

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 2021

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:11 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Hon. Robert Menendez, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Kaine, Van Hollen, Risch, Young, and Cruz.

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

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

We are here today to consider nominations for four very important positions. Secretary, former Senator, Ken Salazar to be Ambassador to Mexico, Ms. Jessica Lewis to be Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs, Ambassador Donald Lu to be the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, and Ms. Marcella Escobari to be an Assistant Administrator for the United States Agency for International Development for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Congratulations on all your nominations. I know all of you have a distinguished history of public service. We appreciate your willingness to continue to serve your country, and those members of your family.

I understand that Senator Bennet and Senator Hickenlooper, our colleagues from Colorado, will be introducing Secretary Salazar this morning. So we will go to them.

Senior Senator from Colorado, Senator Bennet?

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL BENNET, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Chairman Menendez for having me, the Ranking Member as well, for allowing Senator Hickenlooper and me to introduce Ken Salazar, President Biden's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Mexico.

Ken is no stranger to this body where he served with distinction, and Colorado is honored to call him our own. And I am grateful to call him a mentor and a brother. In my view, President Biden could not have made a better choice.

The American Southwest embodies our braided history with Mexico, and I cannot think of anyone with a deeper connection to the region than Ken.

Our history goes back over 400 years when Ken's family settled in New Mexico before America was even a country. Later, the family journeyed to Colorado, San Luis Valley, where they have farmed for five generations.

If you drive down to the Valley and visit San Luis, which is Colorado's oldest town, there is a stone marker identifying the state's first irrigation ditch, The People's Ditch, etched into the stone or the names of farmers and ranchers who were entitled to draw water from that ditch, because they were the ones who dug it, and the name Salazar is among them.

The Valley is a sparse, beautiful part of our state, but it was not an easy place to grow up. The Salazar family ranch in Los Rincones did not have electricity until 1982.

Ken and his siblings grew up reading with oil lamps. They did not have phones, or television, but they did have the example of their parents, both incredible patriots. Ken's father, Henry, served in World War II and became a staff sergeant. He was so proud of his service to America, that he asked the family to bury him in uniform, which they did.

When the war broke out, Ken's mother, Emma, also wanted to do her part. So she traveled to Washington by herself, when she was only 19, to work at the Pentagon. Neither of his parents had a college education, but they worked hard to provide their family with opportunities they never had, all eight of their children, including Ken, became first-time college graduates.

They were so proud of everything Ken went on to achieve, from working as a lawyer at top western firms, to breaking barriers as the first Hispanic-American elected to statewide office, as Colorado's Attorney General, to become the first Mexican-American elected to the U.S. Senate outside of New Mexico, to joining President Obama's historic Cabinet as Secretary of the Interior.

Ken is exactly who we need to strengthen our vitally important relationship with Mexico, which is critical to the stability and prosperity of our entire hemisphere. But as this committee appreciates, the relationship faces no shortage of challenges, from immigration, to trade, energy, resource management, public health, and the rule of law.

Ken has worked and lived virtually all of these issues. As Colorado's Attorney General, Ken negotiated several extradition arrangements with Mexico, many of which remain in place today. In the Senate he led important immigration reform with Ted Kennedy and John McCain. He shaped major provisions of the Farm Bill. He helped craft by partisan energy bills. When he left to serve in the administration, Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell praised his leadership on the floor, and the Senate confirmed his nomination unanimously.

As Interior secretary, Ken negotiated water-sharing agreements between the U.S. and Mexico, and strengthened bilateral cooperation around conservation to protect Big Bend National Park along the Rio Grande.

I could go on, Mr. Chairman, but it comes down to this, you would struggle mightily to find someone more qualified than Ken. He has the experience and substance to hit the ground running, and a life story that represents America at our best.

I urge the committee to advance his nomination with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. When I am up for a nomination, I want you introducing me, Senator Bennet.

Senator Hickenlooper?

Senator BENNET. I will be there.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN HICKENLOOPER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO**

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Well, good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member, and members of the committee.

I am also equally honored to introduce Secretary Ken Salazar, President Biden's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Mexican States. I have known Ken for over 30 years, from when we first had a jazz club in the basement of my restaurant, and he was raising money for a campaign to protect open lands in Southern Colorado called La Tierra. We got John Nichols to come speak, and raised—I think we raised 16 or \$1,800.

His older brother, John, who some of you remember, from serving in the House, was my Secretary of Agriculture, my first term as governor. Ken has been beside me on every campaign, and every major issue, every political battle I fought. And I have tried to be by his side as well.

As Michael said, his family story is emblematic of the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. His family settled in Southwest, United States was then New Spain in the 16th century. His ancestors helped found the City of Santa Fe. Michael described him growing up on Los Rincones without electricity. He did not mention that Los Rincones is a scrabble of about six buildings. The big city, Manassa, which is four miles away, almost has a population of a thousand.

Again, the ranch down there is one of the most beautiful places in Colorado. My son, Teddy, learned to ride, ride a horse on this ranch when he was 11 years old. And of those eight children that Ken's parents, Emma and Henry raised, all eight graduated from college.

And I was also—well, you ought to get him to tell the story at some point, but children six, seven, and eight were all born on the same long night, which is a story only he can tell. He served Governor Romer, both as chief counsel and as secretary of Natural Resources, and both in those roles, and as a U.S. Senator, and as the secretary of Interior, he never shied away from tough issues.

He understands the importance of collaboration, and bipartisan-ship, pragmatism. He is a world-class negotiator, which I think he got from his mother, Emma. She was about 5 feet 2 inches, and yet one of the strongest, most potent political forces in Colorado. She blessed two generations of candidates, and they were not always Democrats, but she blessed to two generations, she blessed me on my reelection in 2014 when she was 91 years old.

When he came to the Senate, Ken designated and chose Senator John McCain as his mentor, as a freshman senator, and the two worked together on immigration reform, both working with Republicans and Democrats, he convened ranchers and environmentalists throughout his term as secretary—as Interior secretary, on water issues, conservation issues, et cetera.

From a ranch in Conejos County, Colorado, to the hallways of this chamber, Ken has had a package of experiences that make him uniquely qualified to be a remarkable Ambassador to Mexico. Mexico is an important ally and trading partner. Nuevo Laredo now is our largest port of entry, and in many—in so many cases, the United States and Mexico share priorities. And I think that it is a delicate point in the relationship now, a point that demands someone with the skills of Ken Salazar.

All of us in Colorado are so grateful for all of his contributions, the things that he has done. He created something called Great Outdoors Colorado that, to this day, is perhaps the greatest public-private partnership around land conservation in the history of this country. In everything that he has done, he has been able to bring people together, resolve conflict, and create progress.

