it because they are otherwise occupied, and we hope you will continue to encourage that.

Mr. Hickey, thank you, and thank you to all of you who are willing to take these positions and to serve. We are in a unique time right now. We hope things calm down quickly. But it looks like we may be in for the long haul. So all of you are going to have your hands full.

So with that, I am going to excuse myself, as I have some other things that I have to attend to. Thanks so much.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator KAINE?

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA**

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, to my committee colleague, and to the nominees. Congratulations to all of you, and I will have questions for each of you but I want to now proudly introduce my longtime friend—please do not hold that against him—but my longtime friend, Doug Hickey, who is here as the President's Ambassador—nominee to be Ambassador to Finland, and he is joined by his wife, Dawn, who is also a close friend.

Doug is very qualified for this position for a couple of reasons. First, he has decades of experience—more than three decades of experience holding senior level positions in the telecom, internet, and technology industries, and he has been in the tech space his whole career as a founder and builder of numerous companies and also an investor in those companies.

This background is particularly important for Finland because the technology export is that nation's key industry—is that nation's key export industry and they are a global leader. Doug's background in the tech space will make him a natural fit in the position.

Doug also has, as Chairman—Ranking Member Risch mentioned, notable government experience because he was appointed by President Obama to head the U.S. involvement in the Milan World Expo in 2014. He has performed vital volunteer work for many philanthropic organizations—Catholic Relief Services, the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Center, his alma mater, Siena College.

His life experience, business background, innovation, and deep intellect will be critical to this U.S.-Finland partnership.

As Senator Risch mentioned, the U.S. relationship with Finland is a very strong one but it is more important than ever. Finland has often played the role with the United States as an interlocutor on matters dealing with Russia and sometimes an interpreter as to Russian intent and actions.

Finland has the European Union's longest border with Russia. So as Vladimir Putin continues the barbaric, unjust, illegal invasion of Ukraine, Doug will work tirelessly with the mission there in Finland to strengthen the U.S. commitment to Finland's security, es-

pecially as Finland is taking some steps that are quite unusual for them—delivery of weaponry to support Ukraine’s defense, consideration of accession to NATO.

He is an excellent and highly qualified choice for this position and I strongly urge my committee colleagues and then I will strongly urge my colleagues on the floor to promptly support him. We need an ambassador in Finland as soon as we can.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

And thank you, Mr. Hickey. I think you have received about as good an endorsement as you could receive.

And we also will be hearing from Alina Romanowski, who was nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Ambassador Romanowski is a career member of the Senior Executive Service, currently serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait.

Previously, she served as the Department of State’s Principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism. She joined the Department of State to establish the Middle East Partnership Initiative Office and served as its first director.

In light of her broad foreign policy experience, leadership abilities, and distinguished U.S. Government career, she is, clearly, highly qualified to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

Welcome, Ambassador Romanowski. U.S. leadership is critical in addressing the dual concerns of security and human rights in Iraq. Progress on both issues depends on robust engagement between the United States and the Iraqi Government.

Next, I will introduce Steven Fagin, who is nominated for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Yemen. Mr. Fagin is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor. He recently served as the Deputy Chief of Mission and later charge d’affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq.

Prior to that, Mr. Fagin held several other positions focused on the Middle East, including principal officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil, Iraq, and director of the Office of Iranian Affairs in the State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

He earned a bachelor’s from Williams College and he has demonstrated success as a leader in both Washington and abroad. So welcome to you, Mr. Fagin, as well.

And, finally, I would like to introduce Erin McKee, who is nominated to be the Administrator for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Ambassador McKee is, clearly, up to the challenge ahead, based on her experience and her expertise. She is currently the U.S. Ambassador to the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Republic of Vanuatu.

Ambassador McKee is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of career minister and brings a wealth of foreign policy and development experience to her position.

Prior to her work in the Pacific Island region, she worked on Eastern Europe at USAID and in the private sector. She is a graduate of the University of California. And we welcome you to the hearing here today.

And so we will begin. But if you, Senator Cruz, would like to make an opening statement, you are recognized for that purpose.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS**

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to today's panelists. Congratulations on your nominations.

If confirmed, each of you will be dispatched to regions that are in deep turmoil right now and that are beset by multiple crises. In Europe, as everyone knows, Russia has launched an unprovoked war, the largest land war that the continent has seen since World War II.

Our allies face incalculable harm and the existence of Ukraine hangs in the balance. In the Middle East, the Iranian regime has flooded the region with terrorism and violence, has seized control of entire countries, such as Lebanon, and seeks to build a nuclear arsenal that I believe there is an unacceptably high risk they would use against Israel or, indeed, against the American homeland.

Many of these crises are self-inflicted. Since the earliest days of the Biden administration, Biden-Harris officials have pursued policies all but explicitly designed to weaken our allies and to embolden our enemies.

In Europe, the Biden administration spent much of 2021 undercutting our Ukrainian allies militarily, economically, and diplomatically.

The President inexplicably issued waivers for Nord Stream 2, providing Putin with an alternative route to send gas to Europe and exposing Ukraine to the existential conflict it is now facing.

The administration at least twice withheld lethal assistance from our Ukrainian allies, aid they would have trained with and now will be using, all in an effort to grease relations with Russia.

Biden/Harris officials denied President Zelensky an early critical meeting with President Biden in order to try to coerce his approval for such policies and, of course, on the eve of war, State Department officials were dispatched to offer broad concessions to Russia that would have crippled NATO, and once they became public that signaled weakness to both our allies and our adversaries.

The State Department went so far as to pressure the Ukrainians to cede territory to Russia—the literal definition of European appeasement.

At times like this, we need every ally we can find. But, unfortunately, across the globe, the Biden administration has alienated many of our traditional allies.

Yesterday, this committee heard testimony about India from Assistant Secretary Lu. India is a critical ally across a number of areas and the U.S.-Indian alliance has broadened and deepened in recent years. But under the Biden administration it has gone backwards.

And so yesterday in a United Nations General Assembly vote condemning Putin's aggression the Indians abstained rather than stand with us against Russia, and today there are reports that the Biden administration is contemplating imposing CAATSA sanctions against India, the largest democracy on Earth, a decision that I think would be extraordinarily foolhardy.

India is not the only country to have voted against us and against condemning Russia. The United Arab Emirates also abstained in yesterday's vote.

The UAE is a close ally of the United States and during the Trump administration was a critical player in the Abraham Accords that fundamentally transformed the entire Middle East and brought Israelis and Arabs together under American leadership.

When the Biden administration took over, however, they made it a week one priority to tilt away from our regional allies and towards Iran, and they immediately dismantled terrorism sanctions on the Iran-controlled Houthis in Yemen.

The Houthis, of course, did not wait a day before escalating their attacks and they eventually started launching terrorist attacks into the UAE itself.

Critically, this week and this weekend the Biden administration is looking to lock in their pivot towards Iran at breathtaking danger to our Middle East allies and to the United States itself.

There are reports from Vienna that a new agreement from Iran will be announced imminently. This deal is nothing short of catastrophic, and I fully anticipate that the Biden administration will attempt to circumvent congressionally mandated review of the deal.

The deal will provide Iran with a functionally unlimited nuclear program, facilitate the development of ICBMs, dismantle sanctions related to terrorism and human rights, and pour hundreds of billions of dollars into the regime's coffer.

A regime headed by a theocratic ayatollah who chants "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" is on the verge of being massively funded by President Joe Biden.

In these dangerous times, I look forward to hearing your testimonies and discussing each of these issues with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MARKEY. Once again, it is my pleasure to welcome our nominees to today's hearing. Thank you for taking the time to discuss your experiences and qualifications with us.

And now we are going to turn to your opening statements and I will ask each of you to keep your statements to approximately five minutes, knowing that your full statements will be made part of the record, without objection. We will start with Ambassador Romanowski and proceed in turn.

First, I have a few questions that speak to the importance of this committee and what—and the responsibility we have to ensure that there is a responsiveness of all officials in the executive branch and that we expect—we will be seeking from you, and I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

Do each of you agree to appear before this committee and make officials from your office available to the committee and designated staff when invited?

Can each of you say yes?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Do you commit to keep this committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Will each of you respond yes?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact? Will each of you answer yes?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator MARKEY. That is fine, and we will look forward to your cooperation in the months and years ahead after you are confirmed.

So we will begin with Ambassador Romanowski. We are now going to recognize you for a five-minute statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI OF ILLINOIS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to submit my complete testimony for the record.

Senator MARKEY. Without objection.

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me, especially as a member of the career civil service. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee to defend and advance our nation's interest in Iraq.

I am grateful to share this day with my family. My husband, a retired U.S. Navy submariner, and I raised two sons, one making their way in the financial investment world and the other expecting to serve our nation when he completes the U.S. Navy's Officer Candidate School next month.

My parents, who came to the United States in their 20s, instilled in me a deep sense of service, respect, and humility, and their guidance remains with me in spirit.

My more than 40 years of public service have taken me across the Departments of State and Defense, USAID, and the intelligence community in positions mostly focused on the Middle East.

If confirmed, I will draw on that broad experience to advance U.S. national security interests in Iraq and the region. It is the greatest honor to be entrusted with strengthening our relationship with Iraq.

From my many years of experience in the Middle East, especially in my current role as Ambassador to Kuwait, I know firsthand the importance of this critical strategic partnership.

Iraq remains a foreign policy priority for the United States and is a cornerstone of regional stability. The United States is committed to deepening its enduring partnership with the Iraqi people.

As Iraq learns to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to rebuild following the territorial defeat of ISIS, we are focused on

bolstering Iraq as a sovereign, stable, secure partner free from malign influence.

We must stay engaged to ensure that Iraq can address internal and external threats, secure its borders, limit the influence of great power competitors, while respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Iraqis.

If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of Iraq charting an independent foreign policy and continuing cooperation with its regional neighbors to enhance its sovereignty, security, critical infrastructure, and economic development.

The United States supports a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq that serves all its citizens, including its most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize U.S. assistance programs that encourage durable solutions for Iraq's most vulnerable populations.

Since 2018 alone, the United States has provided over \$500 million in assistance to support members of these communities. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting with these communities and addressing their concerns.

The United States continues to work with our Iraqi partners as they seek to strengthen their democratic institutions, responsive governance, and the rule of law.

If confirmed, bolstering Iraq's independence and advancing citizens' rights will be a top priority in my engagements with Iraq's new Government.

I will encourage Iraq's political, economic, and civil society leaders to focus on building a prosperous and resilient Iraq. I will also encourage further cultural and educational exchanges between our two countries.

Economic reform is essential for Iraq to prosper. If confirmed, I will continue to press the Government of Iraq to diversify its economy, expand private sector growth, reduce corruption, improve transparency, and create new markets for U.S. exports.

For example, I will vigorously advocate for Iraq to fulfill and even expand its arrangement to purchase U.S. rice and wheat.

Our security partnership with Iraq is an essential component of our relationship and stability in the region. The Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve has transitioned to an advise, assist, and enable mission. It continues to provide the Iraqi Security Services critical support for the enduring defeat of ISIS and retains the inherent right to self-defense.

If confirmed, I will ensure that our security partnership continues to support security sector reform, D-ISIS stabilization, counterterrorism, cooperation, and border security.

We are invested in strengthening Iraq's security institutions including the Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The Iraqi Kurdistan region is considered an example of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

I am concerned, however, about the backsliding in the area of human rights, in particular, freedom of expression. If confirmed, I will work with our partners in the Iraqi Kurdistan region to ensure they maintain their standing as an example, working towards political and economic reforms, all while anchored within a federal Iraq.

Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to leading our Embassy in Baghdad. My highest priority will be the safety and security of over 25,000 Americans who live and work in Iraq.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Romanowski follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI

Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me, especially as a member of the career civil service. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee to defend and advance our nation's interests in Iraq.

I am grateful to share this day with my family. My husband, a retired U.S. Navy submariner, and I raised two sons—one making his way in the financial investment world and the other expecting to serve our nation when he completes the U.S. Navy's Officer Candidate School next month. My parents, who came to the United States in their 20s, instilled in me a deep sense of service, respect, and humility and their guidance remains with me in spirit.

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Iraq remains a foreign policy priority for the United States and is a cornerstone of regional stability. The United States is committed to deepening its enduring partnership with the Iraqi people. As Iraq learns to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to rebuild following the territorial defeat of ISIS, we are focused on bolstering Iraq as a sovereign, stable, secure partner, free from malign influence. We must stay engaged to ensure that Iraq can address internal and external threats, secure its borders, limit the influence of great power competitors, while respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Iraqis. If confirmed, I will underscore the importance of Iraq charting an independent foreign policy and continuing cooperation with its regional neighbors to enhance its sovereignty, security, critical infrastructure, and economic development.

The United States supports a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq that serves all its citizens, including its most vulnerable and marginalized communities. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize U.S. assistance programs that encourage durable solutions for Iraq's most vulnerable populations. Since 2018 alone, the United States has provided over \$500 million in assistance to support members of these communities. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting with these communities and addressing their concerns.

The United States continues to work with our Iraqi partners as they seek to strengthen their democratic institutions, responsive governance, and the rule of law. If confirmed, bolstering Iraq's independence and advancing citizen rights will be a top priority in my engagements with Iraq's new Government. I will encourage Iraq's political, economic, and civil society leaders to focus on building a prosperous and resilient Iraq. I will also encourage further cultural and education exchanges between our two countries.

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ening Iraqi security institutions, including the Peshmerga in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, to strengthen regional stability.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Region is considered an example of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. I am concerned, however, about backsliding in the area of human rights, in particular freedom of expression. If confirmed, I will work with our partners in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to ensure they maintain their standing as an example, working towards political and economic reforms, all while anchored within federal Iraq.

Finally, if confirmed, I look forward to leading our Embassy in Baghdad. My highest priorities will be to strengthen the U.S.-Iraq partnership and most importantly, the safety and security of over 25,000 Americans who live and work in Iraq.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Ambassador.

Mr. Hickey, you are recognized for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS T. HICKEY OF IDAHO, NOMINATED  
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTEN-  
TIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUB-  
LIC OF FINLAND**

Mr. HICKEY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today.

I am honored to be the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Finland and I am deeply grateful to President Biden for the confidence he has placed in me.

I would like to thank my family and friends for all their support and love during this process. I would like to thank my wife, who is with me here today, Dawn, and my children, Bob, Kristen, Cole, Parker, and Lyra for all their love and support.

The United States and Finland share close security, economic, geopolitical, and cultural ties. Like the United States, Finland is committed to safeguarding democracy, protecting fundamental human rights, combating climate change, promoting technological and economic advance, and ensuring peace and security throughout the world.

I firmly believe we can continue to accomplish many American policy objectives with the support of our deep transatlantic cooperation with Finland.

If confirmed, the following are the top priorities I would seek to advance.

First, my top priority is always to ensure the safety and security of American citizens. I would work with Finnish officials in Embassy Helsinki to ensure Americans visiting or living in Finland were afforded all protections and rights to which they are entitled.

I would do my utmost to protect the safety and well being of Embassy personnel and their families. I would also have an open-door policy to gather ideas on how to be the most effective team, how to keep our Embassy community morale high, and how to best serve American people at home and abroad.

A second priority, if confirmed, will be to further deepen our defense coordination with defense. As a NATO enhanced opportunities partner, Finland has contributed much to our shared global defense objectives.

The Finnish Government announced in December that it would purchase 64 new F-35 fighter jets, which will deepen U.S.-Finland security and defense ties for decades to come.

And as a fellow and like-minded member of the Arctic Council, Finland is an instrumental partner in shaping Arctic policy, a region of the world garnering increased attention for its economic, security, and geopolitical prospects.

A third priority would be to advance American economic interest in Finland, particularly, by growing and empowering bilateral business ties. The United States and Finland work well together as two of the world's leading technology innovators with collaboration in all levels of the private sector, academia, civil society, and government.

We should continue this work with Finland to open new sources of economic opportunity in areas such as green technologies, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and 5G and 6G.

The United States should build upon our shared economic interest and capabilities with Finland not only to contribute to increased job creation and economic prosperity for both nations, but also because our shared values and technological prowess will provide a stronger defense against adversaries who may seek to compromise intellectual property or sensitive infrastructure.

Lastly, if confirmed, I would work to advance joint efforts by the United States and Finland to address global challenges. While the Finnish and American people share a love for democracy and freedom, there are others around the globe seeking to impose their authoritarian beliefs.

Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine is just one example. These adversaries spread disinformation, disrupt peace, imprison dissenters, support violence, and suppress fundamental rights.

With Finland, I believe the United States has a trusted partner in defending democratic values and countering tactics of authoritarian regimes and malicious non-state actors.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finland on the unprecedented challenges facing our world such as fighting climate change, safeguarding the rules-based international order, countering corruption, and combating COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the U.S. relationship with Finland is best equipped to address these and the challenges that come.

Let me conclude by saying it would be my honor to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Finland. Thank you for your time and consideration today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hickey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS T. HICKEY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today. I am honored to be the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Finland, and I am deeply grateful to President Biden for the confidence he has placed in me.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support. I would like to thank my wife Dawn and my children, Bob, Kristen, Cole, Parker, and Lyra for all their love and support.

The United States and Finland share close security, economic, geopolitical, and cultural ties. Like the United States, Finland is committed to safeguarding democracy, protecting fundamental and human rights, combatting climate change, promoting technological and economic advancement, and ensuring peace and security throughout the world. I firmly believe we can continue to accomplish many American policy objectives with the support of our deep transatlantic cooperation with Finland. If confirmed, the following are the top priorities I would seek to advance:

First, my top priority is always to ensure the safety and security of American citizens. I would work with Finnish officials and Embassy Helsinki to ensure Americans visiting or living in Finland were afforded all protections and rights to which they are entitled. I would do my utmost to protect the safety and well-being of Embassy personnel and their family members. I would also have an open-door policy to gather ideas on how to be the most effective team, how to keep our Embassy community morale high, and how to best serve the American people at home and abroad.

A second priority, if confirmed, will be to further deepen our defense coordination with the Finns. As a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner, Finland has contributed much to our shared global defense objectives. The Finnish Government announced in December that it would purchase 64 new F-35 fighter jets, which will deepen U.S.-Finland security and defense ties for decades to come. And as a fellow and like-minded member of the Arctic Council, Finland is an instrumental partner in shaping Arctic policy—a region of the world garnering increasing attention for its economic, security, and geopolitical prospects.

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If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finland on the unprecedented challenges facing our world, such as fighting climate change, safeguarding the rules-based international order, countering corruption, and combating COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the U.S. relationship with Finland is best equipped to address these and the challenges that come.

Let me conclude by saying that it would be an honor to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Finland. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Hickey.  
And now to you, Mr. Fagin. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF STEVEN H. FAGIN OF NEW JERSEY, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN**

Mr. FAGIN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to submit my complete testimony for the record.

Senator MARKEY. Without objection.

Mr. FAGIN. Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, distinguished members of the committee, I am thankful for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this honor and their confidence in me. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with members of this committee and Congress on the critical U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Yemen.

First, I would like to thank my family for their steadfast support during my 25 years in the Foreign Service, which has often taken me far away from them.

My sister, Randi, and her husband, Rob, are in attendance today. I am also one-half of a Foreign Service tandem couple. The other half, Natasha Franceschi, is Deputy Chief of Mission in Tunisia. We have served in some challenging places together, including Baghdad, and Natasha is watching these proceedings from Tunis.

When I was in college in the late 1980s, I participated in a student exchange program to the USSR under President Reagan's U.S.-Soviet exchange initiative. This was a life-changing experience that led me to pursue a career in diplomacy.

I have spent much of my career working in and on conflict and post-conflict countries, and I have witnessed firsthand the human and physical devastation resulting from war, especially in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Iraq.

The escalation of hostilities and dramatic increase in civilian casualties in Yemen over the last few months are deeply troubling, both for the long-suffering people of Yemen and for the entire Gulf region.

However, continued conflict is not inevitable and peace in Yemen is possible. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking to support U.N.-led efforts to secure a durable and inclusive resolution to the conflict, which also addresses Yemen's dire economic situation.

I know we are all profoundly concerned by increasingly aggressive Houthi actions in recent months, including attacks impacting civilians and civilian infrastructure in the UAE and Saudi Arabia using missile and armed drone technology provided by Iran.

There are more than 130,000 Americans living in these countries and their safety is under threat from such attacks.

I assure you that, if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than ensuring the safety and security of our citizens.

The unlawful flow of weapons from Iran to the Houthis is also enabling the continued Houthi offensive in Marib, complicating efforts to get the parties to the negotiating table and extending the suffering of civilians.

Strengthening enforcement of the targeted U.N. arms embargo for Yemen to cut off the flow of arms to the Houthis must be a priority.

Mr. Chairman, the ongoing Houthi detention of current and former members of our local Yemeni staff in Sana'a is deplorable and an affront to the entire international community.

The United States has communicated this to the Houthi leadership, and the U.N. Security Council has condemned these Houthi actions in the strongest terms, as has the U.S. Congress.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well being of all current and former U.S. Government employees in Yemen and a return to U.S. control of our former Embassy compound.

On February 23rd, the Treasury Department announced additional designations of members of an international network led by IRGC Quds Force and Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal involved in funding the Houthis' war against the Government of Yemen.

The United States will continue targeted designations of individuals and entities that seek to perpetuate the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen for their own gain.

The United States continues to lead the international community's humanitarian response to the dire humanitarian and economic conditions facing the people of Yemen, and our partners must also do their share to fund this response.

Ensuring partners can deliver crucial assistance without interference or delay, and enacting reforms to restore the foundations of Yemen's economy are critical.

Our Yemen policy must continue to be fully aligned with our global policy priorities and principles. If confirmed, I will aim to strengthen coordination with the Government of Yemen and other partners in our shared counterterrorism fight against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other violent extremists.

President Biden and Secretary Blinken have been clear that human rights are central to U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that this remains the case in Yemen. Without accountability and justice there cannot be a durable and lasting peace.

Mr. Chairman, the challenges in Yemen today are, undoubtedly, complex, as you know. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fagin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEVEN H. FAGIN

Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, distinguished members of the committee, I'm thankful for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this honor and their confidence in me. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with members of this committee and Congress on the critical U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Yemen.

First, I would like to thank my family for their steadfast support during my 25 years in the Foreign Service, which has often taken me away from them. My sister Randi and her husband Rob are in attendance today. I am one-half of a Foreign Service tandem couple. The other half, Natasha Franceschi, is Deputy Chief of Mission in Tunisia. We've served in some challenging places together, including Baghdad, and Natasha is watching these proceedings from Tunis.

When I was in college in the late 1980s, I participated in a student exchange program to the USSR under President Reagan's U.S.-Soviet Exchange Initiative. This was a life-changing experience that led me to pursue a career in diplomacy. I've spent much of my career working in and on conflict and post-conflict countries, and I've witnessed firsthand the human and physical devastation resulting from war, especially in Iraq and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The escalation of hostilities and dramatic increase in civilian casualties in Yemen over the last few months are deeply troubling both for the long-suffering people of Yemen and for the entire Gulf region. However, continued conflict is not inevitable,

and peace in Yemen is possible. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking to support U.N.-led efforts to secure a durable and inclusive resolution to the conflict, which also addresses Yemen's dire economic situation.

I know we are all profoundly concerned by increasingly aggressive Houthi actions in recent months, including attacks impacting civilians and civilian infrastructure in the UAE and Saudi Arabia using missile and armed drone technology provided by Iran. There are more than 130,000 Americans living in these countries, and their safety is under threat from such attacks. I assure you that if confirmed, I will have no higher priority than ensuring the safety and security of our citizens.

The unlawful flow of weapons from Iran to the Houthis is also enabling the continued Houthi offensive in Marib, complicating efforts to get the parties to the negotiating table, and extending the suffering of civilians. Strengthening enforcement of the targeted U.N. arms embargo for Yemen, to cut off the flow of arms to the Houthis, must be a priority.

Mr. Chairman, the ongoing Houthi detention of current and former members of our local Yemeni staff in Sana'a is deplorable and an affront to the entire international community. The United States has communicated this to the Houthi leadership, and the U.N. Security Council has condemned these Houthi actions in the strongest terms, as has the U.S. Congress. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of all current and former U.S. Government employees in Yemen and a return to U.S. control of our former Embassy compound.

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The United States continues to lead the international community's response to the dire humanitarian and economic conditions facing the people of Yemen, and our partners must also do their share to fund this response. Ensuring implementing partners can deliver crucial assistance without interference or delay, and enacting reforms to restore the foundations of Yemen's economy, are critical.

Our Yemen policy must continue to be fully aligned with our global foreign policy priorities and principles. If confirmed, I will aim to strengthen coordination with the Government of Yemen and other partners in our shared counter-terrorism fight against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other violent extremists.

President Biden and Secretary Blinken have been clear that human rights are central to U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that this remains the case in Yemen. Without accountability and justice, there cannot be a durable and lasting peace.

Mr. Chairman, the challenges in Yemen today are undoubtedly complex as you know. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Fagin.

And now we will turn to you, Ambassador McKee.

Welcome, and whenever you feel comfortable please begin.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. MCKEE. Thank you, Chairman.

With your permission, I would like my full testimony to be submitted for the record.

Senator MARKEY. Without objection.

Ms. MCKEE. Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Cruz, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia for the United States Agency for International Development.

I would like to thank the President for his trust in me and I am deeply grateful for the honor to be nominated to serve in a position

at USAID, an agency I dedicated much of my career to at a moment when its leadership and development expertise are so urgently needed in Europe and Eurasia.

I am grateful to the members of the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today, and if confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interest in this critical region of the world.

I would like to thank my family for their steadfast support, particularly my husband, Sean, and my daughter, Caitlin, who is here with me today. Their unconditional love and encouragement have been my rock throughout my public service career.

From Moscow to Lima, from Baghdad to Jakarta, they have stood by my side and shared in the sacrifice and adventures of nearly 30 years in the Foreign Service. I could not have made this journey without them, and for that I am truly grateful.

Since 1995, I have had the tremendous opportunity to represent the United States in nine overseas assignments as well as here in Washington, D.C., with the U.S. Agency for International Development and currently serving as U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

It has been my privilege to serve the American people and advance our country's interests, promote our values and principles, and offer host country nations a model for hope, security, prosperity across a variety of diverse and complex contexts.

If confirmed, I will have the distinct honor and responsibility to lead the USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia at a time when the stakes are as high as we have seen since USAID first opened its doors in the region's newly independent states 30 years ago.

Although many of USAID's partners in Eastern Europe and Eurasia have achieved remarkable democratic and economic progress, the region's development trajectory is under increasing threat.

The Kremlin's malign influence across the region has expanded and intensified in recent years, and with Russia's invasion of Ukraine we are facing a grave and dangerous moment.

The People's Republic of China is also increasingly leveraging its economic might to capture economies, undermine sovereign decision-making, and weaken democratic norms.

While the people of the region work to secure prosperity, a stronger voice in government, and independence from foreign manipulation, powerful anti-democratic elites, both domestic and foreign, seek to bend the region toward a future of authoritarian rule and pervasive corruption.

USAID is a critical counterweight to the predatory partnerships peddled by authoritarian regimes. USAID's work, work that reflects American quality, integrity, and commitment, helps host country partners secure mutually beneficial investments, connectivity, peace, security, and development impact with results that will be sustained and endure, and critically, most critically, USAID inspires hope among people of the region that the democratic dividend that is good governance and a fair economic playing field are attainable.

Let me also note that while the region's challenges are great, so too are the opportunities from democratic bright spots such as

Moldova and Armenia to the increasingly perilous conditions in Belarus and the ongoing political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The region's people continue to stand up for transparent accountable government, human rights, human dignity, at times at great risk to their own personal safety.

Their efforts to lay the foundation for the region's democratic future must be protected and safeguarded. Their hard-fought gains to support their courageous efforts and encourage further progress is a top priority.

Whether we are confronting the COVID-19 pandemic, corruption, economic or social inequality, climate change, threats to energy security, an outwardly aggressive Russia and increasingly assertive China, or cyber threats, the United States is most effective when we partner with our allies and our friends, and support those striving every day in their countries to build a democratic, prosperous, and stable future.

If confirmed, I will work closely with our allies and our partners to promote peace and security, increase economic opportunity, and advance respect for fundamental freedom and human rights, building enduring partnerships with our host countries in the process.

Thank you for this invitation to appear before you and I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. McKee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia for the United States Agency for International Development.

I would like to thank the President for his trust in me, and I am deeply grateful for the honor of being nominated to serve in a position at USAID, an Agency I dedicated much of my career to, at a moment when its leadership and development expertise are so urgently needed in Europe and Eurasia. I am grateful to the members of the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests in this critical region of the world.

I would like to thank my family for their steadfast support, particularly my husband Sean and my daughter Caitlin. Their unconditional love and encouragement have been my rock throughout my public service career—from Moscow to Lima—from Baghdad to Jakarta, they have stood by my side and shared in the sacrifice and adventures of nearly 30 years in the Foreign Service. I could have not made this journey without them, and for that I am truly grateful.

Since 1995, I have had the tremendous opportunity to represent the United States in nine overseas assignments, as well as here in Washington, D.C., with the U.S. Agency for International Development, and currently as U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. It has been my privilege to serve the American people and advance our country's interests, promote our values and principles, and offer host-country nations a model for hope, security, and prosperity across a variety of diverse contexts.

If confirmed, I will have the distinct honor and responsibility to lead the USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia at a time when the stakes are as high as we have seen since USAID first opened its doors in the region's newly independent nations thirty years ago.

Although many of USAID's partners in Europe and Eurasia have achieved remarkable democratic and economic progress, the region's development trajectory is under increasing threat. The Kremlin's malign influence across the region has expanded and intensified in recent years, and with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are facing a grave and dangerous moment in the region.

The People's Republic of China is also increasingly leveraging its economic might to capture economies, undermine sovereign decision-making, and weaken democratic norms.



While the people of the region work to secure prosperity, a stronger voice in government, and independence from foreign manipulation, powerful, anti-democratic elites, both domestic and foreign, seek to bend the region toward a future of authoritarian rule and pervasive corruption.

USAID is a critical counterweight to the predatory partnerships peddled by authoritarian regimes. USAID's work—work that reflects American quality, integrity, and commitment—helps host country partners secure mutually beneficial investments, connectivity, peace, security, and development impact, with results that will be sustained and endure. And critically, USAID inspires hope among the people of the region that the democratic dividend—good governance and a fair economic playing field—are attainable.

Let me also note that while the region's challenges are great, so too are the opportunities. From democratic bright spots, such as Moldova and Armenia, to the increasingly perilous conditions in Belarus and the on-going political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region's people continue to stand up for transparent, accountable government, human rights, and human dignity—at times, even at great risk to their own personal safety. Their efforts lay the foundation for the region's democratic future. USAID can and must do its part to safeguard their hard-fought gains, support their courageous efforts, and encourage further progress.

Whether we are confronting the COVID-19 pandemic, corruption, economic or social inequality, climate change, threats to energy security, an outwardly aggressive Russia, an increasingly assertive China, or cyber threats, the United States is most effective when we partner with our allies and support those striving every day in their countries to build a democratic, prosperous future.

If confirmed, I will work closely with our allies and partners to promote peace and security, increase economic opportunity, and advance respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, building enduring partnership with our host countries in the process.

Thank you for this invitation to appear before you, I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

And now we will turn to a round of questions from the Senators to our panel. The chair will recognize himself and begin with you, Ambassador McKee.

We are seeing a humanitarian crisis unfold before our eyes in and around Ukraine. As of this morning, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that since the start of the Russian invasion on February 24th more than 1 million refugees have already fled Ukraine, with the highest numbers crossing into Poland and Hungary.

To the extent that you can answer, what is USAID doing right now to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukrainians and others who are fleeing the Russian invasion and, from your perspective, what role should USAID be playing in the days and weeks and months and years to come as the humanitarian needs become even greater?

Ms. MCKEE. Thank you, Chairman, very much for that question.

It is our utmost priority, if confirmed, and I will make it our utmost priority to stave off the human tragedy.

I understand that in the past few days USAID has announced the stand up of a disaster assistance response team, or DART team, to oversee our humanitarian response in close partnership with the State Department's PRM Bureau, which will lead the refugee response in Poland and other neighboring countries.

Administrator Power visited the Poland-Ukraine border over the weekend to see firsthand the growing humanitarian needs caused by the invasion and to signal USAID's prioritization of close coordination with our European partners.

I also understand that from the earliest days our Bureau of Humanitarian Response in USAID signaled our concerns about the

growing threat from Russia to the European Union and to echo their counterpart in the EU, and I understand that in anticipation of a worst case scenario they introduced maximum flexibility in its response mechanisms to be able to scale up and deliver the American assistance—foreign assistance through our U.N. partners and allies where it is needed most.

On February 27th, the United States announced nearly \$54 million in additional humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, including \$28 million for USAID to support critically needed health care, safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, supplies, and protection for vulnerable children.

So we are prioritizing, as I understand, the safety and security not only of the refugees in the crisis that we are facing but of our staff and citizens within the Ukrainian borders and implementing partners who remain bravely protecting and safeguarding U.S. investments where they can.

If confirmed, everything that we can do to stave off this human tragedy, deliver humanitarian assistance, deliver response immediately and build the foundation for recovery in the medium and long term should the crisis, hopefully, wind down will be my top priority, if confirmed.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. And, as you know, the Biden administration increased its request for assistance to Europe by \$10.8 million for fiscal year 2022 for activities including supporting the rule of law and democracy in Central Europe, combating anti-Semitism, and strengthening energy security and diversification.

How is USAID programming furthering those goals and are there other types of programs that you would prioritize in the region?

Ms. MCKEE. Thank you, Senator. That is an important question as well and I think, today, it is more acute and critical than ever to stop the democratic backsliding and provide market-based solutions for energy diversification to stop the dependence on Gazprom and the Kremlin, and to identify ways in which we can support the countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia to continue their Euro-Atlantic integration on an accelerated path, and that means shoring up both democratic institutions as well as civil society to give people a voice and an opportunity to be able to strengthen good governance as well as the free and independent media and other programs that I know exist that need to be amplified now more than ever.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Ambassador.

Let me turn now and recognize Senator Cruz for a round of questions.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Fagin, let us start with you. When you and I sat down and met, you emphasized the U.N.-led political process.

This week, the U.N. Security Council approved a resolution which designates the Houthi militia as a terrorist organization, making it subject to sanctions, along with renewing asset freezes and travel bans and extending the arms embargo.

This is a significant development, to say the least. What signal does this send when the United Nations Security Council is acting upon a stronger and more unified message against terrorism while

one of Biden's first moves in office was to remove the Houthis as a designated terrorist group?

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, thank you for the question, and as I noted in my opening remarks, I share your concerns about the Houthis' deplorable actions, their terrorist attacks, using ballistic missile and drone technology against the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

As the President has said, the issue of the possible designation of the Houthis as an FTO is under review by the administration. My understanding is that that review is considering the anticipated impact of such a designation on the behavior of the Houthis as well as the anticipated impact on the humanitarian situation.

Senator CRUZ. Mr. Fagin, I can say we can assess the impact so far that it has been disastrous. The Biden administration ostentatiously made it a week one priority to undo terrorism sanctions on the Iran-controlled Houthis.

On January 25th, just five days into the administration, they approved all transactions involving the Houthis for a month. On January 27th, in his first appearance in the press room, Secretary Blinken said he was, quote, "particularly focused" on the question of undoing the terrorism designations.

On February 5th, the State Department announced they would be delisting those sanctions, and we know what happened next. That very weekend the Houthis launched missiles at civilians in the city of Marib, signaling the beginning of an offensive that would become a bloodbath, and they launched armed drones into Saudi Arabia.

After a year of such relentless terrorism, the Biden administration reluctantly announced that it was imposing some terrorism sanctions on the Houthis but not yet reversing their decision.

Let me ask you a question I asked you in my office. Do you believe the Houthis are terrorists?

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, as I noted, the Biden administration has condemned the Houthis' terrorist attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE using ballistic missiles and drones.

Senator CRUZ. Okay. Let me try that question again. Do you believe the Houthis are terrorists?

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, as I said, the Biden administration has condemned the Houthis' terrorist attacks, and as I said as well— Senator Cruz: Yeah. I have to say you said that in my office also. You said they commit terrorist attacks but you were unwilling to say they are terrorists. Explain to me how exactly that works, like, how people who commit terrorist attacks are not terrorists.

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, let me just say, again, that the issue of an FTO designation is under review by the administration.

Senator CRUZ. How many terrorist attacks do they have to commit before you will admit they are terrorists?

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, the administration has condemned the Houthis for their terrorist attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Senator CRUZ. Except the administration is unwilling to acknowledge the obvious, that they are terrorists. Is one terrorist attack enough? Is 10? Is a hundred terrorist attacks?

I just want to know how many civilians do the Houthis need to murder before the Biden administration will acknowledge the obvious, which is that they are terrorists?

Mr. FAGIN. Yeah. Senator, I deeply share your concerns about the Houthis. The Houthis have committed some deplorable acts, not only these attacks on the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which threaten our own citizens there—we have 130,000 citizens or more than that residing in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The Houthis currently have in detention 13 current and former members of our staff.

Senator CRUZ. All right. Let me ask one final question both to you, Mr. Fagin, and to you, Ms. Romanowski.

In my opening remarks, I discussed my profound concerns with this administration's foolhardy Iran deal. The basis of that deal is that Iran, the ayatollah, and the mullahs will be flooded with hundreds of billions of dollars in immediate resources from sanctions relief.

Based on both of your assessments of Yemen and Iraq, respectively, and as a matter of your professional expertise in the region, do you believe that if the Iranian regime receives hundreds of billions of dollars that that money will go to finance terrorism in Yemen and in Iraq?

Mr. Fagin, you can start.

Mr. FAGIN. Senator Cruz, thank you for the question.

Again, I share your concerns about the malign activities of the Iranian regime. But that is a speculative question. There is not a deal in place.

Senator CRUZ. I am asking your professional judgment and this judgment goes to your competence in terms of whether you should be confirmed to this post.

Mr. FAGIN. Yeah. If I could—

Senator CRUZ. Based on the behavior of Iran, do you believe if they get hundreds of billions of dollars they will use that to fund terrorism, and I would like a yes or no, based on your professional judgment.

Mr. FAGIN. Again, Senator, it is, unfortunately, a speculative question because there is not a deal.

Senator CRUZ. I am asking for your judgment.

Mr. FAGIN. But I can, certainly, say that the Iranians will not use funds for the betterment of their people.

Senator CRUZ. Ms. Romanowski?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. Senator, thank you for the question.

I also share your concerns with Iran's malign activity and role in the region. Iran remains a primary enduring threat to both Iraq and the region.

It has increasingly sophisticated military capability so supports broad proxy networks and it has demonstrated that it periodically is willing to use force against U.S. allies.

The Biden/Harris administration has determined that getting back into the JCPOA is the best—

Senator CRUZ. Ms. Romanowski, you are reading a statement. I just am asking—will you answer the question? Do you believe, based on your professional judgment, they will use hundreds of billions of dollars to finance terrorism, yes or no?

Ms. Romanowski [continuing]. First of all, I am not privy to any of the negotiations that are going on. But it is very clear in the Iranian history that they have used their resources and their funding

that they can get to finance their proxy networks and to continue to spread their malign activities across the region.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Senator MARKEY. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Connecticut?

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

The theory here goes that if we stay out of a nuclear agreement with Iran, if we continue to apply sanctions on Iran, then that will decrease their support for terrorist groups in the region.

There is no evidence to suggest that is the case. In fact, if you look at the period of time since we withdrew from the agreement all we have seen is an increased level of Iranian involvement in Yemen, an increased amount of integration between Iran and the Houthi forces there.

What we have seen is that support for Iranian proxy groups in Iraq has increased. Those groups started firing at U.S. troops after we withdrew from the agreement.

So this notion that if the United States continues to apply maximum pressure that that is somehow going to convince the Iranians to stop funding groups in the region just does not bear out in reality.

And as to this question of the designation of the Houthis as an FTO, we have to deal in the world of reality. Separate and aside from what you think that term means, the practical impact of designating the Houthis as an FTO is famine. Is famine. And that is not me making that claim. That is the U.N. That is the World Food Programme.

The World Food Programme says very clearly if you designate the Houthis as an FTO we cannot operate inside Yemen.

They go further. Commercial food operators will not be able to operate inside Yemen.

Now, maybe that is a flaw of our statutes, that the designation of an entity as a foreign terrorist organization has such extreme consequences for the people of that country. But that is the reality.

And so we have to think seriously about whether we want to subject millions of Yemenis to starvation as a consequence of that designation and whether that is better or worse for the people that we are trying to protect.

And I guess my only ask of you, Mr. Fagin, is that you consult along with the administration with those operators on the ground who are going to be forced to pull out and submit the Yemeni people to famine and starvation if we go forward with this designation, given the fact that there are so many other ways that we can impose sanctions on Houthi leaders, as the Biden administration already has.

Let me ask you this question, Mr. Fagin.

My sense is that the Saudi-led coalition has not changed their perspective on the path to peace. Escalation. Escalation. Escalation.

We have to get into a deescalatory cycle in Yemen in order to get to the table. We have been pressing the Saudis for the last year to open up the airport to provide humanitarian pathways for relief agencies to restart the Yemeni economy.

But at the foundation, we have got to be able to convince both sides—the Houthis and the Saudis—that more escalation in Sa’dah province, in Marib, is just going to lead to more of the same. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. FAGIN. Senator, thank you for the question, and I share your concerns about the humanitarian situation and about escalation.

As you know, in February of 2021 the administration ended our support for offensive military operations in Yemen. That included the suspension of certain sales of munitions to Saudi Arabia.

The administration has been pressing Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and all parties to deescalate.

Now, on a positive front, the Saudis, the UAE, the Government of Yemen, they support this U.N.-led process. In fact, the administration has been successful in marshaling an international consensus in favor of this process, including at the Security Council.

So we are behind this process and we can bring these countries along.

Senator MURPHY. I think we are going to have to be tougher on our allies and partners in the region. We have got to be equally tough on the Houthis. But we have got to deliver, I think, a stronger message to our allies who continue to bring the fight to Yemen, notwithstanding the fact that it does not seem to be accruing to the benefit of their interests.

Mr. Chairman, I will submit a question to the record for Ms. McKee. I want to make sure that USAID’s activities in funding anti-propaganda and anti-misinformation work in Europe is integrated with the work of the Global Engagement Center.

I hope that we are going to pass a supplemental appropriations bill for Ukraine that will include a dramatic increase in the Global Engagement Center’s funding. That means we will be able to fight Russian propaganda about their efforts in Ukraine.

USAID does a lot of this work as well, and sometimes I worry that the two are not always working in close coordination. And so I will submit a question for the record on that subject.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MARKEY. The Senator from Virginia?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to all the nominees. It is a good panel—three career Foreign Service, one political nominee. I think that mixture that we have in our ambassadors and Foreign Service professionals abroad of career and political nominees is a good mixture and you really represent the best of this tradition.

Mr. Fagin, I just particularly want to just comment about you. Your spouse is—you are part of a two State Department family and your spouse is the DCM in Tunisia, and that—it is hard for families to serve abroad and it is especially hard for them to serve abroad in split locations.

I remember the first time I was visiting Egypt as a member of the committee and one of the Foreign Service professionals there had to leave to go do a Skype date with her husband about six time zones apart, and I said, that is a long way. She said, this is not the farthest apart that we have been; we have been farther apart than that.

So I just want to acknowledge the service of your family and so many in the Foreign Service world.

Mr. Hickey, I want to ask you a question about the discussions in Finland about NATO. Really interesting. In 2017, the support of the Finnish population for NATO accession was 19 percent.

Recently, a poll had it at 53 percent for reasons that are pretty obvious. And the polling also suggested that support for joining NATO would be 66 percent if Sweden also were to join. Finland and Sweden have traditionally had a lot of defense cooperation.

However, Finnish political parties are still fairly opposed, at least kind of in their stated position, to NATO accession. An important role of a U.S. Ambassador is to promote U.S. interests but not get involved in domestic politics.

The question of whether Finland were to join NATO is very much a domestic political issue but it also, certainly, touches upon values and principles really important to the United States.

So should you be confirmed and be in this position and able to offer information and answer questions about NATO, how would you strike that balance between, again, offering advice and answering questions and not overly engaging in this issue as a matter of domestic Finnish politics?

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

It is, clearly, timely, what has happened. I have been tracking the polling information as you have as well in the public domain. It is pretty striking what has happened and how quickly it has happened.

The view of Finnish people has changed pretty dramatically, relative to NATO, to the positive, and the reason, as you said, is really obvious based upon what is happening with Russia and Ukraine.

Finland shares the largest border in Europe with Russia—800 miles—and has had a nuanced relationship with Russia for many, many years. You talked about it earlier of them not only as being an interlocutor but as an interpreter for many others, which is a huge value to us, quite frankly, I think.

I think what we can do and I would do, if confirmed, is to make sure parties at all levels of civil society in Finland understand the benefits of NATO. But we have to be thoughtful that it is a sovereign decision that they are going to make.