And that is exactly what we need now. We are all fortunate to his, once again, answering the call to service, to take on this crucial role at this crucial time.

I wholeheartedly support his nomination, and I hope that he gets widespread support from every single person on this committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, Senator Hickenlooper. I did not think there was much that could be added after Senator Bennet, but you did a fantastic job of filling out the total, the total picture. So we know that both of you have very busy agendas and you are welcome to excuse yourselves at any time.

With that, let me take a moment to introduce Ms. Jessica Lewis. It is with a mixture of deep pride and wistfulness that we are here today considering the nomination of Ms. Lewis to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Political Military Affairs.

I, like many others in both the Senate and the House, have had the good fortune of working closely with Ms. Lewis and benefiting from her exceptional wisdom, drive, and judgment. Ms. Lewis is recognized across party lines as one of the most effective and respected leaders on Capitol Hill, she is a trailblazer for women in national security. Indeed, if approved by the Senate, she will be the first woman confirmed to hold this position.

You all know her as the majority staff director of this committee, and prior to that, as a senior national security and foreign policy advisor for then Majority Leader Harry Reid. What you may not know is that she came to Capitol Hill almost two decades ago to work for me as a foreign policy advisor and staff director of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee in the House of Representatives. So we are proud of all of Jessica's accomplishments since then.

And while it would be impossible to catalogue all of these accomplishments here, I do want to highlight her leadership, her steady hand during this past year in particular, leading the staff to an incredibly productive year, while also providing invaluable advice on

the committee's foreign policy priorities. I have been deeply impressed, and that is not an easy thing to do, but not at all surprised.

I would like to highlight that Ms. Lewis' tireless dedication over her entire career to mentoring young professionals as well, elevating her colleagues, and empowering those who have not been traditionally represented in the field, are exemplary. And I have no doubt she will apply herself in the same way, and with equal success at the State Department.

Secretary Salazar is a friend of mine, and of this committee, and I am deeply gratified by your nomination to be Ambassador to Mexico. It is a Testament to the Biden administration's seriousness about restoring a productive and respectful relationship with the people and Government of Mexico. One of the most important, expansive bilateral relationships we have.

The task ahead of you is great. You will need to continue engaging on the critical issues of trade and migration that have been central in our bilateral relationship, while also engaging on the, often uncomfortable, issues that face both our nations, including the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people, environmental threats, and issues of democracy, governance, and rule of law, including with respect to human rights and labor rights.

I have no doubt that your vast experience in government, your personal ties to Mexico, and your commitment to bipartisan solutions will make you an excellent ambassador upon your confirmation.

Of the Office of Political Military Affairs, for which Ms. Lewis has been nominated, are of vital importance to U.S. foreign and national security policy, and to this committee. It is a position with immense impact for safeguarding U.S. national security and promoting and accomplishing vital U.S. foreign policy objectives.

In recent years, the Bureau's relationship and credibility with this committee has been strained, though it has been improving. I expect that with Ms. Lewis at the helm, the Bureau's level of cooperation with the oversight activities of, and consultation with this committee will improve considerably. And I will put that expectation to the test.

Ambassador Lu, I am pleased to see you back again before this committee, this time to be the next Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, a region of critical importance and significant challenges. Indeed, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan will require sustained Senate oversight for how the administration plans to mitigate the effects of the withdrawal.

I, along with many members of this committee are especially concerned about the plight of women, and the minorities as the Taliban continues to gain military strength.

In addition, as the administration evacuates the first group of Afghan SIV applicants, I continue to be concerned about the thousands of remaining Afghan SIV applicants and our Afghan human rights and democracy partners whose lives remain in grave danger from the Taliban.

And as you know, any peaceful resolution to this conflict must be regional in nature, and will require the Assistant Secretary to be deeply engaged.

Our relationship with India is growing, bolstered by a vibrant Indian-American community here in the United States, I expect our diplomats to deepen this relationship while remaining true to our core values, and raising concerns as necessary.

In Bangladesh, I continue to advocate for labor rights in the establishment of unions to ensure that workers in every sector can work in safe conditions. There will be no shortage of challenges, but I am confident that your knowledge and experience in the region will serve you well as you take on this role.

Ms. Escobari, your extensive experience helping countries in our hemisphere chart a path towards prosperity, including in your previous service as USAID Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean Bureau, which make you exceptionally qualified for this position. As you know, the challenges we face in the region are growing by the day. Democratic backsliding has accelerated in many countries aggravating by the ongoing socioeconomic impact of COVID-19.

With the recent assassination in Haiti, widespread protests and regime violence in Cuba, and authoritarian crackdown in Nicaragua, humanitarian emergency in Venezuela, and numerous challenges related to irregular migration, the Western Hemisphere today is less secure, less prosperous, and less stable than it had been in many years.

We look forward to hearing how you will work to address those challenges, if confirmed.

In closing, the four of you have immense challenges ahead, I am confident that your rich experiences will serve you well as you take on your new responsibilities upon confirmation. We look forward to your testimonies. And this is normally a little longer than we would in introducing, nominees, but you are coming into critical positions.

So let me turn to the distinguished ranking member for his opening remarks.

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

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thanks to our witnesses for joining us today, and your willingness to serve, and of course your families who will share in that sacrifice.

I want to start with the nomination of Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Central Affairs. Personally, my top two foreign policy priorities are China and global health. And India is a major player in both of these priorities.

So I look forward to hearing your views on how we can work with India to maintain a favorable balance of power in the Indian Ocean, and continued to partner in the fight against COVID, and other global health concerns, including vaccine development and manufacturing in India.

It is also becoming clear that a hasty U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan threatens to squander our hard-fought gains there. Ambassador Lu, we welcome your thoughts on the way ahead.

Next, we have the nomination of Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs. Our security partnerships are essential to protecting our vital national interests. They are also critical aspect

of competition with China and Russia. We will often hear from our allies and partners over the problems and the speed of our security cooperation process. And often state is at the forefront of these problems.

I look forward to hearing how you plan to strengthen our relationships with partners, and allies, and keep the U.S., the security partner of choice around the world. I have no doubt you have great qualifications for that task in as much as your service on this committee has shown that to be such.

On the nomination of Assistant Administrator of USAID for Latin America and the Caribbean, if confirmed, you will have no shortage of challenges, especially the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, the growing violence and poverty in Haiti surrounding the recent assassination of President Moyes, democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua, and holding governments in Central America accountable for addressing the drivers of irregular immigration.