So I think our role is, really, more information and education, and the Finnish people and the Finnish Government are clear eyed, I think, on how they approach the Russians.

So I think our best role is more information and education and support if they decide to make such a move.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Hickey, for that, and I want to thank my colleagues, especially Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Risch.

I have a bill that I have had—a bipartisan bill—pending before the committee for some time that would clarify that the United States could never withdraw from NATO simply by a presidential action but that it would take a vote of either the Senate or an act of Congress—the Senate ratified the NATO treaty.

That bill has been cleared for presence on our next business meeting on the 23rd of March. It is bipartisan. I look forward to taking it up.

Ambassador Romanowski, I want to ask you a question quickly. I also have a piece of legislation that is bipartisan that is through the committee and on the floor now to repeal the Iraq War authorizations from 1991 and 2002.

I am not going to ask you about that. Your testimony very plainly points out the many areas where we are working in tandem as partners with Iraq, and I believe the repeal of a war authorization against the government of this partner country would be wise.

I want to ask you just one question, though, about Iraq right now. Often, as I visited, the state of relations between the Kurds and the Iraqi central Government is sort of up and down and controversial, and sometimes it is more mellow.

What is your kind of current understanding of dialogue between Erbil and the Kurdish region of Iraq and the central Government?

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

I share your view that there is often difference of view between the Iraqi Kurdistan regional Government and also the Government in Iraq.

I do think a lot of it depends on the issues. There was recently a ruling regarding their oil sharing. I will say that if I am confirmed one of the things and one of the priorities will be to ensure that we can facilitate and we can also represent the interests of both parties, should they ask us.

It is—we want to see them as good partners. We want to see them working out their differences and we want to also be there to promote a good relationship between those two governments. It is critical for Iraq's stability and its prosperity.

Senator Kaine. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Markey. The chair recognizes the Senator from Maryland.

Senator Van Hollen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

Ambassador Romanowski, let me follow up on where Senator Kaine left off.

Because we have seen a fair amount of political instability created from the lack of formation of a government. How do you assess the current situation and what is the United States doing now to encourage the formation of a government?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. First of all, as a result of the elections, I think we are optimistic that the elections actually created some welcome surprises. For example, you have 30 independent candidates who were elected.

It is stalled right now over the interests between certain parties, and I know that we are working hard to, again, try to bring the parties to view the interests of a strong sovereign Iraq to be what is at stake and what is in their interest in forming their government as they go forward.

If I am confirmed, keeping the—working with the new government and ensuring that they can work for their people and bring their interest of Iraq to working together, as they have different views, is going to be very important and a critical component of what I will be doing on a daily basis if any evidence of what my—of what Ambassador Tueller is doing now.



Senator VAN HOLLEN. As you indicated in response to Senator Kaine's question, you have the recent decision by the Iraqi federal supreme court regarding Kurdistan's oil laws deeming them to be unconstitutional.

Would you agree that it would be in everyone's interests to have implementation of that ruling stayed so that we can proceed with negotiations on that point and as we work to try to—they work to try to form a government?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. My understanding is that they are talking about what exactly—the implementation of that law. But until they have worked out those, my understanding is that things will be going on as they have been before. But that is correct.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I think the KRG has indicated that they are going to continue to proceed. Do you see the timing of that supreme court ruling being part of the efforts to pressure the Kurds and others with regard to the formation of a government?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. I think the Iraqi supreme court based their decision, from what I understand, on the technicalities of the issue, and I think that is where they came out on that one.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. So you do not see the timing after all these years has being in any way curious or connected to the ongoing effort to form a government?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. It does bring—it does make me pause about that. There are a lot of decisions that come about in that region for the many years I have been working on and we can read a lot into it and—but yeah.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I just—obviously, we have got to make sure that we do what we can to support the efforts to form a government.

What is your assessment of ISIS' strength right now in Iraq and whether or not in this period of time where there is some vacuum in the formation of government they are attempting to exploit the situation?

Ms. ROMANOWSKI. At this point, we are always very concerned about the resurgence of ISIS. The fact that we have transitioned to an advise, assist, and enable mission that allows us to work—continue to work with the Iraqi Security Forces on their fight against ISIS is—it convinces me and leads me very strongly to believe that while they are forming a government they will remain—the Iraqi Security Services will remain vigilant on ISIS.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right. Again, I think one of the challenges we got is some of the divisions within the country among different groups, and not just the Shi'a militia, which, obviously, are a malign influence, but even among other parties. We really need to make sure that we bring people together quickly.

Just in closing here, Ambassador McKee, congratulations on your nomination. I know you talked a little bit about our ongoing assistance to Ukraine to support the efforts in Ukraine.

As you know, the President has just proposed a supplemental that includes \$5 billion for different forms of humanitarian economic assistance.

Could you talk a little bit about how you envision that being implemented?

Ms. MCKEE. Thank you, Senator.

I am not privy to the sort of contours or the intent behind the bill. But I do know that the wise way forward would be to build on the investments that we have made to date that we are currently struggling to safeguard, given the kinetic activity in the country and our concern for the safety and security of our staff and our implementing partners.

Looking ahead, obviously, the most important thing will be to support the Ukrainian people and their aspirations to continue to build a democracy, to continue to move forward on Euro-Atlantic integration, to continue to diversify their economy, their energy resources, and lean westward, and that would be, if confirmed, my top priority.

Our assistance resources can go far building on the investments we have made to date in response to both the needs on the ground as well as what we know are going to be critical in the days ahead.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I hope we will move quickly to pass that supplemental request. Thank you.

Senator MARKEY. I thank the Senator, and I would like to thank each of our nominees for being here today and for answering the questions so attentively, and I am certain that each of them will be an asset to the United States in their new positions and I look forward to hearing about the good and important work that you will be doing.

Senators will have until the close of business tomorrow to revise and extend their remarks and submit any questions for the record.

With that, and the thanks of the committee and in the hope that we can get all of you in your positions very quickly, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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### **Additional Material Submitted for the Record**

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* How can the U.S. Embassy help promote and support Iraq's Government formation?

*Answer.* The Iraqi people held free and fair elections that were the most technically credible in the country's history. I understand that at present, the Department is communicating at the highest levels with Iraqi leaders to put their differences aside to allow government formation to occur. If confirmed, I will urge Iraq's leaders to expediently form a new government that respects Iraq's sovereignty and serves the needs of the Iraqi people.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to urge Iraqi parties in the Council of Representative, including Kurdish parties, to find a path towards forming a government?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue the work our Embassy in Baghdad and our Consulate in Erbil is doing to encourage party leaders to expediently form a government that serves the needs of their constituents. In those engagements, I will encourage the parties to find common ground and urge them to consider the interests of Iraq first. I will also urge the Kurdish parties to work together during and after government formation in order to serve the best interests of the residents of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and for the sake of Iraq's stability.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that Embassy Baghdad has the staffing and outreach needed to effectively engage with Iraqi Government officials, as well as Iraqi civil and cultural society?

*Answer.* The safety and security of our personnel is the top priority and engaging with our Iraqi counterparts is essential to doing our jobs effectively. COVID-19 and the security situation have impacted staffing levels and our ability to engage. Staffing levels are constantly reviewed to ensure the appropriate levels given the security situation. If confirmed, I will regularly review staffing levels and the security situation to ensure that we have sufficient staff to meet our national security interests.

*Question.* What would you need to see on the ground as far as security to increase staffing levels at Embassy Baghdad and to consider reopening our Consulate in Basra?

*Answer.* The safety and security of our personnel is the top priority. If confirmed, I will regularly review staffing levels with the country team to ensure that we have sufficient staffing to meet our national security interests. In that connection, I would need to meet with the country team to determine whether the security situation in southern Iraq has sufficiently improved to resume operations at Consulate General Basrah.

*Question.* As you know, the Embassy is still recovering from a devastating attack in 2019. Between a complete shutdown of consular capacity and ongoing security concerns, the Embassy is limited in its ability to reach Iraqi citizens. How do you plan to prioritize restoring consular capacity and other public diplomacy initiatives at Embassy Baghdad?

*Answer.* Our Embassy in Baghdad has already made great progress in restoring our public diplomacy initiatives as COVID-19 restrictions have begun to ease. Opportunities exist for greater engagement, and if confirmed I look forward to looking at ways we can continue to do that. I will prioritize the reconstruction of the infrastructure destroyed in the 2019 attack, and work to revive the appropriate protocols for the safety of our consular applicants and employees. I will also support expediting a safe construction plan that will enable the Consular Section to once again process visas for U.S. Government exchange visitors and students.

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately. Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes, currently as Ambassador to Kuwait I take these incidents seriously. If confirmed, I will continue to take these incidents seriously, investigate them thoroughly, and will ensure that our staff promptly get the medical assistance they need.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that our staff promptly get the medical assistance they need, and I commit to reporting these incidents through the proper channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will meet with medical staff and the RSO to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* How do you plan to continue to further U.S. interests in Iraq?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will urge Iraq's leaders to expediently form a new government that bolsters Iraq's sovereignty and serves the needs of the Iraqi people, which is essential to the stability of Iraq and the whole region. I will work with the Iraqi Government and people to strengthen our strategic partnership and advance key issues of mutual concern. If confirmed, I will also want to ensure the continued development of a democratic, inclusive, and rights-respecting governance system that

serves its people and is accountable to all Iraqis. This is also essential for Iraq's economic development and capacity to counter internal and external threats.

*Question.* What are your priority lines of effort linked to U.S. national security interests?

*Answer.* Iraq remains a foreign policy priority for the United States and a cornerstone of our national security interests. If confirmed, I would focus on bolstering Iraq as a sovereign, stable, secure partner, free from destabilizing influences. I would continue U.S. Embassy Baghdad's and Consulate General Erbil's efforts to ensure that Iraq can address internal and external threats, secure its borders, and limit external destabilizing influence, while respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Iraqis, to include members of vulnerable, marginalized, and disenfranchised populations, such as IDPs. If confirmed, I would work with the Department of Defense on programs to advise, assist, and enable Iraqi security forces to prevent ISIS or other actors from threatening the United States, Iraq, and the region. If confirmed, I would underscore the importance of Iraq charting an independent foreign policy and continuing cooperation with its responsible neighbors to enhance its sovereignty, security, critical infrastructure, and economic development, while prioritizing the safety and security of all U.S. personnel and property. If confirmed, I will also support efforts to help Iraq reduce its dependence on Iranian electricity and gas imports and expand its economic cooperation with its Gulf neighbors.

*Question.* What role will countering Iranian influence play in this strategy?

*Answer.* Countering Iran's influence in the region is critical to U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I would work to counter Iranian destabilizing influence in Iraq by promoting democratic processes and institutions. I would continue Embassy Baghdad and Consulate General Erbil's efforts to bolster Iraq's sovereignty and security through supporting the Government of Iraq's ability to create the operational and institutional capacity to counter existential threats and effectively secure its borders.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you seek to address Iranian support for militias in Iraq?

*Answer.* Iran remains an enduring threat to Iraq as well as the region due to its increasingly sophisticated military capabilities, broad network of proxies and partners, and willingness to use force against the United States, our allies, and partners. Iran-aligned militia groups destabilize Iraqi politics, as we have seen most recently with their attacks and threats against Iraqi officials and politicians during the Government formation process. If confirmed, I would work with the Government of Iraq to disentangle itself from Iran in areas such as energy, security, entrepreneurship, agriculture, human rights, and anti-corruption to strengthen Iraq's sovereignty, and echo the Iraqi people's calls for a government that represents them and their interests.

*Question.* Are there specific steps the U.S. can take to curb their influence in the country and limit their ability to act with impunity? If so, what are they?

*Answer.* Encouraging party leaders to expediently form a government that serves the needs of their constituents is the best path to curb Iran-aligned militias from influencing the Government of Iraq. In those engagements, if confirmed, I would encourage the parties to find common ground and urge them to always consider the interests of Iraq first. Following government formation, working with the GOI to advance governance institutions, to include improving accountability and transparency, will be instrumental in minimizing Iran-aligned militias influence.

I would also continue Embassy Baghdad and Consulate General Erbil's coordination with others in the State Department and other agencies to identify and share with social media companies information regarding Iranian and other sources of disinformation, exhortations to violence, and hate speech that may violate their terms of service agreements.

*Question.* What role can, and should, the U.S. play in advancing Iraqi-led efforts to form a unified and inclusive government that can address the genuine needs of its people?

*Answer.* I understand that at present, the Department is communicating at the highest levels with Iraqi leaders to put their differences aside to allow government formation to occur. If confirmed, I would continue our encouragement of party leaders to expediently form a new government that respects Iraq's sovereignty and serves the needs of the Iraqi people. In those engagements, I would encourage the parties to find common ground and urge them to consider the interests of Iraq first. I would also urge the Kurdish parties to work together during and after government

formation in order to serve the best interests of the residents of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, and for the sake of Iraq's stability.

*Question.* What role will institutional reform and anti-corruption efforts play in this strategy?

*Answer.* First, it is vital that Iraq form a government that will work toward meaningful reform in the service of the Iraqi people. Once a new government forms, if confirmed, I will continue Embassy Baghdad's efforts to encourage and support reforms to counter corruption, improve the investment climate, and improve the rule of law. The U.S. and Iraqi Governments concurred on the need for such reforms during the strategic dialogue meetings over the past two years. Such reforms would benefit Iraq's stability and prosperity, the well-being of the Iraqi people, and the U.S.-Iraq strategic partnership.

*Question.* To what extent do you feel this political impasse creates a political security vacuum that makes Iraq vulnerable to outside interference?

*Answer.* This political impasse has created opportunities for outside influence, particularly from Iran. This is one reason why, if confirmed, I would continue Embassy Baghdad's and Consulate General Erbil's encouragement of party leaders to put Iraq's interests first and form a government as quickly as possible.

*Question.* How might the U.S. advance the economic reforms Iraq so desperately needs? Where does transparency and anti-corruption factor in your list of priorities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would seek to continue to use bilateral fora, such as Strategic Dialogues and trade and investment discussions, tying specific assistance to needed economic reforms. The Embassy in Baghdad is currently engaged in advocacy supporting roughly \$4.9 billion in U.S. business, primarily in the energy sector. Soliciting input from business organizations like the U.S.-Iraq Business Council would expand this base and highlight roadblocks encountered by U.S. businesses. Finally, the more than 800,000 young Iraqis who enter the workforce annually represent an opportunity for the United States to use its soft power to expand Iraq's entrepreneurship base, create jobs, and diversify Iraq's economy.

Transparency and anti-corruption factor high on the administration's list of priorities. Foreign direct investment directly correlates to perceived security and lack of corruption. Improving the business climate and efficiency of the government bureaucracy would encourage U.S. companies to expand investment, and if confirmed, I would work toward this goal.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to go about addressing the growing influence of Russia and China in Iraq? What threat do you believe they pose to U.S. national security interests there?

*Answer.* Insulating Iraq from the malign influence of Russia and People's Republic of China (PRC) is key to our national security interests in the region. As Ambassador to Kuwait, I am concerned about the efforts by the PRC and Russia to strengthen their influence in the region at the expense of the United States strategic partnerships in the Gulf. If confirmed, one of my primary concerns would be that Russia could seek to expand or strengthen its military ties with Iraq. If confirmed, I would work to ensure Iraq is aware of the consequences of pursuing military ties with Russia. I would also press Iraqi leaders to stand with the vast majority of the international community, including most Arab countries, in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. If confirmed, I would advance our conversation with Iraq on further steps we can take to ensure a stable global supply of energy, no matter what Putin does.

The PRC's main focus in Iraq is the energy sector, but it is also a significant player in Iraq's information and communication technology market as well. As oil revenues rise and Iraq moves forward with more commercial projects, U.S.-PRC economic competition is likely to increase. It is vital we continue to emphasize to the Government of Iraq the value of our continued partnership and the risks associated with the PRC's information collecting capacity and other problematic PRC activities.

If confirmed, I would also continue Embassy Baghdad and Consulate General Erbil's coordination with the State Department and other agencies to identify and share with social media companies Russian and PRC sources of disinformation, exhortations to violence, and hate speech that may violate their terms of service agreements.

*Question.* In your opinion, what steps can the U.S. take to improve our diplomats' ability to get outside the Embassy compound? How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* The safety and security of our personnel is my highest priority; however engaging with our Iraqi counterparts is essential to doing our jobs effectively. If confirmed, I would regularly review staffing levels and the security situation to ensure that we have sufficient staff to meet our national security interests.

Our Embassy in Baghdad has already made great progress in restoring our public diplomacy initiatives. Opportunities exist for greater engagement with Iraqis, and if confirmed I would assess our staffing levels to determine if they should be adjusted to expand our engagement. I would prioritize the reconstruction of the infrastructure destroyed in the 2019 attack. I would also support enabling the Consular Section to once again process visas for U.S. Government exchange visitors and students.

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Baghdad?

*Answer.* I understand that Mission Iraq conducted a survey last fall to gauge post morale and well-being, as well as to solicit general views on post operations. The survey included questions on leadership, job satisfaction, and Embassy operations, as well as measures of diversity and inclusion, and the results helped identify ways that quality of life can be improved.

COVID restrictions and disruptions have undoubtedly impacted Mission Iraq over the past two years. However, with 99 percent of Mission employees vaccinated, the Mission has been able to relax masking and social distancing requirements, allowing the return for the most part to pre-COVID operations. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the Embassy staff and using the results of the recent survey as a guide for improving morale.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Baghdad?

*Answer.* Mission Iraq is a challenging but rewarding place to work. If confirmed, I would ensure that employees have clear goals and understand their role in advancing our national interests. I would foster an equitable environment in which input is solicited and considered and in which decisions are made in a transparent manner. Now that the COVID situation has improved, I would also promote opportunities outside of the office setting to rebuild and strengthen the Mission's sense of community and our mission in Iraq and the region.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Baghdad?

*Answer.* Mission Iraq consists of a diverse community of direct-hire employees, contractors, and local staff across multiple U.S. agencies spread between multiple locations. In such a large community, it can be challenging to maintain a sense of cohesion, yet all work together to support vital U.S. national security priorities in Iraq. If confirmed, I would make every effort to clearly communicate our mission and be accessible at all of our locations, including through town hall meetings, written communications, and staff meetings. My experience at four different national security agencies gives me a unique perspective that will help me to create and maintain a unified vision among a diverse community.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* In all of my prior positions, I have been fortunate to work with a smart, dedicated team of professionals. My management style is to support a diverse, inclusive, and collaborative decision making process in which all people feel included and empowered. I take great pride in mentoring both Civil and Foreign Service as well as military colleagues and look for ways to help them succeed and further their careers. If confirmed, I would seek to provide a clear, strategic vision to advance the President's agenda and look to my Embassy colleagues to provide innovative ideas and will value their input.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* No, bullying or berating colleagues is never acceptable.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

*Answer.* The Deputy Chief of Mission position is an essential part of an Embassy team. If confirmed, I plan to have a close, collaborative relationship with my DCM and would rely on his or her frank and honest counsel on all Mission matters. A positive working relationship between the Chief of Mission and the Deputy Chief of Mission is essential to good morale at an Embassy.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

**Answer.** As the Chief of Mission, I would expect that my Deputy Chief of Mission would take a lead role on the implementation of all security, management, and operational matters, including the professional development of first and second tour officers. However, since I cannot be in the country at all times, if confirmed I would also expect my DCM to have developed strong relationships with Iraqi policymakers and be able to step into my shoes when needed. The DCM must also be able to deliver honest and frank assessments to me at all times and not be reticent to provide bad news.

**Question.** Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

**Answer.** Yes. I believe that it is my responsibility as a manager and leader to provide accurate, constructive, and timely feedback to employees. I would also expect my team to provide honest feedback to me. If confirmed, I will use all available management tools, including awards and letters of appreciation, to reward and recognize those who are most successful in their roles.

**Question.** If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

**Answer.** Yes. If confirmed, I would expect all of the supervisors at Mission Iraq to adhere to Department leadership principles to provide clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees. If confirmed, I would also use all available management tools, including awards and letters of appreciation, to recognize and reward high achievers.

**Question.** What public diplomacy challenges does U.S. face in Iraq? How do you plan on addressing these?

**Answer.** Public diplomacy challenges in Iraq include 1) countering pernicious Iranian and violent extremist influence that undermine Iraqi sovereignty, 2) promoting economic prosperity, 3) supporting free and fair elections, 4) increasing transparency and good governance, 5) providing humanitarian and stabilization assistance, and 6) encouraging respect for religious, ethnic, and minority communities. If confirmed, I would continue current efforts to highlight shared priorities: U.S. support for Iraqis as they stand against corruption and demand accountability from their elected officials; specific examples of U.S. Government assistance, including to religious and ethnic minorities; U.S. pandemic assistance; U.S. support for economic reforms; and sustained and aggressive counter messaging against malign Iranian messaging and activity. If confirmed, I would continue our Embassy's close work with U.S. military elements in support of national security priorities, including the enduring defeat of ISIS. I would also make it a priority to continue the Embassy and Consulate General's cultural engagements, educational exchange programs, and public outreach programs with Iraqis.

**Question.** What steps can the U.S. take to address the proliferation of propaganda promoted by adversaries and strategic competitors in the Middle East?

**Answer.** Our cultural, educational, and media engagements with Iraqis are a cornerstone of communicating America's desire to build durable connections and promote mutual understanding between the citizens of both nations. These engagements have and can continue to play a powerful role in countering disinformation about the United States, its policies, and its people.

If confirmed, I would seek to expand these engagements and continue Embassy Baghdad and Consulate General Erbil's coordination with other offices in the State Department and other agencies to work with social media companies to identify and share with social media companies Russian and PRC sources of disinformation, exhortations to violence and hate speech that may violate their terms of service agreements.

**Question.** How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

**Answer.** In keeping with the spirit of the Smith-Mundt Act, the public diplomacy activities at our Embassy in Baghdad are focused on influencing the opinions and attitudes of Iraqi audiences. Though the State Department provides policy guidance and resources that shape and support the Embassy's efforts, the ultimate decision regarding tone and content of our messaging resides with our experts in the field.

**Question.** "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet

many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. The Department has no higher priority than the health and safety of our employees. If confirmed, I would take these incidents seriously, investigate them thoroughly, and ensure that our staff promptly get the medical assistance they need.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Iraq personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would provide as much information as I can to Mission Iraq personnel regarding health incidents and other security matters. I would promote effective and comprehensive communication throughout Mission Iraq, actively solicit community feedback, and work to address employee concerns.

*Question.* Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. Yes, I have received these briefings in my current position as U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait.

*Question.* In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to ensuring that our staff promptly get the medical assistance they need and that any anomalous health incidents are recorded in detail and reported through the proper channels.

*Question.* Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure our employees know there is nothing the Department and I take more seriously than their well-being. I will treat every reported case seriously and communicate the Department's work in caring for and supporting those affected and in determining the causes of the incidents. Our employees around the world are committed to serving the American people and promoting our national interests with integrity and professionalism, and they deserve nothing less than the best we can offer.

*Question.* In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Iraq remained on Tier 2 for scaling their anti-trafficking efforts in key areas but failing to accurately screen victims, provide proper protection and prosecution efforts. Iraq also did not prosecute or convict any traffickers during the reporting period. How will you work with relevant stakeholders in the Iraqi Government and civil society to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. The Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government have increased their efforts to improve anti-trafficking capacity over the last few years, but there is still much to be done. If confirmed, I would engage and encourage the relevant stakeholders in the Iraqi Government and KRG in these efforts, including identifying and screening vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators and supporting the creation of a systematic identification and referral mechanism. Civil society engagement on trafficking is key in Iraq, and I would coordinate closely with relevant organizations in-country to strengthen ongoing initiatives. In addition to protection concerns, if confirmed, I would urge the Government to make progress in line with the other recommendations outlined in the 2021 TIP Report.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to accurately portraying any situational updates regarding human trafficking in Iraq in the annual Trafficking in Persons report?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* In the State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Iraq was identified as lacking governmental and societal respect for religious free-



dom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Protection for members of vulnerable ethnic and religious communities is a priority for the Department. The administration supports a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq that serves all its citizens, including members of its most vulnerable and marginalized communities. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize U.S. assistance programs that encourage durable solutions for members of Iraq's most vulnerable populations, and focus on promoting a democratic, inclusive, and rights-respecting governance system. I look forward to coordinating with the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain on this strategy and meeting with these communities and addressing their concerns.

*Question.* In the State Department's 2020 Human Rights Report, Iraq was identified as having significant human rights issues including unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; forced disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence against journalists, and much more.

- If confirmed, how will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Inclusion of civil society voices and perspectives is central to open and accountable governance. If confirmed, ensuring that Embassy staff work closely with civil society to further strengthen civil society and democratic institutions would be a priority for me, just as I have done as Ambassador to Kuwait. Furthermore, I would urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to ensure the protection of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, and to more strongly protect civil society from harassment.

*Question.* What options are available to the U.S. mission to bolster human rights?

Answer. I understand that U.S. officials in Washington, Baghdad, and Erbil continue to raise our human rights concerns with all levels of the Iraqi Government, which I would continue, if confirmed. That would include urging the protection of peaceful protesters, activists, women in public life, and journalists, and pursuing judicial accountability for violent crimes against those individuals. If confirmed, I would also consider all options available, such as the Global Magnitsky Act and other designation authorities, to promote accountability for those who personally profited through corrupt acts or play a role in attacking peaceful protesters, resulting in the deaths of Iraqis.

Promoting accountability to voters and transparency in elections is also important. In support of the recent Iraqi elections, the United States provided \$9.7 million to UNAMI for technical electoral-assistance work, and another \$5.2 million to support UNAMI's election monitoring team. If confirmed, I would continue efforts to encourage Iraqi leaders to form a government without further delay.

Continued humanitarian assistance, such as the additional \$155 million announced by the U.S. Government in July 2021, provides shelter, healthcare, food, water, and hygiene services across Iraq and helps displaced Iraqis obtain civil documentation, legal services, and increased access to education and job opportunities. Our programming addresses critical human rights needs through a variety of interventions, including securing, exhuming, and processing mass graves, and providing psychosocial and legal aid services to support the rehabilitation of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and other groups in vulnerable circumstances.

If confirmed, I would consider all of these options to continue support for our human rights goals and other national security interests.

*Question.* The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states. If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Iraqi Government and any other counterparts necessary to communicate U.S. support of Doreen?

Answer. Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin is by far the best qualified candidate for Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The Department places a high priority on this election and we regularly advocate on behalf of

Ms. Bogdan-Martin. If confirmed, I would enthusiastically support her candidacy and encourage Iraq to vote for her as the next ITU Secretary-General.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* Do you agree with the Biden administration's support for repealing the 2002 and 1991 AUMF?

*Answer.* Yes. As the administration has stated, there are no current military operations that rely on the 1991 AUMF and the United States has no ongoing military activities that rely solely on the 2002 AUMF as a domestic legal basis, and that repeal of the 2002 AUMF would likely have minimal impact on current counterterrorism operations.

*Question.* Practically speaking, what do you believe would be the effect of repeal on both our diplomatic relationship and our regional policies?

*Answer.* There are no current military operations that rely on the 1991 AUMF and the United States has no ongoing military activities that rely solely on the 2002 AUMF as a domestic legal basis, and repeal of the 2002 AUMF would likely have minimal impact on current counterterrorism operations. A repeal would show the U.S. commitment to continuing a strong relationship with our Iraqi and regional partners.

*Question.* What is your assessment of Iran's current influence in Iraq?

*Answer.* Iran remains the primary and enduring threat to Iraq as well as the region due to its increasingly sophisticated military capabilities, broad proxy network, and willingness to use force against the United States, our allies, and partner forces. Iran-backed militia groups destabilize Iraqi politics, as we have seen most recently with their attacks and threats against Iraqi officials and politicians during the Government formation process. Iran benefits from the patronage based political system and seeks to undermine efforts for meaningful reform. As protests since October 2019 and the election results show, the Iraqi people are increasingly concerned by Iran's destabilizing influence and want a government responsive to their needs.

*Question.* Given that the current divide in forming a government is driven by disagreements between the major Shia parties, will an outcome there serve as a bellwether for how the political class and voters perceive Iran?

*Answer.* Iran-backed groups performed poorly in the October 10 elections and lost a significant number of seats. However, delays in government formation could create a potential opening for Iran to increase its influence in the internal affairs of Iraq. The United States continues to urge political leaders to compromise on a way forward and expedite government formation. The United States seeks a government that bolsters Iraq's sovereignty, addresses the needs of all Iraqi people including security, and prioritizes economic and political reforms.

*Question.* From a Chief of Mission perspective, how will you approach ensuring the security of your diplomats from Iranian aggression while ensuring they are still out and doing the business of diplomacy?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of all U.S. Government personnel in Iraq. If confirmed, I will ensure the mission continuously assesses the security, threats, and health environment in Iraq to maintain the safety of all personnel under Chief of Mission security responsibility. As the mission recovers from COVID, increasing face-to-face diplomacy with in-person meetings is an essential part of the strategy to maintain and strengthen our bilateral relationship with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people while keeping our people safe. Balancing security and engagement will be my highest priority.

*Question.* Given the ongoing threat from ISIS and Iranian forces, and in light of last month's strike against the ISIS leader, how do you assess the role U.S. military forces will continue to play in Iraq and in the wider region?

*Answer.* U.S. forces remain in Iraq to advise, assist, and enable the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga, in the continuing fight against ISIS and the development of a capable, self-reliant, and accountable security force, supported by the Government of Iraq. I believe U.S. military forces will remain an important counterterrorism and security partner to Iraq and the region, I must defer to the Department of Defense for further specifics.

*Question.* Will Iraq remain a base for U.S. counterterrorism and intelligence missions?

*Answer.* U.S. military forces in Iraq have transitioned to an advise, assist, and enable mission to support the Iraqi Security Forces, which includes intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support. The Department of State continues to provide counterterrorism assistance to Iraq to prevent violent actors, including ISIS, from destabilizing and terrorizing its population and the region, to respond to and interdict terrorism threats, and to assist the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to better detect and prevent the flow of known or suspected terrorists and facilitators, illicit materials, and weapons. The Department can provide additional information in a classified setting.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Question.* The Biden administration's new nuclear agreement with Iran will provide Iran with sanctions relief worth hundreds of billions of dollars, including through the immediate release of assets and the lifting of sanctions on economic activities. Do you believe that Iran will use resources that flow from a new agreement to finance Iran-supported forces in Iraq?

*Answer.* Iran has demonstrated it is a threat to regional security and stability, particularly within Iraq. However, the maximum pressure campaign had virtually no impact on Iran's nefarious behavior, and Iran rapidly expanded its nuclear program after the previous administration left the JCPOA. A mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA is the best available option to constrain anew Iran's nuclear program, because an Iran with a nuclear weapon would present a far greater threat. The JCPOA would also provide a platform to address Iran's other actions, including their support of destabilizing forces in Iraq. The United States will continue to use its full range of tools, including sanctions that would persist even during any mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA, to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in Iraq and its support for terrorism, without regard to how Iran resources those illegitimate efforts.

*Question.* The Biden administration's new nuclear agreement with Iran will provide Iran with sanctions relief worth hundreds of billions of dollars, including through the immediate release of assets and the lifting of sanctions on economic activities. Do you believe that Iran will use resources that flow from a new agreement to finance terrorist groups, either in Iraq or in other countries?

*Answer.* President Biden has been clear that the United States is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. Iran's actions pose fundamental problems across a series of issues—including its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, its destabilizing actions throughout the region, including in Iraq, and its abhorrent practice of using wrongfully detained U.S. citizens and foreign nationals as political tools. Because an Iran with a nuclear weapon would make all these threats far worse, the President's strategy is to pursue a mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA to restrict Iran's nuclear program and provide a stronger platform to address its destabilizing conduct across the region, including in Iraq. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to use the full range of tools at its disposal to counter Iran's destabilizing activities, limit Iran's ability to finance all groups that work to destabilize the region or the world, and intercept weapons flows to these groups. However, Iran's past behavior has proven that their decisions to fund proxy groups throughout the region, including in Iraq, will likely not change.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO DOUGLAS T. HICKEY BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Finland's Sovereignty*

*Question.* Like all countries, Finland's right to choose its own alliances and associations is a sovereign one. As discussions about potential Finnish NATO membership increase as a result of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Foreign Ministry has said that Finland's accession to NATO would have "serious military and political repercussions."

- What role do you see for the United States in helping to protect Finnish sovereignty to make its own decisions?

Answer. Finland's leadership has consistently reaffirmed that it is Finland's sovereign decision whether or not to join NATO, rejecting any attempt by Russia to restrict NATO's Open-Door policy. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, I commit to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership.

#### *Nordic Security*

*Question.* Russia's invasion of Ukraine came after months of increased military activity in its Murmansk region and Kaliningrad enclave.

- How do you assess existing U.S.-Finnish security cooperation, and where do you see opportunities to deepen cooperation to promote security in the Nordic and Baltic states?

Answer. The United States and Finland cooperate on regional and global security, free trade, emerging technology, countering hybrid threats, and counterterrorism. Finland shares our goal of strengthening the transatlantic relationship to address the full range of threats and challenges. Finland's 800-mile-long border with Russia—the longest in the EU—means it is a key partner in ensuring Europe's security. Finland's purchase of F-35As will ensure the transatlantic security partnership continues to deepen. Common logistics and interoperability will create future opportunities for further security cooperation for decades to come. If confirmed, I will work to continue to deepen cooperation to promote security in the Nordic and Baltic states.

#### *Malign Chinese Influence*

*Question.* Finland's 2020 telecoms law allows for the country to ban equipment within the 5G network's key assets due to national security concerns, but does not name any particular company. Some interpreted this as a refusal to point a finger at Chinese companies.

- How do you assess Finland's relationship with China? Is Finland a potential partner in strategic competition with China?

Answer. While Finnish officials are willing to publicly criticize the PRC's human rights record, they also stress the importance of maintaining effective dialogue. Although Finland does not ban specific vendors from its 5G network, changes to its telecommunications law in December 2020 make it difficult for untrusted vendors to operate in the network. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finnish officials, the business community, and civil society on this important issue, as well as working to increase U.S. trade with Finland as a counterbalance to the PRC's growing influence in Europe.

#### *Climate*

*Question.* Temperatures in the Arctic are rising three times faster than the global average. Climate change in the Arctic both harms local ecosystems and impacts the global climate system.

- How will you work with Finland within the framework of the Arctic Council to address climate change?

Answer. Finland, like the United States, is an Arctic nation, and our main forum for cooperation on Arctic issues is the Arctic Council. Both the United States and Finland work together within the Arctic Council to enhance sustainable development, environmental protection, and the well-being and security of the people living in the region. Finland has set among the most ambitious goals in Europe of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035. It plans to phase out coal by May 2029 and increase the share of renewables in energy consumption to more than 50 percent during the 2020s to help achieve this goal. If confirmed, I will work with U.S. and Finnish Government officials and scientific experts to support Finland's ambitious climate goals.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* I am very concerned about directed energy attacks on U.S. Government personnel (so-called Anomalous Health Incidents). Ensuring the safety and security of our personnel abroad falls largely on individual Chiefs of Mission and the response of officers at post. It is imperative that any individual who reports a suspected incident be responded to promptly, equitably, and compassionately.

- Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people working with me. The interagency community continues its examination of a range of hypotheses. Secretary Blinken prioritizes the Department's response to anomalous health incidents, setting clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with its workforce and providing care for affected employees and family members.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* Yes. I will do everything possible to ensure that employees who report a possible anomalous health incident receive immediate and appropriate attention and care and the incident is reported through appropriate channels.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people who will work with me. I commit to working with health and security officials and other parties as recommended.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO DOUGLAS T. HICKEY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*State Department Management and Public Diplomacy*

*Question.* Many U.S. Missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID.

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Helsinki?

*Answer.* Mission Helsinki has faced challenges posed by COVID-19, and I am thankful for the staff's continued service. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Mission Helsinki will be my first priority, and I look forward to working with the talented team of locally employed staff, U.S. Direct Hires, and their families, and ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and has my support.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Helsinki?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. We are all one team working for the good of the U.S.-Finnish relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified Mission and vision at Mission Helsinki?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. We are all one team working together to advance the U.S.-Finnish relationship and the interests of the American people, so I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, U.S. Embassy Helsinki is committed to a diverse and inclusive workforce. Diversity makes our Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

*Question.* Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of Mission.

- How would you describe your management style?

*Answer.* I believe in the importance of serving the community, and I have demonstrated an ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds in a constructive manner. I regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as Mission Finland carries out important work on behalf of the American people. I also believe in setting high standards and leading by example. Our employees are our most important asset. I am dedicated to professional development and helping employees grow and advance.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

*Answer.* No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). If confirmed, I will work closely with the DCM to advance U.S. priorities in Finland, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and advancing shared priorities.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues and I will value the institutional knowledge provided. If confirmed, I will entrust the DCM with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission, and the DCM should keep abreast of policy issues to be able to serve as *Chargé d’Affaires* in my absence.

*Question.* In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking.

- Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

*Answer.* Yes, I believe it is important to use the performance evaluation process to provide employees with timely, honest, accurate, and constructive feedback on their performance.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

*Question.* It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Finland.

- In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our Embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

*Answer.* Based on my knowledge of the Department and Embassy operations overseas, U.S. diplomats have done a remarkable job to get outside our Embassy walls and advance U.S. objectives by meeting local actors in diverse settings and environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals, but as conditions improve, I understand that U.S. diplomats have resumed in-person engagements and programs again. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, including host government officials and non-governmental organizations.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I plan to exchange ideas with people from all parts of the country to hear their views and promote our shared goals. I will use both social and traditional media to reach people across Finland. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to continue leveraging engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

*Question.* Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts.

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in Finland?

*Answer.* The United States has strong academic, cultural, and professional exchanges with the people of Finland. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to continue leveraging relationships with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

*Question.* What public diplomacy challenges do U.S. diplomats face there?

*Answer.* The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals. As conditions improve, U.S. diplomats have started in-person engagements and programs again. If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing both traditional and social media to engage with the Finnish public, in addition to in-person programs.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

*Answer.* We are all one team working to advance the bilateral relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people. If confirmed, I will leverage public diplomacy tools to enhance security cooperation, expand economic and trade relations, strengthen collaboration on Arctic and climate issues, and deepen people-to-people ties. I will work to counter adverse influence and mis- and disinformation through engagements with traditional media, communication via social media, institutional outreach and personal interactions, and through a variety of public diplomacy programming. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for the Finnish public.

*Question.* “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer.

- If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, there is nothing I will take more seriously than the health and security of the people who will be working with me.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Helsinki personnel?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with Mission Helsinki personnel.

*Question.* Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

*Answer.* I have received a briefing at the unclassified level on the anomalous health incidents that have affected U.S. Government personnel around the world. If confirmed, I commit to seeking full briefings at the appropriate classification levels before my departure to post and learning how I can best protect all Embassy personnel and respond to reports of any future potential incidents.

*Question.* In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other Embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. Missions and personnel around the world?

*Answer.* If confirmed, the safety and security of the personnel and family members of Embassy Helsinki, and American citizens in Finland, will always be my first priority. Should an individual report a potential anomalous health incident, I commit to ensuring the incident is reported through the appropriate channels and sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns.

*Question.* Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

*Answer.* If confirmed, the safety and security of Embassy personnel, their families, and American citizens in Finland will always be my first priority. This is an issue I take very seriously and is a top priority for Secretary of State Antony Blinken. If confirmed, I will take every measure to keep our staff safe and secure and would take any report of a potential anomalous health incident very seriously. I will ensure those affected receive appropriate and prompt medical attention, and that incidents are investigated fully and reported through the appropriate channels.

I will share what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with my team and the mission community.

#### *Europe and Eurasia*

*Question.* For decades, Finland has been a key negotiator between Russian interests and NATO interests.

- If confirmed, how would you make use of this diplomatic connection?

*Answer.* Finland has been outspoken against Russia's destabilizing actions, supports sanctions on Russia, and has issued timely statements condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. The United States works closely with Finland to monitor and push back against Russia's malign activities. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with the Finnish Government to ensure a unified and proactive approach to address Russian threats.

*Question.* As Putin's Government grows more aggressive toward Europe, will Finland lose its status as a mediator between NATO and Russia? If so, how will that affect NATO-Russia relations?

*Answer.* Finland maintains a pragmatic but firm relationship with Russia. Finland is a like-minded partner concerning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine, and Finland supports a multilateral and diplomatic solution. President Niinistö, Prime Minister Marin, and Foreign Minister Haavisto have publicly condemned Russia's war against Ukraine as a grave breach of international law and an attack on the European security order.

*Question.* If Putin agrees to negotiate with the Ukrainian Government, would you advocate for this conference to take place on neutral territory under neutral supervision, such as in Finland? If yes, how?

*Answer.* While I cannot speak to hypotheticals, I would note that Finland is a like-minded partner concerning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine, and Finland supports a multilateral and diplomatic solution. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Finland to support our shared security goals.

*Question.* On February 26, 2022, Finnish Ambassador Mikko Hautala said Finland does not feel threatened by Russian warnings of a potential military response if they decide to join NATO.

- Do you think that Finland should be worried about the Russian military?

*Answer.* While I cannot speak for Finland, the country's independent defense capabilities safeguard over 800 miles of Europe's Russian border, enhancing the security of U.S. Allies and partners in the region. Finland maintains a pragmatic but firm relationship with Russia. Finland is a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner and actively participates in NATO political dialogue, exercises, and operations. Furthermore, Finland's purchase of F-35As will ensure the transatlantic security partnership continues to deepen.

*Question.* What will you do as Ambassador to prevent concerns of Russian aggression from rising?

*Answer.* Finland is a like-minded partner concerning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine, and Finland supports a multilateral and diplomatic solution. President Niinistö, Prime Minister Marin, and Foreign Minister Haavisto have publicly condemned Russia's war against Ukraine as a grave breach of international law and an attack on the European security order. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. and Finnish policies toward Russia remain closely coordinated.

*Question.* If Finnish sentiment does change, how will you use your role to assure Finland of U.S. support?

*Answer.* Finland is a valued partner and close friend, and the U.S.-Finland relationship is broad and multi-faceted. The United States and Finland cooperate on regional and global security, free trade, emerging technology, countering hybrid threats, and counterterrorism. If confirmed, I will work to continue to strengthen our cooperation with Finland and assure Finland of U.S. support on regional and global challenges.

*Question.* In the unlikely event of a Russian attack on Finnish territory, is their military sufficient to repel Russia's?

*Answer.* While I cannot speak to hypotheticals, Finland's independent defense capabilities safeguard over 800 miles of Europe's Russian border, enhancing the security of U.S. Allies and partners in the region. Finland is a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner and actively participates in NATO political dialogue, exercises, and operations. Furthermore, Finland's purchase of 64 F-35As and associated missiles



and munitions will provide Finland with a credible defense capability to deter aggression in the region and ensure interoperability with U.S. forces.

*Question.* Would you support U.S. security assistance to the Finnish Government in case of invasion?

Answer. While I cannot speak to hypotheticals, if confirmed, I will commit to continue to strengthen our cooperation with Finland on regional, security, and global challenges. Finland shares our goal of strengthening the transatlantic relationship to address the full range of threats facing the transatlantic community.

*Question.* In 2019, Finland's top import was crude petroleum, mostly from Russia. Its top 2019 export was refined petroleum, exporting mostly to Europe and the U.S.

- Given Finland's key role in the oil industry, how would the Finnish economy be affected by sanctions against Russia's oil and gas sector?

Answer. Finland is well ahead of most of the world in transitioning its economy to a sustainable and carbon-neutral energy footing, and as such is better prepared for possible disruptions of gas and oil supplies. While Finland imports all its natural gas from Russia, gas only accounts for five percent of Finland's energy consumption.

*Question.* Do you think that Finland would support those sanctions?

Answer. Finland has been outspoken against Russia's destabilizing actions, has been supportive of past sanctions on Russia, and has issued timely statements condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. Finnish officials and the public support the continuation of sanctions against Russia until the full restoration of Ukrainian territorial integrity within its sovereign, internationally recognized borders.

*Question.* On February 28, 2022, Finland decided to supply the Ukrainian Government with military gear, including firearms and ammunition.

- Do you support this decision? Why or why not?

Answer. Yes. We are seeing historic levels of international support for Ukraine and welcome the unprecedented security cooperation and assistance including lethal defensive aid. The United States has engaged Allies and partners to support Ukraine in the face of Russia's unprovoked war. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this engagement.

*Question.* Russia's invasion of Ukraine could cause a long-term Ukrainian diaspora.

- Do you think that Finland would consider accommodating Ukraine's displaced citizens?

Answer. Recent media reports suggest Finnish citizens are welcoming and hosting Ukrainian refugees.

*Question.* Would you encourage the Finnish Government to do so?

Answer. The United States has encouraged countries in the region to adhere to their refugee obligations. Russia's war against Ukraine has created a rapidly growing humanitarian crisis, with more than one million refugees, predominantly women and children, having already fled the country.