And for the nomination of a U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Senator Salazar, Secretary Salazar, it is good to see you again. As neighbors, Mexico and the United States share an enduring interest in maintaining robust security and economic cooperation. I look forward to hearing your thoughts, especially on how to address the growing role of Mexican transnational criminal organization in the production and trafficking of fentanyl into the United States.

I think all of us have been shocked by the state of politics in Mexico, with the huge number of assassinations that have taken place of people that are running for public office, and the current state of affairs there. It is staggering how many people have been killed.

Ambassador—excuse me—Senator Salazar, your ability to handle these things, I have absolutely no question about. It has been a pleasure working with you on issues that were parochial to my state while you were Secretary of the Interior. I enjoyed serving with you briefly in this chamber.

And with that I will yield back my time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

All right, we will turn to our nominees. We will start with Secretary Salazar, and moved down the dais. We ask you to summarize your statement in about five minutes, so we can have a conversation with you. Your full statements will be included in the record without objection.

And with that, we recognize Secretary Salazar.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR, OF COLORADO,
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO
THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, and Ranking Member Risch, and all the members of this committee, for the time this morning. I appreciate your service and your leadership on this committee.

I also want to acknowledge and thank my good friends, Senator Michael Bennet, and Senator John Hickenlooper for their long jour-

ney with me together, working on issues that we so much care about for Colorado and the United States of America.

And I want to acknowledge my family back in Colorado, and the San Luis Valley, and in Denver. My wonderful wife, Esperanza, watching this hearing this morning with Melinda, Andrea, Mireya, and Selena, and Blake, and all of my family in the valley, thank you so much for being the wind beneath my wings for all of the journey that I have had in this wonderful life of mine.

Let me also acknowledge my guests here today. Former colleagues from the U.S. Senate, as well as friends, Stephanie Valencia, Felicia Escobar and Dan Restrepo, I thank them for their help in my own—in my journey.

So let me also say, this is a very proud moment for me, proud because President Joe Biden is a person who cares a lot about Mexico, Central America and Latin America, his many trips, even as Vice President trying to deal with these issues that have been around for—the United States for a very long time, are a testament to his attention to the North-South relationship and to the Western hemisphere.

And so I am very proud to be able to work with him, to have the opportunity, if confirmed by this committee and the Senate, to be able to work on the issues that he so much cares about.

And likewise, Vice President Kamala Harris, she and I knew each other back in her days as attorney general. And I know her interest in dealing with the issues, including the root causes in the relationship between the U.S., Mexico, Central America, and Latin America.

So I very much look forward to being a part of their team, but I can only do that work effectively if I also work closely with the members of this committee, and that includes both the majority and the minority staff, it includes a you, Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, and each of the members of this committee. We may not always agree, but what I will make sure I do is that I have the opportunity to hear your voices and to work with you, to deal with these solutions, or these challenges, and create solutions that we have all been looking for.

So let me just say a word about how I see the issues for the United States and Mexico. Our futures are inextricably bound together as two nations, as people that have a very common heritage.

We are inextricably bound together because of the demographics of our two nations. We are inextricably bound together because of the migration patterns of the history of our two nations. We are inextricably bound together with our economic and jobs, dreams, and the prosperity for both nations. And we are inextricably bound together with the dream of security, and freedom from the fear of violence that we currently see on the border, on both sides of the border, and on the southern border of Mexico, as well as in other places in Latin America. And we are bound together by our history and by our heritage.

I will not spend a long time talking about those issues, but very quickly on the demographics, we have about 170 million Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in both countries. It is interesting that of those 170 million more than one-fourth of the population resides here in the United States. And they come from families like mine

that have been around, through our heritage, for 400, 700 years with our Native American, Mexican, and Spanish backgrounds, through the Mexican-American War in 1848, and then for the last 170 years as American citizens.

We are bound together because the issues of migration have brought us together historically through the push and pull of the history of migration into this country. It is an issue which still be-devils this country in terms of how we deal with a sustainable, orderly migration system, and in order to get to that point, we have to work closely with the Mexican Government to share our interest in dealing with those issues.

We are bound together because of our economy and jobs. You know, they say that the Latino population is the mainstream economy in the United States, some 60 million strong, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, and 60 million strong contributing greatly to the economy United States and to the future, political, and demographics of this country. So we need to make sure that we are integrating that community.

And on security, we cannot deal with the security issues without having the Mexican Government working with us. It is incumbent upon them because it is a shared responsibility that we have to deal with the violence issues, both on that side of the border, as well as on this side of the border.

So let me just conclude by saying, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Risch. This is a very proud moment for me, it is a very proud moment because of our history, but it is also a very proud moment, as I look forward to the future, yes, full of challenges, but full of opportunities. It is a proud moment for us to bring the two nations closer together and to deal with a kind of reality that creates prosperity, security, and peace for the peoples of both the United States and Mexico.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Salazar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and members of the committee, I am proud and humbled to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to Mexico.

My history is deeply rooted in Mexico and the United States. My forebearers came from Mexico and Spain in the early 1600s and settled along the banks of the Rio Grande del Norte near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Following the end of the Mexican-American War, they migrated north and established the settlement of Los Rincones in the San Luis Valley. Today, we still ranch and farm the same lands along the tributaries of the Rio Grande.

My father was a proud soldier in World War II. My mother helped open the Pentagon as a public servant. After the war, they returned home. At home, our native language was Spanish. We were poor and worked in the fields and home alongside our parents. We were taught to dream big dreams and the timeless values of faith, hard work and education. All eight of their children became first generation college graduates.

Like my parents, I am a proud American. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to advance the interests of the United States and to strengthen the common bonds between the United States and Mexico. I recognize the difficult and enormous challenges ahead. I also am optimistic about the opportunities ahead for our two nations.

In my view, it is time to create transformative change in the United States-Mexico relationship by ushering in a new era of partnership with our southern neighbor.

That partnership must:

- address jobs and economic opportunity for the people of the United States and Mexico through trade, infrastructure, tourism, and investment;
- secure our shared borders and create an orderly, safe, and humane framework for migration;
- identify partnerships that address the scourge of violence and respects the rule of law; and
- engage in a global sustainability transformation for a viable planet while respecting the sovereignty of both nations.

If confirmed, I will seek the advice and guidance of this committee and its members in my service to the United States. I look forward to working with President Biden and Vice President Harris and the United States Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Mexico. I also look forward to working with the Mexican Government to advance our shared interests in Mexico and here in the United States.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Secretary Salazar.
Ms. Lewis?

STATEMENT OF MS. JESSICA LEWIS, OF OHIO, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE [POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS]

Ms. LEWIS. Chairman Menendez. Thank you, first of all, for your kind words. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, I am honored and humbled to be here as the Biden-Harris administration's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

I would like to thank President Biden for nominating me, and Secretary Blinken for his support. I was lucky enough to start my career on this committee, under then Chairman Biden when Secretary Blinken was the staff director on the committee.

I would like to thank my father, Robert Lewis, for raising my sister and me; his strength and love after my mother, Molly Lewis, passed away when I was a child, made me who I am today. I am also lucky to have the love and support of my stepmother, who is truly my second mother, Patricia Lewis. And I am joined by my sister, Kaitlynn Griffith, who has been with me every step of the way.

My greatest joy in life has been as a mother, and I would like to thank my 9-year-old son, Matthew, who is wisely enjoying a day of summer camp today instead of sitting through a hearing. And to my incredible community of friends, thank you for being my second family.

I would like to personally thank Chairman Menendez, who hired me nearly 20 years ago as a staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and who trained me to be a staffer. The Chairman has the sharpest mind I have encountered, and has taught me to stand up for what I believe. I would not be here before the committee today if it were not for Senator Menendez.

I would like to thank former Senator Harry Reid, who taught me the ways of the Senate during my nine years working for him, and Senator Cardin, who brought me on as staff director of this committee.

And finally, I would like to thank the outstanding bipartisan staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to my team, you are simply the best.

To my Republican colleagues, working with you has taught me when we can come together, as we recently did on the China Bill

which passed this committee with overwhelming support, we are at our very best.

I have spent my entire career in public service, if confirmed I would be honored to continue that path at the State Department. I began my career teaching third grade in public schools, and believe my work as a teacher serves as the foundation for all I do today.

I then worked at the Organization of American States running education, training, and technology programs in Latin America. Since then, I have spent nearly 20 years on The Hill and have worked on some of the most critical national security legislation of our time. I staffed the Conference Committee for the legislation that implemented the 9/11 Commission recommendations in the early-2000s, and recently negotiated passage of the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act only a few years ago.

And, as Senator Reid's National Security advisor, I worked directly with the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, the Defense Department, and our Intelligence Agency.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs manages our arms sales, and security assistance, negotiates international security agreements, and manages our security relationships with other countries. The Bureau is also in charge of U.S. programs to help countries cope with the after effects of war through conventional weapons destruction programs.

If confirmed, I would focus on four areas. First, as President Biden promised, a plan to enhance the consideration of human rights in our decision-making to ensure our arms sales are in our foreign policy interest, and in line with American values.

Second, I am committed to reinvigorating the Bureau's relationship with this committee and with Congress.

Third, I want to focus on strengthening the workforce at the Bureau, and specifically its efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Fourth, I believe the judicious provision of U.S. defense equipment can deepen our relationships with our allies and partners, and support our foreign policy and national security. I believe if government can help to keep the global playing field level, our defense companies can continue to out-compete any rival while upholding our values.

In conclusion, if confirmed, I am committed to leveraging the tools of the Political-Military Affairs Bureau in the service of U.S. foreign policy and American values.

Thank you. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lewis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JESSICA LEWIS

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, members of the committee, I am honored and humbled to be here as the Biden-Harris administration's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

I would like to thank President Biden for nominating me, and Secretary Blinken for his support.

I would like to thank my father Robert Lewis for raising my sister and me. His strength and love after my mother, Molly Lewis, passed away when I was a child, made me who I am. I am also lucky to have the love and support of my step-mother—who is truly my second mother—Patricia Lewis. I am joined by my sister Kaitlynn Griffith, who has been with me every step of my life. My greatest joy in

life has been as a mother, and I would like to thank my 9-year-old son Matthew, who is wisely enjoying a day of summer camp today instead of sitting through a hearing. And to my incredible community of friends—thank you for being my second family.

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I would like to thank former Senator Harry Reid, who taught me the ways of the Senate during my 9 years working for him, and Senator Cardin, who brought me on as staff director of this committee.

Finally, I would like to thank the outstanding bipartisan staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. To my team, you are simply the best. To my Republican colleagues, working with you has taught me when we can come together—as we recently did on the China bill which passed this committee with overwhelming support—we are at our best.

I have spent my entire career in public service; if confirmed, I would be honored to continue that path at the State Department. I began my career teaching third grade in public schools and believe my work as a teacher serves a foundation for all I do.

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Since then, I have spent nearly 20 years on the Hill and have worked on some of the most critical national security legislation of our time. I staffed the conference committee for the legislation that implemented the 9-11 Commission recommendations in the early 2000s and negotiated passage of the Countering Americas Adversaries Through Sanctions Act only a few years ago.

And, as Senator Reid's national security advisor, I worked directly with the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, the Defense Department, and our Intelligence Agencies.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs manages our arms sales and security assistance, negotiates international security agreements, and manages our security relationships with other countries. The Bureau is also in charge of U.S. programs to help countries cope with the aftereffects of war through conventional weapons destruction programs.

The Bureau is also unique because of its dedicated workforce. They have a well-deserved reputation for professionalism, and they have performed the challenging work of the Bureau across administrations.

If confirmed, I would focus on four areas.

- First, as President Biden promised, I plan to enhance the consideration of human rights in our decision-making to ensure our arms sales are in our foreign policy interest and in line with American values.
- Second, I am committed to reinvigorating the Bureau's relationship with this committee and Congress.
- Third, I want to focus on strengthening the workforce at the Bureau, and specifically its efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Fourth, I believe the judicious provision of U.S. defense equipment can deepen our relationships with our allies and partners and support our foreign policy and national security. I believe if government can help to keep the global playing field level, our defense companies can continue to outcompete any rival while upholding our values.

In conclusion, if confirmed, I am committed to leveraging the tools of the Political-Military Affairs Bureau in the service of U.S. foreign policy and American values.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And as a good staffer, you came in under five minutes. So it is just amazing.

Ambassador Lu, please go ahead?

STATEMENT OF THE HON. DONALD LU, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS

Ambassaador LU. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of this committee, I am honored and humbled to be here today as President Biden's nominee to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs.

I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have shown in me. I would not be here today without the love and support of my family. I am joined today by wife and best friend, Ariel. And we have two wonderful teenagers at home, Kip and Aliya. Unlike Security Salazar's kids, they are not watching, they are sleeping soundly at the moment.

As the son of an immigrant to the United States, I am particularly proud to have served my country in the U.S. Foreign Service in the Peace Corps. During my 30 years at the State Department, I have worked in India, Pakistan, and Central Asia, advancing our agenda on counterterrorism, democracy, and anti-corruption.

As someone who believes that the Foreign Service and the Civil Service should look like the face of America, I am committed to implementing the President's vision on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Mr. Chairman, with the President's decision to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan by September 11, we are faced with new risks and new opportunities. And in particular, we have an historic opportunity to rebalance our relations with the countries of this region to better reflect our long-term strategic priorities.