*Question.* On Monday, February 28, 2022, Ukrainian president Zelenskyy submitted a petition for Ukraine to join the EU.

- Do you think that Finland will support this petition?

Answer. This is a question for Finland to determine.

*Question.* Would you encourage the Finnish Government to do so?

Answer. The transatlantic community remains the bedrock of U.S. foreign policy. It is the foundation of our shared security, our shared prosperity, and our shared values. If confirmed, I would work with Finland to support Ukraine's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, while leaving the specifics of the EU accession process to Finland and other EU member states.

#### NATO

*Question.* Finland has historically remained neutral in European security matters with regard to Russia; however, since Russia's reinvasion of Ukraine, Finland has taken action to send military assistance to the Ukrainian military, and popular support for joining NATO has surpassed 50 percent for the first time.

- What do you believe are the advantages and disadvantages of Finland joining NATO, both for Finland, the United States, as well as the NATO alliance itself?

*Answer.* Finland is a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner and actively participates in NATO political dialogue, exercises, and operations. Finland shares our goal of strengthening the transatlantic relationship to address the full range of threats facing the transatlantic community. Both the United States and Finland's leadership have consistently reaffirmed that it is Finland's sovereign decision whether or not to apply to join NATO, rejecting any attempt by Russia to restrict NATO's Open-Door policy. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, I commit to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership.

*Question.* As Ambassador, how would you approach the matter of Finland joining NATO?

*Answer.* If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, I commit to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership.

*Question.* What ways can we work with Finland to advance our mutual national security interests in Europe outside of NATO?

*Answer.* The United States and Finland cooperate on regional and global security, free trade, emerging technology, countering hybrid threats, and counterterrorism. Finland's purchase of F-35As will ensure the transatlantic security partnership continues to deepen. Common logistics and interoperability will create future opportunities for further security cooperation between Finland and the United States for decades to come. Finland is a leader in critical and emerging technologies ranging from 5G and 6G to quantum computing. These industries represent billions of dollars in trade, investment, and cooperation aligned with American companies and interests. If confirmed, I will work to continue to strengthen our cooperation with Finland.

*Question.* Finland is a leader in the implementation of nuclear power and disposal of radioactive waste.

- Do you support the increased use of nuclear power in general?

*Answer.* There is broad public support in Finland to expand nuclear energy production. If confirmed, I would look to support this area as an opportunity to promote American technologies and nuclear energy solutions that accelerate the clean energy transition and facilitate an affordable pathway to net-zero.

*Question.* If sanctions are put on Russia's nuclear industry, which supplies unique equipment and material for nuclear plants around the world, including Finland, how will you work with the Government to ensure they can find alternatives while adhering to sanctions?

*Answer.* While I cannot speak to hypotheticals, if confirmed, I would work with the Finnish Government on viable, clean, low-carbon alternatives to Russian nuclear energy. Finland has been proactive in this area; Finnish leadership have publicly stated their intention to reduce energy dependence on Russia and the Government has halted Fennovoima's nuclear power project. If confirmed, I would seek opportunities for American industry, which has been a decades-long global leader in civil nuclear technologies and is developing some of the most advanced new technologies.

*Question.* In the event of a mainland European energy shortage due to reduced supply from Russia, how would you encourage the Finnish Government to assist in preserving and augmenting European energy security?

*Answer.* In 2019, a EUR 250 million subsea natural gas pipeline—called the Balticconnector—was completed between Finland and Estonia. This pipeline links Finland's gas grid with the Baltics and can be supplied via existing LNG terminals in Finland and the Baltics.

*Question.* In the coming decades, how do you foresee clean energy agreements affecting Finland's large oil and automotive industries?

*Answer.* Finland is a green energy leader in Europe and is on track to meet its ambitious 2035 carbon-neutral target. In general, there is broad public and political support for green energy reforms, and Finnish industries have already begun transitioning to sustainable and clean energy.

*Question.* Do you think they will be able to meet global climate benchmarks?

*Answer.* Finland has set among the most ambitious climate goals in Europe, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2035, planning to phase out coal by May 2029, and planning to increase the share of renewables in energy consumption to

more than 50 percent during the 2020s to help achieve this goal. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finland to advance our shared climate goals.

*Question.* Finland has shown limited interest in accommodating asylum-seekers from Afghanistan and other countries. In November 2021, the Finnish Government raised its 2022 refugee quota from 1050 to 1500, which is still less than three people for every ten thousand Finnish residents.

- If confirmed, would you encourage the Finnish Government to raise that quota?

*Answer.* Finland has been a strong leader in its Afghanistan response, working closely with the United States and Allies to support evacuation and resettlement. In 2021, Finland quadrupled its humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan to 12.5 million euros. Finland continues to place human rights as a cornerstone of its foreign policy, and the United States can work with Finland to continue to ensure the rights and protection of refugees both within Finland and within a broader international system. If confirmed, I will work with and encourage Finland to raise the refugee quota further, while also recognizing its past leadership.

*Question.* How do you anticipate Finland and other EU countries will respond to the recent influx of refugees from Central Asia and the Middle East?

*Answer.* In 2015, Finland saw an unprecedented 32,447 individuals file for asylum protection, and the immigration system responded quickly to expand capacity and services. By 2020, Finland received only about 3,000 asylum applications. Finnish Immigration Service was able to shrink service capacity to correspond to the number of asylum seekers while maintaining flexibility for future surges.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work with the Finnish Government to provide long-term resettlement to the thousands of asylum-seekers currently living in Finland?

*Answer.* Finland provides services and housing to quota refugees directly through local municipalities. According to the Finnish Red Cross, municipal services have been able to secure housing for all arriving quota refugees and often secure almost 1,000 additional places ahead of the process for the following year. The Finnish Immigration Service provides housing, social and healthcare services, interpretation services, and legal aid to asylum-seekers at regional reception centers. If confirmed, I will encourage the Finnish Government to provide long-term resettlement to the thousands of asylum-seekers currently living in Finland.

#### *Indo-Pacific*

*Question.* Although Finland had a positive relationship with the Chinese Government through 2017, recent reports by Finnish civil and defense ministries suggest a much more adversarial stance toward China, and they encourage solidarity with the rest of the EU on this issue.

- If confirmed, how will you support Finland in countering malign CCP encroachments into Europe's political institutions, especially the EU?

*Answer.* While Finnish officials are willing to publicly criticize the PRC's human rights record, the Finns stress the importance of maintaining effective dialogue with the PRC. Finland has also been open in its criticism of the PRC's repression of the Uighurs in Xinjiang, supporting the EU's March 2021 sanctions targeting PRC officials implicated in human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Three Finnish officials were affected by the PRC's retaliatory sanctions. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Finnish Government and multilateral institutions to support Finland in countering malign CCP encroachments into Europe's political institutions.

*Question.* Do you see Finland as a valuable potential ally in blocking similar encroachments into the U.N. and other global institutions?

*Answer.* Finland is a like-minded partner. After the implementation of the Hong Kong security law in July 2020, Finland suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong, prompting criticism from PRC state-controlled media and the PRC's Embassy in Finland. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finnish officials, including those working in U.N. institutions, the business community, and civil society on this important issue, as well as working to increase U.S. trade with Finland as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in Europe.

#### *Trade and Technology*

*Question.* One of China's goals is to have Chinese manufacturers produce new 5G communications systems around the world, which poses a security risk to the U.S. and our allies. The Finnish telecommunications company, Nokia, could offer 5G in-

infrastructure that aligns with our security interests as an alternative to Chinese companies.

- As Ambassador, how would you work with the Finnish Government to promote private sector engagement in telecommunications?

Answer. Finland is a global leader in telecommunication technology and is home to one of the three trusted providers of “full stack” 5G equipment worldwide. Finland is known as the “the world’s telecommunications test laboratory” and is used for experimental launches of new products and services before going global. Finland offers a great opportunity for American companies to develop and test new applications of 5G networks, and if confirmed I look forward to supporting this opportunity.

*Question.* What ways could the U.S. Government promote technology partnerships with Finland in order to create secure and marketable 5G infrastructure solutions that can compete with Chinese alternatives?

Answer. Although Finland will not ban specific vendors from its 5G network, changes to its telecommunications law in December 2020 make it difficult for untrusted vendors to operate in the network. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finnish officials, the business community, and civil society on this important issue, as well as working to increase U.S. trade with Finland as a counterbalance to the PRC’s growing influence in Europe.

*Question.* How would you work with the Finnish Government to protect intellectual property with regard to high technology?

Answer. Finland is a source of emerging technology and, as such, there is an opportunity to promote IPR enforcement worldwide. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Finland on adopting controls and standards for new technologies such as quantum and artificial intelligence, which protect our common democratic values, respect for human rights, and preserve our other fundamental freedoms.

*Question.* In the State Department’s 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Finland was identified as Tier 1 but courts in country had failed to prosecute as many traffickers in past reporting periods and victims continued to be penalized.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Finland was ranked as Tier 1 in the 2021 TIP report. According to the report, Finland fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The Government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period while considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large to combat and monitor trafficking in persons to improve anti-trafficking efforts in Finland?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and Finnish authorities to encourage cooperation to make progress in combating trafficking in persons to include fully prosecuting traffickers and protecting victims. If confirmed, I will continue our engagement with the Finnish Government on this important issue with the goal of ensuring Finland remains as a Tier 1 status country.

*Question.* In the State Department’s 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Finland was reported to have had serious incidents motivated by antisemitic or antimuslim behavior and rhetoric. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Finnish law guarantees freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion. If confirmed, I will support efforts of Jewish, Muslim, and all faith communities to collectively advocate on issues that threaten to restrict religious practice. This includes opposing laws that would negatively infringe on religious practices, such as the recently proposed animal welfare law that would ban or limit kosher and halal slaughter. If confirmed, I will advocate for religious freedom for members of all religious groups, and work with the Ambassador-at-Large, the Finnish Government, and NGO partners to promote religious freedom.

*Question.* In the State Department’s 2020 Human Rights Report, Finland had no reports of serious human rights abuses or concerns. However, there is always room for improvement. If confirmed, how can you engage with civil society to bolster human rights on the ground and at the U.S. Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with civil society to advance shared values, including respect for human rights. Finland is a strong advocate for addressing global

issues in multilateral fora, including through their new seat on the Human Rights Council. If confirmed, I will work to leverage our strong relationship and shared values and utilize public diplomacy tools to promote the international rules-based order and bolster human rights.

*The United Nations*

*Question.* The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU, if elected. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states. If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Finnish Government and any other counterparts necessary to communicate U.S. support of Doreen?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I commit to demarching the Finnish Government and any other counterparts necessary to communicate U.S. support of Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO DOUGLAS T. HICKEY BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* Since the unprovoked Russian attack on Ukraine, Finland is evaluating its security posture particularly given its long border with Russia.

- How should the U.S. build on existing security cooperation with Finland to strengthen our ties and deter further aggression?

*Answer.* Finland is a valued partner, and the U.S.-Finland relationship is broad and multi-faceted. The United States and Finland cooperate on regional and global security, free trade, emerging technology, countering hybrid threats, and counterterrorism. Finland's 800-mile-long border with Russia means it is a key partner in ensuring Europe's security. Finland's purchase of F-35As will ensure the transatlantic security partnership continues to deepen. Common logistics and interoperability will create future opportunities for further security cooperation between Finland and the United States for decades to come. If confirmed, I will work to continue to build on existing security cooperation with Finland to strengthen our ties and deter further aggression.

*Question.* I am concerned by growing Russian and Chinese efforts to project power in the Arctic region, as Russia has exponentially increased its military presence above the Arctic Circle and China now tries to claim that is a "near-Arctic" state.

- How does Finland view Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic? In what ways are Finland and the United States seeking to work together on challenges in the Arctic region?

*Answer.* Finland, like the United States, is an Arctic nation, and our main forum for cooperation on Arctic issues is the Arctic Council. Finland is keenly aware of Russia's unprecedented military and commercial investments in the Arctic and does not agree with the PRC's claim that it is a "near-Arctic" state. Both the United States and Finland work together within the Arctic Council to enhance sustainable development, environmental protection, and the well-being and security of the people living in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our close engagement on Arctic issues, including pursuing new opportunities for scientific collaboration and on our shared strategic and commercial interests.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO DOUGLAS T. HICKEY BY SENATOR MITT ROMNEY

*Question.* Finland has been an outstanding security partner of the United States, NATO, as well as Ukraine, particularly in light of their pledge to send military aid to the Ukrainians. Putin may have calculated that his dishonorable, illegal invasion of Ukraine would divide NATO from its partners and close NATO's doors to new members, but his malicious war has only drawn us closer together. I applaud this

administration's steadfast commitment to keeping NATO membership open to those states that want to join.

- Will you commit, if confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership?

Answer. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, I commit to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO DOUGLAS T. HICKEY BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* How do you view the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine on the security status of Finland?

Answer. Russia's unprovoked, premeditated, and unjustified invasion of Ukraine has significant security ramifications for all of Europe, for the transatlantic community, and globally. Finland's 800-mile-long border with Russia—the longest in the EU—means Finland is a key partner in ensuring Europe's security. Finland is a like-minded partner concerning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine, and Finland supports a multilateral and diplomatic solution. President Niinistö, Prime Minister Marin, and Foreign Minister Haavisto have publicly condemned Russia's war against Ukraine as a grave breach of international law and an attack on the European security order. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. and Finnish policies toward Russia remain closely coordinated.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you work with Finland in coordinating on European security and, potentially, exploring their membership into NATO?

Answer. Finland is a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner and actively participates in NATO political dialogue, exercises, and operations. Finland's leadership has consistently reaffirmed that it is Finland's sovereign decision whether or not to join NATO, rejecting any attempt by Russia to restrict NATO's Open-Door policy. This sentiment was expressed in both New Year's 2022 speeches by President Niinistö and Prime Minister Marin. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, I commit to consistently reaffirm the message to our Finnish partners that NATO's door is open, if they choose to pursue NATO membership.

*Question.* Relatedly, how would you work with Finland's Scandinavian neighbors, such as Sweden, to ensure they move together where appropriate?

Answer. Finland has demonstrated clear solidarity with its EU partners, Nordic neighbors, and the United States on policy regarding Russia, including on sanctions. Finland and Sweden are both NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners and actively participate in NATO political dialogue, exercises, and operations. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. Ambassadors in the Nordic region and Europe to advance U.S. policy and support European security.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the strategic value of cooperation with Finland on security and regional stability?

Answer. Finland is a valued partner and close friend, and the U.S.-Finland relationship is broad and multi-faceted. The United States and Finland cooperate on regional and global security, free trade, emerging technology, countering hybrid threats, and counterterrorism. Finland shares our goal of strengthening the transatlantic relationship to address the full range of threats facing the transatlantic community. As a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner, Finland's purchase of F-35As will ensure the transatlantic security partnership continues to deepen. Common logistics and interoperability will create future opportunities for further security cooperation between Finland and the United States for decades to come. Commercially, Finland's purchase of the F-35As means billions of dollars injected into the American economy, the creation of American jobs, and the opportunity to extend for at least another 30 years our bilateral cooperation in the aviation industry. Finland is a leader in critical and emerging technologies ranging from 5G and 6G to quantum computing. These industries represent billions of dollars in trade, investment, and cooperation aligned with American companies and interests. Our cooperation with Finland helps advance American technology leadership with our Allies and partners to protect our shared security interests, economic prosperity, and demo-

cratic values. If confirmed, I will work to continue to strengthen our cooperation with Finland on regional and global challenges.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO STEVEN H. FAGIN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

*Question.* How do you plan on working with the Riyadh-based Yemen Affairs Unit to best address “on the ground” issues, including the monitoring of U.S. assistance in Yemen?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will be in the region full-time, serving as the Chief of Mission for Yemen and leading the Yemen Affairs Unit located at our Embassy in Riyadh, which oversees the totality of our interests and efforts in Yemen. These include critical humanitarian and development work, economic reform efforts, counterterrorism and security cooperation, engaging with Yemeni and regional officials as well as Yemeni civil society, and above all else, working to ensure the safety and security of American citizens. As Chief of Mission, it would be my responsibility to oversee the implementation and review of third-party monitoring of all programming with U.S. assistance alongside my Washington counterparts, and I look forward to working with Congress on these and many other important issues affecting U.S. interests and security.

*Question.* How will you work with Special Envoy Lenderking to create a space that encourages the warring parties in Yemen to come to the table and have a constructive dialogue?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Special Envoy Lenderking to support inclusive U.N.-led efforts to reach a durable resolution to the conflict in Yemen. The only way to reach such a resolution is through a negotiated political agreement. There is no military solution. U.N.-led efforts must also address the underlying economic and humanitarian crises and lead to accountability for human rights abuses and violations. This is a complex set of problems, but not insurmountable; we must continue to work at it tenaciously and with our partners.

*Question.* What are your plans to ensure the safety of the U.S. compound in Sana’a?

*Answer.* The Houthis’ outrageous actions against our Yemeni local staff and former Embassy compound in Sana’a are both deplorable and unjustifiable and are an affront to the entire international community, only further aggravating the conflict in Yemen. If confirmed, I will lead efforts to ensure the Houthis release unharmed all current and former U.S. local employees who remain held, end their harassment of our staff and restrictions on their movement, vacate our former Embassy compound, and return all seized U.S. Government property. If confirmed, I would continue our work with our partners in the region to make sure the Houthis hear loud and clear that these egregious actions seriously jeopardize the prospects for the Houthis to ever be a part of a legitimate and internationally recognized Government of Yemen.

*Question.* The U.S. currently has more than 200 locally employed staff in Yemen. How do you plan on ensuring the continued safety of these individuals?

*Answer.* The United States is fully committed to ensuring the safety of the 170 locally employed staff who work for the U.S. Government in Yemen. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, the safety and security of the U.S. Government employees in Yemen and in the Yemen Affairs Unit in Riyadh would be paramount. I will pursue every path available to secure the release of the detained locally employed staff, including engagement with Houthi leaders, international organizations, other Yemenis, and regional leaders. I would lead efforts to ensure the Houthis cease any further detentions or harassment of our employees and work with regional partners to condemn such acts.

*Question.* What efforts can be taken to encourage the release of Mr. Marhabi? How do you plan on engaging with the Houthis and other regional partners on this matter?

*Answer.* The fact that the Houthis continue to detain Levi Marhabi is deplorable. Over the past two years, the international community, humanitarian groups, and leading NGOs have called for his immediate and unconditional release. Senior U.S. officials have echoed those calls, including within the U.N. Security Council. If confirmed, I will engage Yemeni and regional officials to make clear U.S. expectations

regarding the equal treatment and protection of members of religious minority groups.

*“Anomalous Health Incidents”*

*Question.* Do you agree these incidents must be taken seriously, and pose a threat to the health of U.S. personnel?

*Answer.* Yes. Any threat to the safety and security of personnel must be addressed quickly and thoroughly. As Chief of Mission, I would be responsible for ensuring that U.S. Government employees in Yemen and in the Yemen Affairs Unit in Riyadh are able to perform their duties safely.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that any reported incident is treated seriously and reported quickly through the appropriate channels, and that any affected individuals receive prompt access to medical care?

*Answer.* Yes. The Department’s most serious commitment is to its people, and it will not relent in ensuring that any personnel who fall ill while in service to their country will get the help that they need.

*Question.* Do you commit to meeting with medical staff and the RSO at post to discuss any past reported incidents and ensure that all protocols are being followed?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I would have a responsibility to all those who fall under my care and security responsibility as Chief of Mission.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO STEVEN H. FAGIN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Question.* Divisions in the Saudi-led coalition helped drive Houthi military advances in recent years. What steps can the U.S. take to foster greater cohesion in the Saudi-led coalition?

*Answer.* Enhancing unity among the anti-Houthi bloc is essential to reaching a negotiated solution that ends the war. The United States is working closely with its partners in the region to minimize divisions in the bloc and, if confirmed, I would meet regularly with these key stakeholders to remind them of our shared interest in ending this conflict.

*Question.* What more do you feel the U.S. can do outside of the U.N.-led political process to inject greater stability in Yemen?

*Answer.* The United States has contributed nearly \$4.5 billion in humanitarian assistance to Yemen since the start of the war. This support not only saves lives, but it also prevents further deterioration of social and economic conditions that would make it even harder to resolve the conflict. If confirmed, I would continue our strong humanitarian efforts, and I would also work with key partners and international financial institutions to support efforts to stabilize both Yemen’s economy and its governing institutions, as well as to address the underlying economic drivers of conflict. U.S. support has helped build the capacity of key Yemeni Government economic institutions and bolstered job-creating enterprises that improve conditions for Yemeni families. Our programming has Yemenis—particularly youth and women—develop skills that increase their employability.

*Question.* Do you feel there is merit in recalibrating U.S. assistance to focus more on local governance and institution building?

*Answer.* Our foreign assistance in Yemen is intended to address a wide range of sectors that support U.S. interests in ending the conflict and improving Yemeni lives. Our economic and community-level support are key components outside of humanitarian assistance that seek to advance critical reforms and build on those openings should there be a political settlement.

*Question.* What means can the United States employ to get the Houthis to engage in peace talks in good faith and reduce interference in aid operations?

*Answer.* The United States strongly supports U.N. Special Envoy Grundberg and is leading international efforts to demonstrate to the Houthis that the only sustainable path forward is through dialogue. We continually encourage others with relationships with the Houthis to press them to give up on a military solution to the conflict and come to the negotiating table. And we will not hesitate to use the tools at our disposal, including sanctions, to pressure the Houthis to cease their military offensives and engage sincerely with U.N.-facilitated political talks to resolve the conflict.



*Question.* What role can the U.S. play to encourage peace between the Houthis and the Yemeni Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with U.S. Special Envoy Tim Lenderking to support U.N.-facilitated efforts to reach an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict in Yemen. The only way to reach such a resolution is through a negotiated inclusive political agreement. There is no military solution. If confirmed, I would support the administration's efforts to advance an inclusive, U.N.-facilitated political process that also addresses the underlying economic and humanitarian crises and leads to accountability for human rights abuses and violations. This is a complex set of problems, but not insurmountable; we must continue to work tenaciously with our partners to reach this negotiated political agreement.

*Question.* What steps can the U.S. take to bring greater pressure on the Houthis? Are there opportunities to foster greater collaboration with our regional partners in this space, Oman, Kuwait?

Answer. The Houthis' increasingly provocative and dangerous behavior warrants a strong international response, and I agree we must continue to work in concert with our partners to send clear messages to the Houthis to de-escalate and sit down at the negotiating table. If confirmed, I would support efforts to use various tools at our disposal, including sanctions, to pressure the Houthis to cease their military offensives and engage in good faith with U.N.-facilitated political talks.