First, it is in our national interest to continue to strengthen our fast-growing strategic, economic, and people-to-people ties with India, while also speaking forthrightly about human rights and our democratic values. As two great Indo-Pacific powers, we must strive to ensure that our Asian partners remain sovereign and free, and not dominated by a single power.

As two great democracies, we must demonstrate through our example why democracy promotes peace, stability, and personal freedoms. And as two great free-market economies, we can build a more stable and inclusive global economy.

As the producer of 60 percent of the world's vaccines, India is critical to the global fight against COVID-19, and if confirmed, I would work with India to end this devastating pandemic. And I commit to working with India and our partners to tackle the climate crisis.

Second, on Pakistan: We have for more than 20 years defined our relations with this important partner primarily through the prism of counterterrorism and security. If confirmed, I will build on our long history of friendship with Pakistan to advance human rights, religious freedom, counterterrorism cooperation, and an improved business climate for American investors.

Third, Afghanistan: I started my career working on the Afghan border in the Pakistani City of Peshawar. I saw then, first-hand, the desperate plight of Afghan refugees. I have a deep commitment to encouraging peace, security, human rights, and the rights of

women and girls. If confirmed, I will work to advance our objectives in Afghanistan.

Finally, in the other countries of South and Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives, we face competition from China and Russia like never before. We must recommit ourselves to robust engagement with these countries to support their sovereignty and independence in the face of many challenges.

Critical new tools have been authorized in this effort, from the creation of the Development Finance Corporation, to this committee's important work on the Strategic Competition Act.

If confirmed, I will work to make the United States a reliable international partner for the Governments and peoples of these countries, one who is willing to call out malign influence, and stand up for human rights and democracy.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will take seriously my role as a steward of the public trust. I will safeguard our precious resources, our people, our embassies, and the strong reputation of the United States.

I believe in the importance of our voice in support of human rights, religious freedom, and democracy, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Congress to build robust relations between the United States and the nations of South and Central Asia. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Lu follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DONALD LU

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear here today as President Biden's nominee to be the next Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me.

As the son of an immigrant to the United States, I am particularly proud to have served my country in the U.S. Foreign Service and the Peace Corps. During my 30 years in the State Department, I have worked in India, Pakistan, and Central Asia advancing our agenda on counterterrorism, democracy, and anti-corruption. And as someone who believes that the Foreign Service and the Civil Service should look like the face of America, I am committed to implementing the President's vision on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Mr. Chairman, with the President's decision to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan by September 11, we are faced with new risks and new opportunities. In particular, we have an historic opportunity to rebalance our relations with the countries in the region to better reflect our long-term strategic priorities.

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Finally, in the other countries of South and Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives—we face competition from China and Russia like never before. We must recommit ourselves to robust engagement with these countries to support their sovereignty and independence in the face of many challenges. Critical new tools have been authorized in that effort, from the creation of the Development Finance Corporation, to this committee's important work on the Strategic Competition Act. If confirmed, I will work to make the United States a reliable international partner to the Governments and peoples of these countries, one who is willing to call out malign influence and stand up for human rights and democracy.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will take seriously my role as a steward of the public trust. I will safeguard our precious resources—our people, our embassies, and the strong reputation of the United States. I believe in the importance of our voice in support of human rights, religious freedom, and democracy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Congress to build robust relations between the United States and the nations of South and Central Asia.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador.
Ms. Escobari?

STATEMENT OF THE HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI, OF MASSACHUSETTS, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT [LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN]

Ms. ESCOBARI. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, thank you for opportunity to testify before you today.

It is an honor to be nominated by President Biden to serve as Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at USAID.

My passion for development was sparked by growing up in Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in our hemisphere, the daughter of two pediatricians who worked in the country's public hospitals.

They brought home a passion for making a difference one child at a time, but also the frustrations of seeing kids die more from disease than poverty. They wanted to prevent disease, not just treat it. My father started the first blood bank in our city, and my mother tried to change culture, implementing practices of hand-washing in maternity wards.

My parents inspired me to tackle the root causes, not just the symptoms of poverty. So I want to thank those watching this today, my husband, Beran, our sons Nico and Lucas, and our friends and family, whose support and love are the reasons I can sit before you today.

When I had the honor to serve in this role for the last year of the Obama administration, the region faced acute threats. Venezuela's economy had contracted by 60 percent, and 300,000 people had fled the country. Hurricane Mathew had hit an already-battered Haiti, and Colombia was embarking on a fragile peace process.

Now the stakes are even higher. The pandemic has hit Latin America harder than any other region in the world. 5.6 million people have fled Venezuela, a humanitarian crisis created by an op-

pressive and inept regime. The people of Cuba and Nicaragua are seeing renewed crackdowns on their most fundamental rights. And one of the strongest democracies in the region, Colombia, is being shaken by economic and social unrest.

Our ability to extend a hand urgently and wholeheartedly, in partnership with our southern neighbors will largely determine the course of the region's recovery.

I believe that the stakes are profound, nothing less than the faith of the region's citizens that liberal democracy, rule of law, and market-based economies can deliver on their most pressing needs.

The inability, and in a few cases unwillingness of national governments to respond to these needs, have led to political instability that threatens the future of the region, as well as the security of the United States.

So I sit before you with a sense of urgency. If confirmed, I will focus on these pressing issues: combating COVID-19, confronting the security and migration crisis in Central America, and strengthening governance across the region.

My passion and conviction come from my parents, but my optimism that we can make a difference, is grounded in a career studying and implementing development. My early experiences in the private sector taught me the importance of creating conditions for investment and growth. In academia, I learned the value of good ideas, and while there are no silver bullets, there is a lot we know about what works and what does not.

If confirmed, I will bring a focus on data and evidence, as well as the ability to iterate quickly on lessons learned. During my time at USAID, I had the privilege to work with dedicated and knowledgeable professionals, who regularly go above and beyond the call of duty.

If confirmed, I will empower their efforts and contribute to a culture where respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion are part of our values and the way that we operate, both here and abroad.

Since leaving the Obama administration, I have worked on the barriers to inclusion and opportunities faced by workers here in the United States. We often draw lines between so-called "developed" and "developing", between Global North and Global South. But in truth, there is no bright line when it comes to the crippling effects of poverty.

The need for inclusive, sustained growth is as real in Appalachia as it is in Antigua. I hope to bring that humility to this job, the sense that every nation is a work in progress, and given the cross-border nature of our challenges, climate change, pandemics, cyber threats, our fates are linked, and our ability to work together, even more urgent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Escobari follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the committee, thank you for considering my nomination.

It is an honor to be nominated by President Biden to serve as Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean at USAID.

My passion for development was sparked during my childhood in Bolivia, one of the poorest countries on the continent, as the daughter of two pediatricians who practiced in the country's public hospitals.

They brought home a passion for making a difference one child at a time, but also the frustration of seeing children die more often from poverty than disease.

They wanted to prevent disease, not just treat it. My father started the first blood bank in our city, and my mother tried to change culture—with simple things like handwashing practices, or promoting the use of breast milk.

My parents inspired me to tackle the root causes—not simply the symptoms—of poverty.

I want to thank them (who are watching this today), my husband, Beran, our sons Nico and Lucas, and our friends and family, whose support and love are the reasons I can sit before you today.

When I had the honor to serve in this role for the last year of the Obama Administration, the region faced acute threats. Venezuela's economy had contracted by 60 percent, 300,000 people had fled the country. Hurricane Mathew had hit an already battered Haiti, and Colombia was embarking on a fragile peace process.

Now the stakes are even higher. 5.6 million people have fled Venezuela—a humanitarian crisis created by an oppressive and incompetent regime. The people of Cuba and Nicaragua are seeing renewed crackdowns on their most fundamental rights. And one of the strongest democracies in the region, Colombia, is being shaken by economic and social unrest. The pandemic has struck Latin America harder than any other region in the world.

Our ability to extend a hand—urgently and wholeheartedly—in partnership with our southern neighbors will largely determine the course of the region's recovery.

I believe that the stakes are profound—nothing less than the faith of the region's citizens that liberal democracy, rule of law, and market-based economies can deliver on their most basic needs.

Inequitable, and lackluster growth have left citizens frustrated and demanding better. And the inability or, in a few cases, unwillingness, of national governments to respond adequately has led to political instability that threatens the future of the region as well as the security of the United States.

I sit before you with a sense of urgency.

If confirmed, I will focus on these pressing issues: combating COVID-19, confronting the security and migration challenges in Central America, and strengthening governance across the region.

This means empowering civil society to stand up to authoritarian regimes, while also helping democratic governments improve their capacity to deliver basic goods and services—from water to electricity to health.

My passion and conviction come from my parents, but my optimism is grounded in a career studying and implementing international development.

My early experiences in the private sector taught me the importance of creating conditions for investment and growth. In academia, I learned the value of good ideas, and while there are no silver bullets, there is a lot we know about what works and what doesn't in development. If confirmed I will bring a focus on data and evidence, as well as the ability to iterate quickly on lessons learned.

During my time at USAID, I had the privilege to work with dedicated and knowledgeable professionals, who regularly go above and beyond the call of duty. If confirmed, I will empower their efforts and contribute to a culture where respect, equity, diversity and inclusion are part of our values and the way that we operate, both here and abroad.

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I hope to bring that humility to this job—the sense that every nation is a work in progress, and given the cross-border nature of our challenges—climate change, pandemics, and cyber threats—our fates are linked, and our ability to work together, even more urgent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you, all. Let me start with a series of questions on behalf of the full committee. And a simple yes or no from each of you, but would suffice. I have these ques-

tions that speak to the importance of—that this committee places on responsiveness by all officials in the Executive Branch, and that we expect and will be seeking from you. So I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

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

Mr. SALAZAR. Yes.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes.

Ambassaador LU. Yes.

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

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

Mr. SALAZAR. Yes.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes.

Ambassador Lu:

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing a notification after the fact?

Ambassaador LU. Yes.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes.

Mr. SALAZAR. Yes:

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And finally, do you commit to promptly responding to request for briefings and information requested by the committee and its designated staff?

Mr. SALAZAR. Yes.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes.

Ambassaador LU. Yes.

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. All right, thank you. All right, let me start off then, a round of five minutes.

Secretary Salazar, in the last four years, there were serious problems in the U.S. cooperation with Mexico on migration issues, and previous administration threatened Mexico with sanctions over migration, implemented policies that forced asylum seekers to remain in dangerous Mexican border communities during their application process, and signed a series of agreements whose contents have never been provided in full to Congress.

Some of these policies, in my view, were morally reprehensible as well as potentially on lawful. And while the Biden administration has taken steps to put things on a better path, we need a holistic strategy to strengthen bilateral cooperation on migration issues, and ensure that the United States upholds its international obligations and domestic laws.

So can you take a moment? You referenced it somewhat in your own personal history, but to lay out the vision of how you view the United States and Mexico working together to have a productive and respectful manner to address the challenges related to irregular migration?

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We need to find the synergy with Mexico to deal with a shared set of challenges. For Mexico there is displacement underway with people

leaving Mexico and coming into this country because of a lack of opportunity there. The Mexican Government has an interest in making sure that their people stay there. No one would want to be going away from their home to a country far away unless they were fleeing poverty, or violence, or other forms of distress.

And so what we need to do is to have a high-level dialogue with Mexico to address both the short-term issues that currently deal with issue of irregular migration, but also as the President and the Vice President have said, dealing with the longer-term issues of the root causes, and so working with my colleagues, hopefully if I get confirmed in the State Department, including the panel who is here today, so Secretary Blinken, and the President, and the Vice President, we hope to bring about that kind of dialogue that creates a holistic strategy to deal with the issues of migration.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me turn to the question of violence and crime, violence and the influence of organized crime in Mexico have reached highly concerning levels. In the lead up to the June mid-term elections, over 100 politicians were murdered, 36 of whom were running for office. These trend lines and the serious implications for our national security mandate that we find ways to strengthen U.S.-Mexico security cooperation.

There are areas for easy—there are areas for easy consensus, such as strengthening efforts to address financial crimes tied to the drug trade, and expanding bilateral efforts to combat arms trafficking from the U.S. to Mexico.

However, in other areas, we face potential obstacles to improving security cooperation, including a new Mexican law approved in December that appears to threaten bilateral cooperation and the linkages between drug traffickers and senior Mexican officials, as evidenced in the arrest of General Cienfuegos last year. I trust that upon your confirmation, you will give these issues your full attention, and keep the committee informed.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Chairman, yes, I will. This is an area where the administration is already engaged in high-level dialogues with Mexico on how we deal with these shared issues. And it is something that this committee obviously will be involved in. So I very much look forward to working with the administration and you to find the solutions.

The CHAIRMAN. And finally, there is new data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, showing that in 2020 over 93,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in the United States, making it the most lethal year for overdoses on record, opioids, and fentanyl in particular pose highly lethal risk to our citizens, and the U.S. Government has to undertake every effort possible to address this tragedy.