*Question.* Please provide your perspective on the Riyadh Agreement and its legitimacy as a realistic pathway towards peace.

Answer. Strengthening the anti-Houthi bloc is essential to reaching a durable resolution to the conflict. The United States is working with the parties to the Riyadh Agreement to improve coordination between the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council, and if confirmed, I would strongly support those efforts. The Yemeni Prime Minister and most of the Yemeni cabinet have returned to Aden, which was a positive step to ease political tensions and improve governance.

*Question.* What more can the U.S. do to support Saudi efforts to advance implementation? Can greater pressure be brought upon the UAE?

Answer. The United States coordinates closely with Saudi Arabia and the UAE on efforts to strengthen the anti-Houthi bloc. If confirmed, I would strongly support those efforts. There have been some notable successes resolving differences among parties to the Riyadh Agreement, including the Prime Minister and most of the Yemeni cabinet returning to Aden to perform their official duties.

*Question.* In your mind, what is the benefit of limiting U.N. talks to the Houthis and the Saudis?

Answer. The United States supports the U.N.'s plans to ensure political talks are inclusive so that the full range of Yemeni voices can be heard, including women and civil society leaders, and members of other marginalized demographics. I was encouraged by reports of the U.N. Special Envoy's political consultations, as well as the GCC's effort to convene a broad representation of Yemenis for an upcoming dialogue. Seven years of war have changed the situation in Yemen, and political talks must reflect that new reality if they are to secure a durable political agreement.

*Question.* Should the southern groups also play a role?

Answer. The United States believes inclusive talks involving voices across the political spectrum that include women, civil society leaders, and members of other marginalized demographics are essential to securing a durable political agreement. Political groups from throughout Yemen, including southern Yemen, should play an active role in U.N.-facilitated political talks.

*Question.* What is your position on the UAE's support for proxy forces like the Giants Brigade?

Answer. The Saudi-led Coalition's defense of Marib against a sustained Houthi onslaught has helped prevent a significant deterioration of already-tenuous conditions in the governorate. Over a million internally displaced people have sought refuge in Marib. The Houthis' continued military efforts to seize the city—despite there being no military solution to the conflict—further underscores the importance of all parties de-escalating militarily and engaging in good-faith efforts to negotiate a political resolution under the U.N.'s leadership. The U.S. Government, at all levels, routinely calls on all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law, respect human rights, and engage in good-faith efforts to prevent civilian casualties and greater human suffering.

*Question.* Please provide your assessment of proxy forces' role in CT, and their effectiveness relative to other forces on the ground.

*Answer.* The United States continues to prioritize counterterrorism efforts by working closely with the Yemeni Government and regional partners to counter threats from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen, both of which are U.S.-designated terrorist groups. Counterterrorism operations, battlefield losses to the Houthis, and internal divisions have degraded AQAP capabilities in Yemen. The group, however, remains a significant threat to the region and to the national security of the United States. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, I would continue to work closely with the Yemeni Government and regional partner forces to degrade those terrorist threats.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to ensure U.S. equities will be taken into account in a final settlement if the United States continues to reduce, restrict, or otherwise sever support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC)?

*Answer.* The Houthis' continued attacks against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are unacceptable and threaten nearly 130,000 Americans living in the two countries. U.S. support for Saudi and Emirati defenses against Houthi attacks remains strong. If confirmed, I will work closely with U.S. Special Envoy Tim Lenderking and both countries to de-escalate the fighting and turn towards inclusive U.N.-facilitated political talks. All parties except the Houthis recognize there is no durable military solution to this conflict.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to address the Houthi's systematic and widespread human rights abuses which pose a very real threat to regional stability?

*Answer.* The best way to help ensure that the human rights of all Yemenis are respected is to seek a comprehensive and inclusive peace settlement that includes the meaningful participation of women, civil society, and members of marginalized groups, which includes their calls for justice, accountability, and redress for human rights abuses and violations. The United States will continue to demand that all parties to the conflict, particularly the Houthis, end human rights abuses, including those involving the recruitment and use of child soldiers; killings; abductions, including on the basis of religion; gender-based violence; torture and other abuses; and interference with the exercise of freedom of expression, including for members of the press. We have supported language condemning the unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers and other abuses in several recent Security Council statements on Yemen.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you direct your Embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work alongside U.S. Special Envoy Tim Lenderking in engaging with a wide range of Yemeni groups, including women and civil society leaders, and members of other marginalized demographics, to promote a more inclusive peace process and to amplify their calls for peace, justice, and accountability. The administration uses foreign assistance to support some of these groups where possible, including by supporting a diverse independent media and groups working to document human rights abuses. We hope to continue this critical work.

*Question.* What options are available to the U.S. mission to bolster human rights?

*Answer.* Justice and accountability for human rights abuses and violations are key to a durable resolution to the conflict. In support of this imperative, the Department supports efforts to document evidence of abuses committed by all parties to the conflict and emphasizes the importance of using such documentation in current and future legal, reconciliation, and transitional justice processes. The continued and worsening harassment of independent journalists and human rights advocates throughout the country poses a significant obstacle to a durable peace. The State Department remains committed to supporting Yemeni journalists and advocating for their protection, and it consistently raises human rights violations and abuses in Yemen in public messaging and multilateral forums.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to go about reducing Iranian influence in Yemen?

*Answer.* I share your concern about Iran's influence in Yemen. Ending the conflict is the best way to diminish the Iranian role in the country. The United States disrupts Iran's destabilizing provision of weapons and military expertise to the Houthis and has sanctioned individuals, entities, and vessels related to international networks used to facilitate the provision of millions of dollars' worth of funds to the Houthis in cooperation with IRGC-Quds Force senior officials. Those who seek to profit from the suffering of the Yemeni people must be stopped.

*Question.* Are there steps that can be taken to improve interdiction efforts?

*Answer.* Iran provides increasingly sophisticated weapons, strategic advice, logistical support, and funds to the Houthis, which the group has used to launch attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, including terrorist attacks threatening civilians and commercial sites. The United States continues to disrupt this Iranian support through increased maritime interdictions, export controls on U.S. origin items, and targeted sanctions of individuals, entities, and vessels involved in transferring these items to the Houthis.

*Question.* To what extent do you feel there is room for greater Israeli involvement in this space?

*Answer.* We welcome all efforts to urge the parties toward peace in Yemen. We believe the Houthis are sensitive to international opinion, and we welcome the expansion of a broad international consensus on the need to end this conflict.

*Question.* How has Iran's support to the Houthis changed in recent years?

*Answer.* Iran continues to exacerbate the conflict through its material and technical support to the Houthis. The Houthis are responsive to a degree to Iranian direction and policy. Iran continues to affect the conflict resulting in ever greater regional instability and miscalculation by all parties.

*Question.* What impact has it had on the advancement of Houthi military capabilities?

*Answer.* The unlawful flow of weapons from Iran to the Houthis in Yemen is enabling the brutal Houthi offensives in Yemen, increasing the suffering of civilians.

*Question.* What more can the U.S. do to address the threat Iranian support to the Houthis poses?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration is committed to countering the military threat from Iran. The U.S. Navy seized dozens of anti-tank guided missiles, thousands of assault rifles, and hundreds of machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers from stateless dhows in the Arabian Sea in February, May, and December of last year. The U.S. will continue to disrupt these activities where possible and use sanctions as appropriate against those who exacerbate the conflict.

*Question.* How might the signing of a time-limited nuclear deal with Iran that fails to curb its support to proxies impact dynamics in Yemen?

*Answer.* The President has been clear that the administration is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, and has stressed that diplomacy, in coordination with our allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal. There are fundamental problems with Iran's behavior across a series of issues, including its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, its destabilizing actions throughout the region, and its abhorrent practice of using wrongfully detained U.S. nationals and others as political tools. Because an Iran with a nuclear weapon would make all these threats worse, the President's strategy is to pursue a mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA to restrict Iran's nuclear program and provide a stronger platform from which to address its destabilizing conduct. The Biden administration is committed to using all the tools at its disposal to counter Iran's destabilizing activities, to include limiting its ability to finance groups outside of Iran, and intercepting weapons flows to these groups.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to advance efforts to secure the release of U.S. local staff still being held by the Houthis?

*Answer.* The detentions of our locally employed staff are egregious and unacceptable. The Department of State is committed to ensuring the safety of these colleagues. If confirmed as Chief of Mission, their safety and security would be paramount for me. I would pursue every path available to secure their release, including engagement with Houthi leaders, international organizations, other Yemenis, and regional leaders. I would lead efforts to ensure the Houthis cease any further detentions or harassment of our current or former employees and work with the international community to condemn such acts until they stop.

*Question.* What options are being considered to shore up the security of current and former local staff in light of the continued threat posed by the Houthis?

*Answer.* The Houthis' unacceptable actions against our local staff and former Embassy compound in Sana'a are both deplorable and unjustifiable, and are an affront to the entire international community, only further aggravating the conflict. If confirmed, I would lead efforts to ensure the Houthis immediately release unharmed all current and former U.S. local employees who remain held, end their harassment

of our staff and restrictions on their movement, vacate our former Embassy compound, and return any seized U.S. Government property. We must continue to work closely with our partners in the region to make sure the Houthis hear loud and clear that these egregious actions seriously jeopardize the prospects for the Houthis to ever be a part of a legitimate and internationally recognized Government of Yemen.

*Question.* There is growing concern over the continued downturn in the economy, particularly in the South. For some time, it's been clear that another injection will be needed to stabilize the currency but this will require progress on advancing fiscal reforms. If confirmed, how do you plan to press the internationally recognized government to improve transparency and implement the reforms necessary to set the condition for greater economic stability?

*Answer.* Economic grievances are a key driver of the conflict and must be addressed if we are to ensure its durable resolution. One element of that effort is improving macroeconomic stability, including in areas controlled by the Yemeni Government, and that requires steps to improve transparency. If confirmed, I would work with our regional and international partners, including experts at international financial institutions and in the private sector, to support reforms that bolster the Yemeni economy and ensure resources are used to benefit the Yemeni people.

*Question.* In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Yemen remained a "special case" for the sixth year in a row. Knowing that accurate information on human trafficking in country remains difficult, how will you work with relevant stakeholders to address these issues if you are confirmed as Ambassador? If confirmed, do you commit to accurately portraying any situational updates regarding human trafficking in Yemen in the annual Trafficking in Persons report?

*Answer.* Despite the conflict in Yemen, migrants continue to travel there, primarily from east Africa, often in search of economic opportunities in neighboring Gulf countries. Some of these migrants could be subjected to trafficking. The conflict and lack of effective government institutions have created serious challenges to monitoring and investigating cases, prosecuting perpetrators, and protecting victims. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Embassy team, other donor countries, NGOs, civil society, and international organizations to address trafficking in Yemen, including the treatment of migrant workers. I firmly commit to ensuring that we portray the trafficking situation in Yemen accurately.

*Question.* In the State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Yemen was identified as lacking governmental and societal respect for religious freedom. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Ambassador At Large to bolster religious freedom in-country?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government continues to promote religious freedom in Yemen, engage with religious communities in the Yemeni diaspora, and closely monitor the conditions of religious minority detainees in Yemen and to press for their release. If confirmed, I would engage Yemeni and regional officials to make clear U.S. expectations regarding the equal treatment and protection of members of religious minority groups.

*Question.* To what extent do you see the Houthis as a threat to Israel?

*Answer.* The Houthis are a threat to regional stability throughout the Middle East. We know that Israel has expressed concerns publicly that Houthi missiles could target Israel, and we take those concerns seriously.

*Question.* What more can the U.S. do to address their antisemitism, specifically we should be pressing the U.N. to condition educational assistance on neutral, unbiased curriculum and educational assistance?

*Answer.* Houthi antisemitic slogans and efforts to incite violence and hate are deplorable and must continue to be condemned. If confirmed, I would stress to all educational programming partners our expectations about the need to provide inclusive messages in educational materials as well as ensure improved oversight and quality control of those materials.

*Question.* In your opinion, what steps can the U.S. take to improve our diplomats' ability to get outside the Embassy compound? How do you intend to improve the ability of U.S. diplomats to better access all local populations?

*Answer.* The U.S. Embassy compound in Sana'a has been closed since 2015, and U.S. diplomats work out of the Yemen Affairs Unit in Riyadh. However, the safety of all U.S. Government personnel is paramount, and the Department of State takes all necessary precautions in connection with any travel into Yemen. We take secu-

rity seriously while also ensuring diplomats have the access to local populations necessary to conduct diplomacy. Embassy teams have traveled to Yemen twice in the last five months.

*Question.* What is your understanding of morale throughout the Yemen Affairs Unit (YAU)?

Answer. I understand that YAU personnel are deeply committed to and motivated by their work on challenging but important issues. If confirmed, ensuring the morale and well-being of YAU staff would be among my top priorities.

*Question.* How do you intend to improve morale at the YAU?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my first steps would be to assess the needs of YAU staff. The pandemic has presented challenges to all of our posts, and as we emerge from COVID-19, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the staff at the YAU to ensure they have all the resources necessary to meet the unique responsibilities of their jobs.

*Question.* How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at the YAU?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that all members of our mission are fully versed in President Biden's strategic objectives for Yemen. Creating a unified mission and vision requires open communication and a common understanding of our strategic objectives, including to ensure that it remains consistent with our regional, global and U.S. national security objectives.

*Question.* How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I believe in providing strategic guidance and direction and empowering the members of my team, while creating an environment where they can provide leadership with ideas and feedback to help drive policy and management decisions.

*Question.* Do you believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private?

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates.

*Question.* How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. A constructive, open, trusting working relationship between an Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission is absolutely essential for the successful functioning of any Mission. If confirmed, I look forward to establishing such a relationship with my Deputy Chief of Mission, and in particular ensuring that my Deputy Chief of Mission feels empowered to provide frank assessments on all policy and management issues and on my own performance and actions.

*Question.* If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I would empower my Deputy Chief of Mission to be the mission's "chief operating officer," responsible for the day-to-day management of all aspects of the mission, while also ensuring that the Deputy Chief of Mission is my alter-ego on policy matters, fully capable of covering for me as required.

*Question.* Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. I believe it is absolutely essential to regularly provide personnel with constructive and accurate feedback on their performance.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees in order to improve performance and reward high achievers?

Answer. I support direct feedback and if confirmed, would encourage all personnel to provide clear, accurate and direct feedback. I also regularly encourage recognizing high achievers with State Department awards, including department-wide awards.

*Question.* What public diplomacy challenges does the U.S. face in Yemen? How do you plan to address these?

Answer. Increasing anti-American sentiment in Houthi-controlled media is a real challenge. I understand that our public diplomacy efforts seek to highlight the damage the war has done to Yemen while underscoring positive U.S. contributions. Conducting diplomatic operations from outside of Yemen complicates our ability to undertake typical public diplomacy programming. I understand the YAU has devel-

oped a robust array of virtual programs, supplemented with in-person programming implemented by partners. If confirmed, I would continue to expand these efforts.

*Question.* What steps can the U.S. take to address the proliferation of propaganda promoted by adversaries and strategic competitors in the Middle East?

*Answer.* The State Department coordinates with the interagency to address foreign disinformation and propaganda across the region. Constant media engagements and messaging collaboration with partners and allies are key to countering foreign state-sponsored disinformation and propaganda in the Middle East and North Africa information space. Embassies are also amplifying and deploying Department produced counter-disinformation material. We also empower local voices to identify, expose, and refute disinformation and propaganda by generating their own original, high-quality, and fact-based research and messaging.

*Question.* How do you balance the importance of Main State versus the in-country mission when it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages for foreign audiences?

*Answer.* Our Washington and Mission-based press and public diplomacy teams collaborate on a daily basis to ensure domestic and messaging to foreign audiences is carefully coordinated. Washington-based communicators share guidance with colleagues in the field and both collaborate to ensure messaging is accurately tailored to local contexts.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously? [for context: anomalous health incidents]

*Answer.* Yes. Any threat to the safety and security of personnel must be addressed quickly and thoroughly. As Chief of Mission, it would be my responsibility to ensure U.S. Government employees under my security responsibility are able to perform their duties safely.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to YAU personnel?

*Answer.* Yes., if confirmed I believe that open communication is essential. As Chief of Mission, I would encourage transparency and open communication, especially as it relates to the health and safety of everyone at the YAU.

*Question.* Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

*Answer.* I have not yet received a briefing, but commit to one before my departure if confirmed.

*Question.* In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

*Answer.* The Department's most serious commitment is to its people, and it will not relent in ensuring that any personnel who fall ill while in service to their country will get the help that they need. As required by the National Defense Authorization Act, we will follow the established procedures for collecting and disseminating information and ensure that information regarding such incidents is efficiently shared across relevant federal agencies in a manner that provides appropriate protections for classified, sensitive, and personal information.

*Question.* Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

*Answer.* As Chief of Mission, if confirmed it would be my responsibility to ensure U.S. personnel are fully informed and able to perform their jobs safely.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO STEVEN H. FAGIN BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* From your perspective, is a diplomatic solution to the Yemen conflict feasible?

*Answer.* The only way to reach a durable resolution to the conflict in Yemen is through a negotiated political agreement. There is no military solution. If confirmed, I would support the administration's efforts to advance an inclusive, U.N.-led political process that also addresses the underlying economic and humanitarian crises and leads to accountability for human rights abuses and violations. To that end, U.S. diplomatic efforts have helped build unprecedented international consensus on the need for an immediate, comprehensive ceasefire and political resolution. This is a complex set of problems, but not insurmountable; we must continue to work at it tenaciously and with our partners.

*Question.* Do you believe UNSCR 2216 properly reflects the current context in Yemen? Will the new administration seek to modify this UNSCR?

*Answer.* The administration is committed to exploring all possible options, taking into consideration the timing, sequencing, and ramifications of any new resolution. We continue to work with partners in the region, U.N. Security Council members, and U.N. Special Envoy Grundberg to advance the peace process. We continually evaluate whether the framework for Yemen's political transition outlined in UNSCR 2216 (2015) provides the best basis for peace efforts. We strongly support the targeted arms embargo and sanctions designations of UNSCR 2216 (2015) as key elements of the U.N. Yemen sanctions regime.

*Question.* How would you seek to engage with the U.N. Special Envoy, Hans Grundberg, and what role do you believe the United Nations can play in Yemen from a political perspective, leaving aside its important humanitarian work?

*Answer.* The United States strongly supports U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and remains committed to supporting a U.N.-led peace process to achieve an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict. The administration's efforts complement those of the U.N. Special Envoy's. I understand U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking works in lockstep with the U.N. Special Envoy, and if confirmed, I would work with them to urge all parties to engage with the U.N., with each other, and with civil society, without pre-conditions towards achieving an immediate, comprehensive ceasefire and political resolution of the conflict.

*Question.* How do you envision working alongside Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Special Envoy Lenderking to reach an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict in Yemen. Our responsibilities will not be the same, however. If confirmed, I will be in the region full-time, serving as the Chief of Mission for Yemen and leading the Yemen Affairs Unit located at our Embassy in Riyadh, which oversees the totality of our interests and efforts in Yemen. These include critical humanitarian and development work, economic reform efforts, counterterrorism and security cooperation, engaging with Yemeni and regional officials as well as Yemeni civil society, and above all else, working to ensure the safety and security of American citizens. SE Lenderking has been tasked by the President with a dual mandate: to push for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict and to mitigate humanitarian suffering in Yemen.

*Question.* What would be the impact on diplomatic efforts if the Houthis are re-designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the administration?

*Answer.* Recent Houthi behavior and increasingly destabilizing actions certainly warrant consideration of a range of responses and the President has been clear that a number of options are being explored. Working in concert with our international partners, we need to send clear messages to the Houthis to deescalate the situation and sit down at the negotiating table. Our diplomatic efforts will continue to focus on the administration's commitment to an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict, which requires engaging with all parties in Yemen, including the Houthis. However, we must not forget the very real humanitarian consequences that a designation can entail.

*Question.* Do you believe the U.S. and our allies and partners should do all we can to interdict weapons from Iran fueling the war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen?

*Answer.* Yes. The Department will not relent in applying pressure on those who perpetuate the conflict and the humanitarian crisis and exacerbate the suffering of the Yemeni people. This includes individuals linked to Iran's destabilizing transfer of weapons, strategic advice, and logistical support to the Houthis. The United States continues to disrupt these activities and has sanctioned individuals, entities, and vessels related to international networks used to facilitate the provision of mil-

lions of dollars' worth of funds to the Houthis in cooperation with IRGC-Quds Force senior officials.

*Question.* How do you assess the effectiveness of U.N.-led efforts to address the large-scale humanitarian needs throughout Yemen?

*Answer.* The U.N. is our largest operational partner in Yemen due to its reliability and history operating there. We support U.N.-led efforts across all sectors to reach those who need assistance most. However, U.N.-led humanitarian efforts need more support from international donors, as humanitarian needs worldwide are at an all-time high. We must continue to urge all donor countries to do everything they can to support the U.N. Humanitarian Response Plan so that this work can continue.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you seek to protect U.S. interests in Yemen from a distance, including U.S.-sourced aid, aid workers, and other humanitarian actors?

*Answer.* If confirmed, protecting U.S. interests would be one of my top priorities. Strong, sustained advocacy with all stakeholders in Yemen has helped to ensure that our implementing partners are able to safely reach the most vulnerable, including the many Yemenis displaced as a result of the conflict. If confirmed, I would continue leading such advocacy. We are the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Yemen, a position we are able to continue as a result of years of trust and relationship-building with partners and local authorities. I would lead my Country Team in consultation with Washington to ensure that this extremely valuable work continues unimpeded, making the best use of the taxpayer's dollar. We must also continue working closely with key partners and international financial institutions to support efforts to stabilize Yemen's economy and address the underlying economic drivers of conflict to achieve a more durable peace.

*Question.* From your perspective, what do you believe is the purpose of the Houthis' latest escalatory attacks on the UAE?

*Answer.* Recent Houthi actions, including attacks on the UAE, are just the latest in a series of reprehensible attacks targeting Yemen's neighbors. There is no justification for these actions, and we must continue working with partners to condemn them and make clear to the Houthis such acts will not be tolerated. The UAE is home to over 60,000 U.S. citizens, and these threats to regional security are extremely concerning. Houthi actions against our current and former Yemeni local staff and our former Embassy compound in Sana'a are equally troubling. All this in combination with the Houthis' military offensives indicates they continue to pursue a military end to the conflict.

*Question.* Are their strikes against the Saudis and Emirates an attempt to coerce these governments into accepting a political settlement that divides Yemen?