We have to improve domestic to address illicit drug consumption, and we must expand efforts to combat the scourge of illicit production and trafficking of fentanyl and other opioids.

Data indicates that drug traffickers are increasingly shipping fentanyl precursors from China to Mexico, where drug trafficking organizations are producing fentanyl and trafficking it to the United States. Given the threat to U.S. citizens posed by illicit fentanyl trafficking, I also trust you will raise this issue at the highest levels with Mexican officials upon your confirmation.

Mr. SALAZAR. I will do, Mr. Chairman.

All right, Ms. Lewis, just a quick question for you, I have several, but I want to go to the ranking member. The informal review process for arm sales has existed for decades, and is a vital consultative relationship between this committee and the Bureau of Political Military Affairs to work through questions, issues, and concerns about proposed arm sales before they are formally notified to Congress.

That relationship suffered under the last administration, but it has improved dramatically under Secretary Blinken. Do I have your commitment to continue and deepen this consultation process with this committee?

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. The last administration infamously attempted to evade congressional oversight on multiple arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates by abusing authorities intended only for emergency. There was no serious argument that these sales qualified as emergencies under the law. And this episode I would expect should never be repeated.

Do you commit to only recommend using the emergency authorities under the Arms Export Control Act in true emergency situations, and not in an effort to evade Congress?

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

Senator Risch?

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

Secretary Salazar, as you transition into this I am wondering if you are familiar with the backlog of U.S. extradition requests that the United States has out to Mexico. My state in particular has one unique case, but others also. We are struggling a bit with this, and certainly you can blame part of it on COVID, but they also seem to drag their feet.

Are you familiar with this issue? And if not, I assume you will commit to get on board with it and see if we cannot move this along a little better.

Mr. SALAZAR. Yes, Senator Risch. I am generally familiar with the issue. I will say that, as Colorado attorney general, I worked closely with your attorney general, now Attorney General Wasden, to develop among the attorneys general the—at the state level with our counterparts in Mexico, the Article 4 prosecution units, which now exist in many of the attorneys Generals' offices around the country.

And so I would look forward to bringing that experience in terms of the bilateral relationship to make sure that the extradition process as under the Constitution, actually are implemented.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that. And certainly, that work that you did is one of the things that is driving all of this, and that is that it is streamlining the process, but it is still not moving as fast as we would like to see it. So appreciate your thoughts on that. And I hope you will move forward.

Do you have any thoughts on the—the chairman made reference to this, a number of—I understand this is an internal issue within Mexico, but I think Americans were stunned to hear that in this electoral season, which they had their elections, I believe, on June 6th, and on the run-up to that there were 88 candidates assas-

sinated who were running. I mean this is—this is not a hallmark of a democracy by any stretch of the imagination. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you, Senator Risch. We need to make sure that we have a strong democracy here at home in the United States, and also that in Mexico, they are a sovereign, and we respect their sovereignty, but they, too, have a shared interest in making sure that the violence, including the assassinations of the last—that occurred during the last election are something that does not happen.

And so it is something that I am certain we will be able to work with the Mexican Government as we enter into the dialogues between the United States and Mexico to address the issues of violence.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Ambassador Lu, I want to talk for a minute about our withdrawal from Afghanistan. I noted this just within the last 24, 48 hours, the Taliban met with the Chinese, a delegation from China. And I do not know what was on the agenda. I can about assure you what was not on the agenda was human rights, or treatment of the Uyghurs. What are your thoughts as far as China is now moving into that vacuum?

Ambassaador LU. Senator Risch, first thank you for your attention and interest in this important issue. I read with concern the same press articles about the Chinese meeting with the Taliban. I know that the countries surrounding Afghanistan, including China, share many of the same concerns we have about the deteriorating situation there.

I can assure you, if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to encourage those countries to be messaging directly to the Taliban that any recognition, any assistance, any support is contingent upon the Taliban's participation in a peace process that results in a negotiated political settlement, as well as respect for the progress that has been made over the last years in respecting minority rights, the rights of women and girls, and counterterrorism.

We do face the challenge of independent countries with different views in that region. But I firmly believe we share a common goal of having stability and peace in Afghanistan.

Senator RISCH. Thank you for your thoughts on that. My personal view, I think it is going to be a heavy lift trying to convince the Taliban that they will respect the gains that have been made in that country for women's rights. But it is our duty to press on with that. And I am encouraged to hear your words in that regard. I expect that that is what you will do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Risch, and congratulations to the nominees. What a wonderful panel.

I am particularly happy to see my longtime friend, Senator Salazar, and also Ms. Lewis, who is just a stellar part of the Senate family, it is always nice to see you, and a member of the Senate family on the other side of the dais, being nominated for a position for which their work entitles them. So congratulations to all of you.

Senator Salazar, let me start with you, with respect to one particular challenging aspect of the U.S.-Mexico relationship right now, and that is the targeting of the press and journalists in Mexico. I place a real high emphasis on protecting freedom of the press. Senator Graham and I introduced a bill in May, the International Press Freedom Bill to help make journalists safer overseas, and even create a special visa category to enable threatened journalists to find safe Haven in the United States.

I am really concerned about attacks on journalists. And for years Mexico has been the deadliest country in the world for journalists. Eight journalists were killed in 2020. Three have been killed so far this year. I took a CODEL recently with six members, bipartisan, in Mexico at the beginning of July. And we met with civil society groups and groups of journalists, and they really laid out their concerns about this.

Often the attacks are unsolved. They do not necessarily believe the attacks are by the Government, but they are often by criminal groups who are not then investigated. And they feel like there is a sort of impunity when it comes to analyses, and investigation, and certainly prosecution of these attacks.

There is a unit within the—equivalent of the Attorney General's Office in Mexico that is supposed to focus on these attacks, but it is widely criticized for solving one or two high-profile cases, and then letting others go unaddressed.

Should you be confirmed, and I will do all I can to make sure that you are, how might you address this particular issue to try to promote more safety for those journalists in Mexico?

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you, Senator Kaine, and thank you as well for your long-time service, and friendship, and guidance over the years on so many issues. You raise an issue that is of a very serious nature. Here in this country we all celebrate the fact that we have a First Amendment, and that we have freedom of the press. And it is something that is one of the most enshrined values of our society, and of democratic societies.

And so when those who are moving forward with the reporting of the news, the journalists that you speak about have to live under threat and are in a position where their reporting ends up getting trampled upon in some way, by whoever it does it. We have a shared interest with Mexico, and Mexico, from my point of view, does not want to tolerate what is happening now with some of the violence against journalists.