*Answer.* Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE are an unacceptable threat to regional security, including to the over 130,000 Americans who live in those countries. The administration's efforts towards a political settlement to the conflict are in support of a united Yemen. In contrast, the Houthis continue to pursue a military end to the conflict, in blatant disregard of the suffering such fighting causes for millions of Yemenis. The United States is working with our partners to pressure the Houthis to stop such attacks and engage seriously in U.N.-led political talks to end this war and hold them accountable for human rights abuses.

*Question.* For their part, what are the Saudis and Emirates hoping to achieve in Yemen now? Do they believe they can beat the Houthis? What would such a victory look like?

*Answer.* The only durable solution to the conflict that will ensure peace and security in the region is a negotiated, inclusive political settlement among the Yemenis themselves that includes justice and accountability for human rights abuses and violations. The United States is working very closely with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to support U.N.-led peace efforts to achieve such a political settlement.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO STEVEN H. FAGIN BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* What terrorist organizations are currently in Yemen?

*Answer.* The United States continues to prioritize counterterrorism efforts by working closely with the Yemeni Government and regional partners to counter



threats from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen, both U.S.-designated terror groups. We also continue to take efforts against the activities in Yemen of other U.S.-designated terrorist groups such as Hizballah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force (IRGC-QF). These groups continue to exploit the political and security vacuum created by the ongoing conflict and threaten regional security.

*Question.* What is the current threat posed by AQAP and the Islamic State in Yemen?

*Answer.* Counterterrorism operations, battlefield losses to the Houthis, and internal divisions have degraded AQAP capabilities in Yemen. The group, however, remains a significant threat to the region and to the national security of the United States. A small ISIS presence also exists in Yemen. We continue to actively monitor threats emanating from Yemen and have resources and capabilities in the region to address them. As Chief of Mission, I would continue to work closely with the Yemeni Government and regional partner forces to degrade those terrorist threats.

*Question.* How many Houthi leaders are currently sanctioned by the United States? Which additional Houthi leaders should be reviewed for sanctionable activities?

*Answer.* Twelve official Houthi political and military leaders are currently designated by the United States under a variety of sanctions authorities. In addition, the United States has sanctioned dozens of prominent Houthi financiers and facilitators, including the February 23, 2022 designations of members of an international financial network, led by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force and Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal, that funds the Houthis' war against the Government of Yemen. Last year, four Houthis were also designated under the U.N.'s Yemen sanctions regime.

*Question.* Do you support the re-listing of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization?

*Answer.* Recent unacceptable Houthi behavior and increasingly destabilizing actions certainly warrant consideration of a range of responses, and the President has been clear that a number of options are being considered. Working in concert with our international partners, we need to send clear messages to the Houthis to deescalate the situation and sit down at the negotiating table. Our diplomatic efforts will continue to focus on the administration's commitment to an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict, which requires engaging with all parties in Yemen, including the Houthis. We will continue to take into account the humanitarian consequences of any of our designation decisions.

*Question.* What is the status of the U.S. Embassy compound in Yemen and what property was seized?

*Answer.* The Houthis' egregious actions against our Yemeni local staff and former Embassy compound in Sana'a are both deplorable and unjustifiable and are an affront to the entire international community, only further aggravating the conflict in Yemen. Unfortunately, the Houthis still maintain a presence inside the compound in Sana'a. We do not yet know the extent of what was taken; however, the standard procedure when we evacuate from an Embassy is to destroy or remove all classified material and disable or remove all classified systems. My understanding is that the Embassy staff followed these procedures before evacuating and sealing the former Embassy compound in Sana'a in 2015.

*Question.* How many Yemeni citizens, who previously worked for the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, are currently being detained by the Houthis?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, there are eight current U.S. Embassy Locally Employed Staff and five former staff who are still detained, two of whom currently work for the U.N.

*Question.* What efforts has the United States taken to secure the release of those individuals? [for context: detained LE Staff]

*Answer.* Special Envoy Lenderking and Chargé d'Affaires Westley continue to work tirelessly to secure the release of detained current and former Locally Employed staff. At senior levels the administration raises this issue at every juncture within the U.N. Security Council and other multilateral fora to garner consensus in public condemnation of these actions. The administration appreciated the strong bipartisan Congressional statement in November condemning these Houthi actions against our Yemeni employees and Congress's ongoing support in securing their safety.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your strategy to address this issue? [for context: LES detainment]

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead efforts to ensure the Houthis release unharmed all current and former U.S. employees who remain held, end the harassment of our staff and restrictions on their movement, vacate our former Embassy compound, and return all seized U.S. Government property. We must continue to work closely with our partners in the region to make sure the Houthis hear loudly and clearly that these egregious actions seriously jeopardize the prospects for the Houthis to ever be a part of a legitimate and internationally recognized Government of Yemen.

*Question.* What is the current relationship between Iran and Yemen?

Answer. Iran's transfer of weapons, strategic advice, and logistical support have enabled the Houthis to attack ships in the Bab al-Mandab Strait and use both long-range missiles and drones to threaten civilian targets inside Saudi Arabia and the UAE, including the more than 130,000 Americans who live in the two countries. Iranian support to the Houthis significantly increases the Houthis' ability to threaten regional peace and security and emboldens Houthi hardliners who continue to push for a military end to the conflict and avoid serious engagement in political talks.

*Question.* What military assistance does Iran provide to the Houthis?

Answer. Iran provides increasingly sophisticated weapons, strategic advice, logistical support, and funds to the Houthis, which the group has used to launch attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, including terrorist attacks threatening civilians and commercial sites. The United States continues to disrupt this Iranian support through maritime interdictions, export controls on U.S. origin items, and targeted sanctions of individuals, entities, and vessels involved in transferring these items to the Houthis.

*Question.* How much funding is provided to the Houthis from Iran?

Answer. Iran has provided tens of millions of dollars to the Houthis. The United States continues to identify and disrupt these efforts; over the past year, for example, the United States has sanctioned key elements of an international financial network led by IRGC-QF and Houthi financier Said al-Jamal that was responsible for transferring tens of millions of dollars to the Houthis.

*Question.* How could the Houthi rebels benefit from the removal of sanctions on Iran?

Answer. The President has been clear that the United States is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon and to countering the full range of Iran's destabilizing behavior. Because an Iran with a nuclear weapon would make all these threats worse, the President's strategy is to pursue a mutual return to full compliance with the JCPOA to restrict Iran's nuclear program and provide a stronger platform to address its destabilizing conduct. The U.S. Government maintains a range of tools to combat terrorist financing, and we will continue to use these to counter Iran's destabilizing activities and support for terrorism. Additionally, our tools for countering Iranian behavior are not limited to sanctions. Working with our allies and partners in the region to counter and disrupt Iranian threats, as well as using tools such as interdictions and export controls, has been effective in countering this behavior, and we will continue to expand our efforts in this area.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO STEVEN H. FAGIN BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Question.* Do you assess that Iran will use resources that flow from a new agreement to finance Iran-supported forces in Yemen?

Answer. While Iran's use of its resources, from whatever source, to support destabilizing activities in the region remains a matter of serious concern, the greatest threat to peace efforts remains the Houthis' intransigence, focus on a military victory, and willingness to launch long range missiles and UAVs threatening civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Department will not relent in applying pressure on those who perpetuate the conflict, risk civilian lives, worsen the humanitarian crisis, and seek to profit from the suffering of the Yemeni people. This includes individuals linked to Iran's destabilizing provision of weapons, funds, and military expertise to the Houthis. These groups continue to exploit the political and security vacuum created by the ongoing conflict and threaten regional security. The United States coordinates closely with our Gulf partners to amplify

our efforts, and we will continue to act to counter the full range of Iran's destabilizing activities regardless of the outcome of talks in Vienna.

*Question.* Do you assess that Iran will use resources that flow from a new agreement to finance terrorist groups, either in Yemen or in other countries?

*Answer.* The administration is committed to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, without regard to the source of Iran's resources, and has stressed that diplomacy, in coordination with our allies and regional partners, is the best path to achieve that goal. The administration remains deeply concerned about Iran's actions across a series of issues - including its support for terrorism, its ballistic missile program, its destabilizing actions throughout the region, and its abhorrent practice of using wrongfully detained U.S. citizens and foreign nationals as political tools. Because an Iran with a nuclear weapon would make all these threats worse, the President's strategy is to pursue a mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA to restrict Iran's nuclear program and provide a stronger platform to address its destabilizing conduct. The administration is committed to use all the tools at its disposal to counter Iran's destabilizing activities, to include limiting its ability to finance all groups that work to destabilize the region or the world, and intercepting weapons flows to these groups.

*Question.* Do you assess the Houthis are terrorists?

*Answer.* I understand the Department has revoked the Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist designations of Ansarallah, sometimes referred to as the Houthis, due to concerns over their potential effects on Yemen's fragile humanitarian and economic situation. This included concerns voiced by the U.N., humanitarian groups, and Members of Congress. The United States has continued, however, through domestic authorities and U.N. sanctions, to act against those who perpetuate the conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and commit abuses against civilians, and seek to destabilize the situation for their own gain. This includes Houthi terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which we and the U.N. have condemned on multiple occasions.

*Question.* Do you assess that our regional allies consider the Houthis terrorists?

*Answer.* The Houthis' deplorable attacks in Yemen and against Yemen's neighbors warrant consideration of a range of responses, and the President has been clear that a number of options are being considered. Working in concert with our international partners, including regional allies, we need to send clear messages to the Houthis to deescalate the situation and sit down at the negotiating table. Our diplomatic efforts will continue to focus on the administration's commitment to an inclusive, durable resolution to the conflict and support of our regional allies.

*Question.* Do you assess that our regional allies want us to reimpose the designations?

*Answer.* The only durable solution to the conflict that will ensure peace and security in the region is a negotiated, inclusive political settlement among the Yemenis themselves that includes justice and accountability for human rights abuses and violations. The United States is working very closely with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to support U.N.-led peace efforts to achieve such a political settlement. The United States is also working closely with our partners and regional allies to promote accountability for the Houthis' deplorable behavior.

*Question.* Please describe the role played by Iran and the Houthis in deepening the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

*Answer.* The Houthis, with continued Iranian support, remain intransigent and focused on their military offensive against Marib, and on attacks threatening civilian targets outside Yemen in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Marib offensive is the single biggest threat to peace efforts and is exacerbating an already-dire humanitarian crisis, placing at risk the approximately one million internally displaced persons who found refuge in Marib after escaping fighting in other parts of the country. The Houthis also exacerbate the humanitarian consequences of the fuel situation at Hodaydah port by stockpiling fuel and manipulating fuel prices, driving up the cost of fuel far beyond the reach of most Yemenis. In addition, the Houthis continue to interfere in the delivery of humanitarian aid.

*Question.* Please assess the degree to which the Biden administration's decision to lift terrorism sanctions against the Houthis and their leaders has enhanced the ability to provide humanitarian relief to Yemeni civilians in general.

*Answer.* I understand that the Biden administration revoked the terrorism designations of Ansarallah, sometimes referred to as the Houthis, in recognition of the

dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. The administration listened to concerns voiced by the United Nations, humanitarian groups, and bipartisan members of Congress, among others, regarding potential impacts the designations could have had on Yemenis' access to basic commodities. I understand that the short time that passed between the designations and the revocations limited the impact the designations could have had on humanitarian assistance and commercial imports. According to U.N. data, food and other humanitarian assistance items are now moving through Yemeni ports at normal rates.

*Question.* Please assess the degree to which the Biden administration's decision to lift terrorism sanctions against the Houthis and their leaders has enhanced the ability to provide humanitarian relief to Yemeni civilians in Marib.

*Answer.* The short time that passed between the designations and the revocations limited the impact that designations could have had on humanitarian assistance and commercial imports in Marib. Humanitarian assistance has been especially critical in Marib, where the escalation of hostilities has caused additional needs and secondary displacement. The lifting of sanctions has helped ensure uninterrupted commercial food supplies and the safe delivery of life-saving food, emergency shelter, water, and sanitation and hygiene supplies, as well as essential non-food items, such as blankets and water containers.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

*Displacement in Ukraine*

*Question.* Ukraine's people are facing an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis that has sent more than 1 million refugees into neighboring countries. Most USAID mission countries have expressed interest to help in hosting families and sending help.

- How will you work to coordinate these multilateral efforts? Are there ways to leverage this moment of openness to refugees in order to secure more effective and humane refugee policies in countries where USAID has missions?

*Answer.* Countries neighboring Ukraine have demonstrated enormous generosity in their response to the refugee crisis stemming from Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. I understand that USAID has been working closely with the U.N., NGO partners and European counterparts to monitor humanitarian needs in Ukraine and neighboring countries, while coordinating our response efforts. Administrator Samantha Power visited Poland and Brussels in the first week of the crisis and I am aware that she has continued to closely coordinate with officials from Ukraine, the EU, partners in the region, and international organizations on the humanitarian response. If confirmed, I will seek to build on this effort by working closely with USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to fully leverage all available resources from neighboring countries and allies to meet the needs of conflict-affected Ukrainians, internally displaced populations, and refugees.

*Vulnerable Groups in Ukraine*

*Question.* The Russian Federation has a history of targeting vulnerable populations, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Tatars, and dissident groups. I am concerned that they will do the same in Ukraine if their invasion is successful, and that many from these groups will be forced to join those who have already fled the country.

- How would you approach designing and managing programming to support groups historically persecuted by the Russian Federation, both who remain in Ukraine and who have fled to countries like Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia?

*Answer.* I share your concern that marginalized groups face increased risk of persecution by the Russian Federation. There are already signs of human rights violations by Russian forces and it will be critical to monitor and document these abuses. I understand that USAID supports organizations in Ukraine that work with vulnerable populations, including members of the LGBTQI+ community, persons with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities. I am also aware that USAID programs have been helping to provide assistance to these vulnerable groups, and facilitating the ability for many to safely exit Ukraine. If confirmed, I commit to prioritizing efforts to protect vulnerable groups both within Ukraine and those who have fled to neighboring countries.

*Anti-Corruption Efforts*

*Question.* Administrator Power has highlighted anti-corruption efforts as a top priority for USAID. During her trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina in January, Administrator Power highlighted that, despite progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans, corruption remains rampant in the region.

- How would you work to further Administrator Power’s objective to combat corruption in conjunction with efforts to promote Euro-Atlantic integration?

*Answer.* Endemic corruption is one of the most intractable challenges in the Western Balkans and across the wider region. Corruption serves as a point of entry for foreign malign influence, corrodes the development gains countries in the region have made in the past three decades, and hinders further progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. I understand that USAID is supporting the Biden-Harris administration’s Anti-Corruption Strategy in the region through several lines of effort by piloting innovative approaches. I understand one of these innovative approaches is the Reporters’ Liability Fund, which provides defense coverage and legal resources to journalists threatened with vexatious lawsuits. If confirmed, I pledge to make combating corruption in the Western Balkans and further progress on Euro-Atlantic integration a top priority of mine and commit to providing you with regular updates on our progress towards that goal.

*Armenia*

*Question.* Armenians continue to grapple with the human costs of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War on a daily basis. USAID assistance to Armenia should continue and expand support for the humanitarian needs of the 90,000 displaced people uprooted by the war in Nagorno Karabakh.

- As worldwide humanitarian demands skyrocket, how will you prioritize helping those displaced by the Nagorno Karabakh War?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID provided \$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the conflict, which included cash assistance to displaced persons, and in-kind assistance to host-family households. If confirmed, I commit to working with USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance who are closely following the needs of the displaced. I will also seek opportunities, if confirmed, to help build constructive cross-border interaction and cooperation as the basis for peace and stability across the South Caucasus.

*Democratic Backsliding*

*Question.* As Ukrainian people bravely fight Vladimir Putin’s illegal invasion they inspire support from a growing wave of democratic voices across Europe. This growing wave undoubtedly worries authoritarians and illiberal voices as they scramble to find ways to solidify their established power structures. We see this happening with Milorad Dodik in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Alexander Vucic in Serbia. We also see positive signals with people in all non-EU countries encouraging their governments to take clear sides in a push to join the European family.

- How do you plan to adjust USAID’s strategies in this historic moment to solidify democratic gains throughout the Balkans and Eastern Europe as the world rejects the kleptocratic authoritarianism of Vladimir Putin?

*Answer.* Russia’s unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine presents a grave threat to democracy, freedom, and development progress across Europe and Eurasia. I believe that USAID’s efforts to help build more prosperous and more democratic countries in the region are more vital than ever. I have seen firsthand during my career in the foreign service that the agency has a robust range of tools to promote democracy and governance and solidify democratic gains. If confirmed, I intend to focus on strengthening the institutions and processes in sectors that are foundational to democratic resilience, including a vibrant civil society, strong independent media, rule of law, free and fair elections, and transparent and accountable governance. There are some very positive foundations upon which to do so in Europe and Eurasia and I look forward to bolstering these efforts, if confirmed.

*Question.* What concrete steps can USAID take to cut the corrupt support web of Vladimir Putin by working with its missions in Europe?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that USAID further leverages its resources to target the Kremlin’s corrupt networks. For example, USAID programs can work to further promote financial transparency to limit Moscow’s ability to funnel money through the region and support investigative journalism to expose and disrupt the Kremlin’s illicit financial operations. I will also work closely, if con-

firmed, with USAID's Anti-Corruption Task Force and our interagency partners to identify new opportunities to expand our capabilities and impact in this area.

*Energy Security*

*Question.* Global support for sanctioning Russian oil and gas has never been stronger, as Russia continues to escalate its aggression towards Ukraine and threatens to cut off supplies to Europe. Given that almost 40 percent of total European gas consumption comes from Russian imports, this conflict has severe implications for European energy security.

- How will you work within the Bureau to promote European Energy Security by supporting projects like the Eastern Europe Natural Gas Development Partnership? What other projects would you prioritize?

*Answer.* As we watch the Kremlin utilize its energy leverage to manipulate our European allies and partners, we must do more to attract further investment and diversify supply. I understand that USAID is assisting countries in developing market rules and energy policy frameworks aligned with European standards. My understanding is that through the Eastern Europe Natural Gas Partnership, USAID collaborated with the United States Energy Association and regional natural gas transmission system operators to develop Eastern Europe's first regional pipeline planning model. I also understand that USAID partner countries are using the regional model to forecast the financial viability and technical requirements of their infrastructure projects focused on diversifying energy supply. If confirmed, I commit to continuing this important work to help bring greater energy security to Europe and Eurasia.

*Question.* In your efforts to address European energy security, how will you balance increased demand for energy and the dire need to decarbonize?

*Answer.* In my view, the Biden-Harris administration's climate change goals and USAID's efforts to advance the region's energy security are closely connected. Energy diversification and market integration, including the incorporation of more renewable energy sources, are critical to both the clean energy transition and advancing the region's energy security. I understand that USAID is working to diversify sources of energy supply in the region. In countries that predominantly have gas as their energy source and who are largely dependent on Gazprom, I understand that USAID helps partners open the market to alternative suppliers to limit Gazprom and the Kremlin's out-sized influence. At the same time, I understand USAID is working to expand the share of renewables in the energy generation profile across the region to reduce dependence on high-emitting coal-fired power plants. If confirmed, I commit to assisting our partners in the Europe and Eurasia region with advancing the clean energy transition, combating climate change, and improving energy security.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

*Waste, Fraud, and Abuse*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the U.S. foreign assistance programs under your purview?

*Answer.* Yes, I commit to upholding a zero tolerance policy for waste, fraud, and abuse in the U.S. foreign assistance programs under my purview, if confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you also uphold a zero tolerance policy for USAID staff and implementing partners under your management responsibility who engage in the sexual exploitation and abuse of the communities and individuals they are meant to serve?

*Answer.* Yes, I pledge to uphold a zero tolerance policy for sexual harrasment and sexual exploitation for all USAID staff and implementing partners under my management responsibility, if confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full and complete compliance with all U.S. law prohibiting the use of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning, support involuntary sterilizations, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to providing timely, accurate, and complete responses to questions and requests raised by the members and staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including its minority members?

Answer. Yes.

#### *Material Support*

*Question.* The United States has strict laws prohibiting the provision of material support to designated foreign terrorist groups.

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that all USAID staff and implementing partners under your management responsibility strictly adhere to all relevant material support laws, regulations, policy directives, and vetting requirements?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* If confirmed, what measures will you seek to put in place to ensure not only that all contracts and agreements contain the required material support clauses, but also that adherence is closely monitored and transparently reported to Congress?

Answer. I understand that compliance with federal contracting requirements is a priority of USAID, and if confirmed, I will work closely with staff and my counterparts in the USAID Management Bureau's Office of Acquisitions and Assistance to ensure that our acquisitions and assistance is conducted in full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, and that monitoring and reporting are conducted in an efficient, timely, and transparent manner.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to working with the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury, and the Department of State to eliminate ambiguity and ensure that USAID's implementing partners, including USAID's humanitarian assistance partners, have clear guidance on what constitutes material support, how to identify intentional and incidental breaches, and how to respond?

Answer. Yes.

#### *Country and Regional Programs*

*Question.* At just over \$635 million in FY2020 (actual), the non-security U.S. foreign assistance budget for Europe and Eurasia has been comparatively small.

- If confirmed, what will be your top foreign assistance priorities for Europe and Eurasia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will have the great privilege and responsibility of leading the USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia during a time when the stakes are extremely high. Responding to the crisis caused by Russia's unprovoked and premeditated invasion of Ukraine, including the reverberations felt among neighboring countries, would be my top foreign assistance priority. If confirmed, I would also seek ways to sharpen USAID's focus on countering efforts to undermine democratic institutions and the rule of law, stymying the manipulation of information, reducing energy vulnerabilities and dependencies, and expanding economic opportunities.

*Question.* What options does USAID have to provide humanitarian assistance and support democratic voices in Ukraine following Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion?

Answer. USAID has employed a Disaster Assistance Response Team based in Poland that is working closely with our European allies and partners to meet critical needs caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I'm also aware that USAID is providing food, safe drinking water, shelter, emergency health care, and much-needed household supplies to communities and displaced people in need where security conditions allow. I am committed to addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian people and, if confirmed, will work in close coordination with my colleagues at USAID, the interagency, our European allies and partners, and with Congress, to respond to the devastating effects of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine.

I'm also aware that USAID continues to support democratic voices in Ukraine including through Ukraine's Center for Strategic Communications, which analyzes Russian disinformation narratives and rapidly produces content to counter them. These types of efforts are critical for countering Russia's efforts to silence or undermine Ukraine's democratic voices. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize programs that lift up democratic voices inside and outside Ukraine and to safeguard the democratic gains the Ukrainian people have worked so hard to achieve.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you work closely with USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance to ensure a seamless transition from emergency response to early recovery in Ukraine, as conditions allow?

*Answer.* Throughout my career in the foreign service, I have seen firsthand USAID’s ability to have a meaningful impact in conflict settings and support recovery efforts post-conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to overseeing such efforts in Ukraine, working closely with colleagues in the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, and to a continued dialogue with you on this issue.

*Question.* Where do the Balkans fit into your priorities for assistance?

*Answer.* If confirmed, USAID assistance to the Balkans would be a top priority. While countries in the Balkans, with USAID’s support, have made considerable progress on their stated goal of Euro-Atlantic integration, these gains must be solidified and maintained. Foreign malign actors, particularly the Kremlin and the People’s Republic of China, are actively working to undermine democratic and development progress in the Balkans. In my view, USAID assistance must be responsive to the threats posed by foreign malign actors, strengthen the institutions and processes in sectors that are foundational to democratic resilience, and expand economic opportunities.

*Question.* What concrete actions will you take as Assistant Administrator to push partner countries in Europe and Eurasia to reform their systems and crackdown on corruption?

*Answer.* I share your concern that USAID partner countries in Europe and Eurasia need to take additional measures to fight corruption and pass key reforms in order to promote prosperity, democracy, and Euro-Atlantic integration. The corrosive impact of corruption undermines national security and the rule of law, stunts development and equitable economic growth, and saps our partner governments of legitimacy, eroding faith in democracy itself. I understand that USAID is supporting the Biden-Harris administration’s Anti-Corruption Strategy in the region through several lines of effort by piloting innovative approaches. I understand that one such effort is the Reporters’ Liability Fund, which provides defense coverage and legal resources to journalists threatened with vexatious lawsuits. If confirmed, I will work with USAID to ensure the success of these programs and the sustainability of their outcomes, support the voices of anti-corruption activists and reforms by committed leaders, within and across the region.

## EUROPE AND EURASIA

### *General*

*Question.* Understanding that you are not yet at USAID and have not yet been fully read-in, what is your understanding and assessment of USAID’s current priorities across the Europe and Eurasia region?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID’s immediate priority for the region is responding to the crisis caused by Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, including the reverberations felt among neighboring countries. I am also aware that USAID has a Countering Malign Kremlin Influence Development Framework which is a tool that helps orient and target resources toward the challenge of foreign malign influence. Additionally, I understand that USAID is taking on a range of other challenges and opportunities in the region, including countering democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism, expanding economic opportunities, forging stronger trade linkages to Western countries, building energy security, countering disinformation, addressing the COVID–19 pandemic and its aftermath, and fighting endemic corruption.

*Question.* At what point do you believe that USAID offices should be closed in countries that have made marked progress in their political and economic development?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID has for some time diligently considered the question of when to phase out work in countries that have made sufficient development progress. I have also been briefed that the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia has an analytical unit for Monitoring Country Progress, which leverages a wide range of data and surveys to assess levels of development progress. If confirmed, I will look to utilize and continue to improve these analytical tools to make an empirically-based determination on the level of progress a particular country has made and whether such progress warrants consideration of a change to USAID’s posture. If confirmed, I commit to consulting with Congress prior to undertaking any major programmatic or footprint changes in the region, if confirmed.



*Question.* Are there any thresholds that should be passed, or should such a decision be made as circumstances change?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that USAID, in coordination with the Department of State and the interagency, conducts ongoing assessments of regional and Agency priorities based on changing circumstances on the ground, and conducts regular evaluations of programs and development strategies. As a best practice, USAID should always be poised to flexibly respond to changing circumstances, opportunities, and constraints, to ensure we effectively utilize taxpayer dollars. I also believe that consistent consultation with Congress and all key stakeholders is critical to making sound, informed decisions regarding USAID's posture and footprint in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with you and your staff on these matters.

*Question.* To be more specific, what do you think are the best means of lessening a given country's reliance on USAID, and when such mechanism should be used?

*Answer.* I believe that the best means of reducing a country's reliance on USAID assistance is to ensure that our partner countries pursue and implement reforms that align with the principles of open, democratic, and responsive governance, and market-based and transparent economic development. I'm aware that USAID works tirelessly to ensure that programs promote these development principles and I look forward to supporting these efforts, if confirmed.

#### *Ukraine*

*Question.* The humanitarian situation in areas attacked and occupied by Russian forces, as well as in areas faced with an influx of refugees and IDPs, continues to deteriorate. This crisis requires a massive immediate response and will necessitate a long term strategy as hostilities continue and even after they stop.

- If confirmed, what will be the first actions you take to respond to the humanitarian crisis facing the Ukrainian people?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID has a Disaster Assistance Response Team based in Poland that is working closely with our European allies and partners to meet critical needs caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I'm also aware that USAID is providing food, safe drinking water, shelter, emergency health care, and much-needed household supplies to communities and displaced people in need where security conditions allow. If confirmed, I am committed to addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian people and will work in close coordination with my colleagues at USAID, in the interagency, our European allies and partners, and with Congress, to bolster the U.S. Government's response to the devastating effects of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine.

*Question.* How will you support and facilitate the response to the growing refugee situation in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, and Moldova, as well as in other countries to which refugees may travel?

*Answer.* Russia's unprovoked and premeditated attack on Ukraine has already forced more than 1.3 million refugees to leave Ukraine. In addition, current estimates indicate that well over 160,000 Ukrainians have been displaced internally due to the violence propagated by the Kremlin. I understand that USAID, along with the State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are leading the humanitarian response on the ground and working closely with partners across the U.S. Government and our allies to address this crisis. I further understand that USAID is leading humanitarian assistance efforts for internally displaced persons in Ukraine while also providing food to refugees. State PRM is the lead agency for non-food assistance to refugees. According to projections, the numbers of refugees and IDPs is likely to increase dramatically. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with colleagues at USAID, State, and the interagency to ensure we are effectively coordinating our assistance efforts. If confirmed, I pledge to consult early and often with Congress, which has a crucial role to play in the success of the United States' response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

*Question.* Should Russia's war against Ukraine drag on for months or years, what actions do you believe USAID should take to assist the Ukrainian people in need? What do you anticipate will emerge as long-term needs?

*Question.* While we do not yet know how long this conflict will endure or the extent of its impact, I believe that USAID—along with our allies—must remain committed to the people of Ukraine both by providing for their immediate humanitarian needs and supporting their longer term aspirations for peace, prosperity, and democracy. USAID has already demonstrated its ability to quickly pivot existing programs to meet evolving needs on the ground. For example, I understand that through long-

established partnerships with regional and local governments, USAID has supported civil preparedness efforts by helping local authorities respond to mass population movements, communicate with its citizens, and repair small infrastructure. I am also aware that USAID continues to review all of its programming to identify how to safeguard our investments and sustain these programs where possible, and most importantly, how to protect the safety of its staff and partners. Throughout my career in the foreign service, I have seen firsthand USAID's ability to have a meaningful impact in conflict settings and support recovery efforts post-conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to overseeing such efforts in Ukraine and to a continued dialogue with you on this issue.

*Question.* Should Russia's war against Ukraine drag on for months or years, what actions do you believe USAID should not involve itself in?

*Answer.* I believe USAID should remain focused on its humanitarian and development mandate of supporting the aspirations of the people of Ukraine for a democratic, prosperous, healthy, peaceful, and independent future. If confirmed, I look forward to joining in these efforts to working closely with our European allies and partners, interagency colleagues, and Congress, all of whom have a critical role to play in responding to Russia's unprovoked and premeditated attack on Ukraine.

#### *Western Balkans*

*Question.* The Western Balkans still face many of the ethnic divisions and political challenges as a result of the wars and crimes against humanity during the breakup of Yugoslavia.

- If confirmed, what actions will you take to advance efforts toward reconciliation, stability, political and ethnic relations, and anti-corruption?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID's assistance in the Balkans is addressing the intractable and intersecting problems which prevent the countries of the region from progressing towards greater Euro-Atlantic integration, including foreign malign influence, endemic corruption, youth brain drain, and the devastating impact of the pandemic on the economy. I understand that USAID's reconciliation programming across the Western Balkans includes people-to-people activities that bring together ethnic communities to foster organic communication and promote multi-ethnic social exchanges. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting these efforts, which are essential to building stability, peace, prosperity, and democracy to the region.

*Question.* The State Department has a number of experienced diplomats implementing a strategy for stability and reform in the Western Balkans. How do you plan to coordinate your efforts with your regional counterparts at the State Department?

*Answer.* I understand that USAID coordinates all of the agency's activities to complement the State Department's important diplomatic work, including USAID's ongoing support for the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. If confirmed, I commit to continuing our close collaboration with the State Department on USAID's assistance efforts in the region.

#### *USAID Missions in crisis zones*

*Question.* We have had concerns about the risks that USAID teams have faced in countries like Belarus and Ukraine. Hostile governments and military operations have necessitated the evacuation and relocation of teams in the recent past, and USAID teams need emergency protocols for future situations.

- If confirmed, do you commit to devising comprehensive plans for USAID missions to evacuate, relocate, and (if feasible) transition to remote operations outside of the given country?

*Answer.* I agree that the U.S. Government is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of these dedicated Americans and local staff working in our embassies abroad. As the U.S. Ambassador to the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, to the Solomon Islands, and to the Republic of Vanuatu, and as a career foreign service officer, I understand the risks that exist to the safety and security of Embassy staff and personnel. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with USAID's Office of Security and the State Department to ensure there is extensive planning in place to safeguard all USAID personnel serving in USAID missions in Europe and Eurasia and our programs.

#### *Anomalous Health Incidents*

*Question.* Have you received a briefing on the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. government personnel around the world, including at U.S. em-

bassies and other diplomatic posts? If you have not, and if you are confirmed, do you commit to receiving a briefing on the incidents before you depart for your post?

Answer. As a sitting U.S. Ambassador, I am aware of the anomalous health incidents that have occurred to U.S. Government personnel around the world, including at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic posts. If confirmed, I commit to receiving a briefing on any incidents involving the Europe and Eurasia region and to ensuring that the Agency takes all measures necessary to keep our personnel and partners safe from any threats.

*Question.* In the event of an anomalous health incident among your Embassy personnel or eligible family members, do you commit to maintain detailed records of the incident, and share the information with the State Department and other embassies to contribute to the investigation of how these attacks are affecting U.S. missions and personnel around the world?

Answer. Yes, I commit to maintaining detailed records and working with the State Department and relevant other entities on any anomalous health incident, if confirmed. The safety and security of our personnel is my highest priority.

*Question.* The past occurrences and ongoing threat of anomalous health incidents among Embassy personnel and their families poses a serious challenge to morale. When personnel at post fear for their safety or doubt that their case will be taken seriously if they were affected, the performance of Embassy operations can suffer. Whether or not anomalous health incidents occur at your Embassy, how will you work to restore and preserve morale that may be lost due to the knowledge these attacks have been occurring at posts around the world?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to sharing information, productive dialogue, and coordination with the State Department to ensure the safety and security of our personnel. I also understand that USAID has a Staff Care unit which directly assists our personnel and facilitates their access to professional services that may be needed. If confirmed, I pledge that restoring and preserving morale both in Washington and in USAID missions overseas will be among my top priorities.

#### *Chinese Influence*

*Question.* Chinese has sought to expand its influence in Europe through politics, business and investment, including through the Belt-and-Road Initiative. Predatory business practices and flagrant human rights violations mean Chinese influence poses a risk to healthy development in Europe.

- If confirmed, what will you do to confront Chinese influence in Europe?

Answer. I share your concern about the growing influence of the People's Republic of China in Europe and Eurasia. I understand that USAID is helping partner countries identify viable investments that do not require them to sacrifice their long-term interests in favor of short-term gains. If confirmed, I would reassure our partner countries that there is an alternative to Chinese debt dependency, digital authoritarianism, misinformation, and strong-arm tactics. I will also work with host country partners and our allies, if confirmed, to secure mutually beneficial investments, connectivity, peace, security and development impact, with high quality results that will be sustained and endure.

*Question.* What are the greatest risks to development posed by Russian influence in Europe?

Answer. I believe that malign influence—and aggression—from the Kremlin is the most pressing threat to development in the region. I have been briefed on USAID's development framework for responding to malign Kremlin Influence, which positions USAID to counter this grave and complex threat to development across the region. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that USAID further leverages its resources to target Kremlin corrupt networks. For example, USAID programs can work to further promote financial transparency to limit Moscow's ability to funnel money through the region and support investigative journalism to expose and disrupt the Kremlin's illicit financial operations. If confirmed, I will also work closely with USAID's Anti-Corruption Task Force and our interagency partners to identify new opportunities to expand our capabilities and impact in this effort.

*Question.* What are the greatest risks to development posed by Russian influence in the Western Balkans?

Answer. Russia has sought to expand its foothold in the media sector, its leverage in the energy sector, its economic power, and its influence with political leaders who have cultivated positive relations with the Kremlin in order to advance their own political fortunes. The endemic corruption of the region has also left an open door

to expanding Kremlin influence. This challenge has been particularly pronounced in the Western Balkans, where Moscow can exploit historical, cultural, and religious affinities, longstanding networks and economic ties, and protracted socio-political fractures to its benefit. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to support USAID's approach to addressing the Kremlin's growing influence in the Western Balkans.

*Question.* What tools does USAID have to guide underdeveloped European economies away from Chinese economic investment?

*Answer.* My understanding is that USAID is helping partner countries identify viable investments that do not require them to sacrifice their long-term interests in favor of short-term gains. For example, I understand that USAID helps build the institutional capacity of partner governments to identify and avoid unfair business practices and apply international procurement practices. If confirmed, I would reassure our partner countries that there is an alternative to Chinese debt dependency, digital authoritarianism, misinformation, and strong-arm tactics. If confirmed, I commit to continuing and expanding upon USAID's approach, which emphasizes choice, self-determination, and mutually beneficial investments.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*Question.* The Balkans is often cited as the "soft underbelly" of Europe and the hearing underscored just how vulnerable the region can be to malign influences. Russia has not hidden its malicious agenda to sow discord and division. As a result, Serbia has remained neutral on Russia's war on Ukraine, and on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov called Republika Srpska leader Dodik.

- Ambassador McKee, how will you approach the Balkans region to ensure that USAID's funding can contribute to the long-term success of the region? In particular, how does your programming engage youth and provide them opportunities for employment and a prosperous future? Is our assistance to the region currently structured in a way to meet our strategic goals and at appropriate levels to do so?

*Answer.* I agree that USAID assistance efforts in the Balkans should prioritize engaging with young people, too many of whom do not see a promising future for themselves in the region and as a result, are taking their skills and talent to other countries. I understand that current USAID programs in the Balkans are targeted on combating endemic corruption, creating more job opportunities, and the need to prepare young people for the workforce in order to combat the trend of young people leaving the region. As a leading advocate for the United States' role and leadership in the Balkans, and I would welcome the opportunity to work closely with you, if confirmed, on sharpening the focus of USAID's programs in the Balkans.

*Question.* I just returned from a Congressional delegation to Poland with Senators Coons and Durbin. As part of that trip, I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Belarus pro-democracy movement who are undertaking inspiring efforts to continue pushing for a free and democratic Belarus.

- Now that we have closed our diplomatic presence in Belarus, how will USAID pivot its remaining projects in Belarus to continue supporting a free and independent media, a vibrant civil society and a democratic Belarus?

*Answer.* Despite the Government of Belarus' efforts to stifle pro-democracy voices, I understand that USAID continues to provide assistance to the pro-democracy movement in Belarus. I believe that USAID should continue to support the democratic aspirations of the increasing number of exiled Belarusians, while still working with local partners where possible. If confirmed, I look forward to keeping you abreast of USAID's on-going efforts to assist civil society and a free and independent media in Belarus, both of which are critical lines of effort.

*Question.* While we call out the unprovoked aggression of Putin, it must be known that we are not at war with the Russian people. Putin is escalating his crackdown on the independent media and civil society groups. At the same time, Russia continues its disinformation efforts, spreading lies within and outside Russia.

- If confirmed, how will you reconsider our strategy to continue our support to the Russian people, particularly the independent media and civil society? How do we effectively combat Russian disinformation? How is USAID collaborating with the State Department on this problem?

Answer. I agree that it is important to distinguish between the people of Russia and the Russian Federation. There are many Russian citizens showing remarkable courage and bravery by protesting the invasion of Ukraine in the streets of Moscow. I understand that through creative initiatives, USAID provides support to local, independent voices, media outlets and practitioners, and civil society organizations. As the Kremlin implements even harsher and more repressive measures inside Russia, I will, if confirmed, assess how USAID assistance can be most impactful and effective given the evolving situation.

Answer. I also understand that USAID staff working on countering Kremlin disinformation regularly meet with their counterparts at the State Department to discuss program design and share best practices. These efforts are also geared towards making sure USAID and State are avoiding duplication of efforts so that we can most effectively utilize the funds provided by Congress to counter the lies and false information spread by the Kremlin. If confirmed, I will seek ways to build upon the close coordination between USAID and the State Department around these critical efforts.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE BY SENATOR MITT ROMNEY

*Question.* The Russian invasion of Ukraine has precipitated a humanitarian catastrophe that will likely worsen as the Russian military continues to target innocent civilians, population centers, and critical infrastructure. One million Ukrainians have already been forced to flee their homes as refugees, with potentially millions more to follow. What's more, I remain concerned that Russia could conduct a siege of major cities, starving the populations. If confirmed, you will oversee USAID's foreign assistance efforts in Europe and Eurasia, including Ukraine.

- If confirmed, how will you plan to lead USAID's efforts to prioritize urgent assistance for the Ukrainian people, including food, water, shelter, and health care, including in the event that the Russian army tries to cut off supplies to Ukrainian cities?

Answer. I understand that USAID has a Disaster Assistance Response Team based in Poland, that is working closely with our European allies and partners to meet critical needs caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I'm also aware that USAID is providing food, safe drinking water, shelter, emergency health care, and much-needed household supplies to communities and displaced people in need where security conditions allow. I am committed to addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian people and, if confirmed, will work in close coordination with my colleagues at USAID, in the interagency, our European allies and partners, and with Congress, to respond to the devastating effects of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine.

*Question.* Will you commit to keeping me updated on USAID's efforts to support the Ukrainian people?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I pledge to closely consult with you on USAID's efforts to support the Ukrainian people.

*Question.* What is USAID's plan, alongside the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and other agencies, to address the crisis of potentially millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge in Poland and across Europe, as well as those who will be internally displaced within Ukraine?

Answer. Russia's unprovoked and premeditated attack on Ukraine has already forced more than 1.3 million refugees to leave Ukraine. In addition, current estimates indicate that well over 160,000 Ukrainians have been displaced internally due to the violence propagated by the Kremlin. I understand that USAID, along with our colleagues in the State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are leading the humanitarian response on the ground and working closely with partners across the U.S. government to address this crisis. I further understand that USAID is leading humanitarian assistance efforts for internally displaced persons in Ukraine while also providing food to refugees. State PRM is the lead agency for non-food assistance to refugees. According to projections, the numbers of refugees and IDPs is likely to increase dramatically. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with colleagues at USAID, State, and the interagency to ensure we are effectively coordinating our assistance efforts. If confirmed, I will also prioritize

outreach and consultation with Congress which has a crucial role to play in the success of the United States' response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO HON. ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you coordinate with our European partners in facilitating humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees?

*Answer.* Within days of Russia's invasion, Administrator Samantha Power traveled to the border of Poland and Ukraine to draw attention to the needs of Ukrainians fleeing violence.

Administrator Power also met with European Union (E.U.) leaders in Brussels to deepen U.S.-EU cooperation on efforts to provide displaced Ukrainians with urgent humanitarian aid. If confirmed, I will work closely with our European counterparts to solidify and strengthen coordination on the response to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine so that our assistance efforts are cohesive and synchronous.

*Question.* In what ways does the Ukraine war change USAID's priorities and planning for Europe and Eurasia?

*Answer.* Russia's unprovoked and premeditated attack on Ukraine presents a grave threat to freedom, democracy, and development progress throughout the region. The people of Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia are all too familiar with the specter of Russian aggression. I believe that USAID's continued support for the democratic movement in Belarus, the reform-oriented government of Moldova, and further progress on key reforms in Georgia is more critical than ever. The impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are only beginning to reverberate throughout the region. I am committed, if confirmed, to leading USAID's efforts to support peace, democracy, and prosperity in Europe and Eurasia at this pivotal moment for the region.

*Question.* How do you believe the conflict affects USAID's long-term capabilities to carry out its programs within Ukraine?

*Answer.* While we do not yet know how long this conflict will endure or the extent of its impact, USAID has already demonstrated its ability to quickly pivot existing programs to meet evolving needs on the ground. For example, I understand that through long-established partnerships with regional and local governments, USAID has supported civil preparedness efforts by helping local authorities respond to mass population movements, communicate with its citizens, and repair small infrastructure. I am also aware that USAID continues to review all of its programming to identify how to safeguard our investments and sustain these programs where possible, and most importantly, how to protect the safety of its staff and partners. Throughout my career in the foreign service I have seen firsthand USAID's ability to have a meaningful impact in conflict settings and support recovery efforts post-conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to overseeing such efforts in Ukraine and to a continued dialogue with you on this issue.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you reevaluate USAID engagement in Belarus and Georgia in light of Russia's latest actions?

*Answer.* Russia's invasion of Ukraine has broad implications for neighboring countries. The Lukashanka regime's decision to host Russian troops has invigorated anti-war sentiment within Belarus, manifesting in visible protests despite the repressive measures imposed by the Belarussian security services. I believe that USAID should continue to support the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus and work with local partners where possible. If confirmed, I am happy to provide you with regular updates on USAID's support for the democratic movement in Belarus.

I understand that USAID assistance in Georgia focuses on supporting reform-oriented actors in civil society and public institutions that promote transparency, international standards, and accountability. I believe that the Agency should continue its dialogue with all key stakeholders to encourage constructive progress toward reforms and Western integration. I look forward to supporting these efforts, if confirmed.

*Question.* Given Russia's frequent mischaracterization of USAID's engagement, how would you communicate with our partners about the mission and role of USAID, if confirmed?

Answer. I share your concern about the Kremlin's tendency to spread lies and false information about USAID's programs in Europe and Eurasia. I understand that across the region,

USAID consistently communicates the Agency's mission of promoting self-determination, sovereignty, and helping partner countries make informed choices about their own development path. If confirmed, I would build upon the proactive messaging already underway to reach new audiences through community outreach, digital engagement, and support for local media across the region.

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