So I would commit to you, Senator Kaine, that I would work with the Mexican Government, at all levels to address this issue, and work closely with you to make sure that we are addressing this issue, not only in Mexico, but around the world.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Salazar. And here is a question for both Ms. Escobari and Senator Salazar, and maybe, Ms. Escobari, I will start with you.

The U.S. is going to host the Summit for the Americas which, it happens every three or four years, the timing is a little bit variable now as to whether it will be late '21 or early '22. The U.S. has not hosted it since 1994. I think it is a particularly important time to have the Summit for the Americas because of COVID, and vaccine

diplomacy, and backsliding democracies, and street unrests in many nations, so it is a really important time.

Mr. Chair, I really look forward to taking up the Brian Nichols nomination soon. I know it was held over today at Senator Cruz's request, but for the U.S. to host the Summit for the Americas without a confirmed State Department Head over the Western Hemisphere Division would be a challenge.

But as you think about participating, either from the USAID space or from—as Ambassador of Mexico and a Summit for the Americas, what would be the kinds of things that you would like to see on the agenda in that summit?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Thank you, Senator. And for your commitment to development through many years, and there are many priorities in the region. I think just to start I would say that COVID at times feels like priority one, two, and three, just because it has ravaged the region. The reasons are structural reasons why that has been the case, high urbanization, you know, informality, poor health systems, but really it has had not only the highest rates of deaths, but also the highest contractions of GDP anywhere in the world.

So the ability together with the region, with our help, with other allies internationally, to help in the procurement of vaccines, and in the distribution of vaccines, and eventually in the manufacturing of vaccines, and their safe and equitable distribution, I think would be at the top of that list.

Senator KAINE. I will submit the second half of the question to Senator Salazar, for the record, since I am over my time. But I appreciate the opportunity to visit with you all. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Chairman, might I just make a quick response to his question since I think it is relevant to most of the committee members?

The CHAIRMAN. Of course, of course.

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Kaine.

The Summit of the Americas to me represents a great opportunity for Canada, the United States and Mexico to really stand up for the North American Continent. So as I participate in that process, if I am confirmed by the Senate, expected on the agenda, we will be talking about economic issues, jobs, trade, economic opportunity, migration and how we deal with those issues, both from Canada and from Mexico, the borders.

I imagine we should be talking and we will be talking about security, given the high level dialogues that are going on. But in addition to that, the whole issue of conservation and environment. The shared borders are political borders, but the environment, and the ecology, transborder into Canada, transborder into Mexico are also very important. And so how we deal with that issue, in my view, should be a part of what we focus on, on the Summit for North America.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I understand we have Senator Young with us, virtually.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, chairman. And welcome to our nominees.

Senator Salazar, when I served along our Southern Border as a Marine Corps officer in the mid-1990s, I saw first-hand the impact of the border crisis on our own country, and on those who were crossing our southern border.

Sadly, the scale of the crisis has become much greater today. This has indeed become what you might characterize as a 50-state border crisis. The vast majority of migrants I understand are not coming from Mexico, but from other countries further south. And that means that our neighbor, Mexico, is suffering from a migration crisis of its own, including securing its own southern border, addressing humanitarian issues, just like we are, and dealing with the economic stresses of a surging migration across their southern states.

The task is made even more challenging for that government, by the presence of predatory criminal trafficking groups in the region. How do you view Mexico's responsibility, Mr. Senator, inactions to secure its southern border? And if you can speak to the largest enforcement gaps where Mexico needs to focus to gain greater supervision over its southern border, I would really appreciate that.

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you very much, Senator Young. And thank you as well for your service.

You start from a reality that we are facing with—facing in this country and have faced for a very long time, you described the situation at the border back in the 1990s, when you were serving around the border. And the reality of it is that these issues have been with us for a very long time. And that really underscores an important role of this committee, and a very important priority for the President and for the Vice President.

And that is, long term, looking at the root causes of what is creating this problem. We have had these challenges for a very long time. And as you say, a very much affecting Mexico in terms of the migrant trail that we now see going across Mexico. So how we work with Mexico to develop a strategy that is effective both for the short term and the long term will be one of the highest priorities that I will take on as Ambassador to Mexico.

The Mexican Government has said clearly that—and are providing significant resources into securing their own Southern border. They have said, and are working on trying to help their—the Central American countries to the south. And so we need to succeed on that mission in a collaborative way with Mexico, so that we can address the problem for the long term.

And I commit, Senator Young, to working with you and the members of this committee to make sure we get that done.

Senator YOUNG. Well, thank you for that commitment. And I am appreciative of that. I know other members of the committee are as well.

Let me dive into a couple of specifics. There are networks of spotters, guides, informants all within Mexico that are so severely degrading efforts of the U.S. Border Patrol to try and secure that border, which I think is in the interest of course just not—not just of the United States, but also of our Mexican neighbor.

So if confirmed, what will you do to improve coordination and cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican Border Patrol authorities?

Mr. SALAZAR. Senator Young, that underscores the importance of what the Biden administration is doing with Secretary Blinken and others, engaging in the high-level dialogue around security and violence issues. And we expect that we will spend a good amount of our time working on those issues. If I am fortunate enough to get confirmed by the United States Senate, I commit to you that that will be one of the highest priority issues.

Senator YOUNG. If you look at the surge that has occurred, really since earlier this year, I do understand this is an ongoing, long-standing problem, as I acknowledged from the beginning, but there has been a surge from the beginning of this year. Why does it appear that Mexico has been less willing to work with the Biden administration on this immigration, unauthorized, than the Trump administration?

Mr. SALAZAR. Senator Young, I think as Chairman Risch said a few minutes ago, we need to have a holistic approach to the issues in Mexico. It is more than just the issue of securing the border. We need to have a safe, secure, and efficient border. And Mexico shares that interest with us, we share that interest, the administration is working hard to develop a northerly and fair and humane system of migration into this country. And we need to make sure that we are working together with Mexico and with the U.S. Senate to address that challenge that has been around for a very long time.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. I thank you for your time. I thank you for your service. You did not answer my final question about why it appears that Mexico has been less willing to work with the Biden administration, apparently, on this issue than the Trump administration. So perhaps if you want to weave that into your future comments, you can. Thank you so much.

Mr. SALAZAR. I am happy to elaborate, Senator. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch; and congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

Senator Salazar, great to see you back, thanks for stepping up again. We have just five minutes. I am going to concentrate my time on situation in South and Central Asia.

Ambassador Lu, thank you for your terrific service as a member of the Foreign Service. You have made us proud.

I see that Secretary Blinken is now in India to discuss a wide range of issues that are important to the United States-Indian relationship, and to discuss our common interests in the Quad. And I support that initiative.

I would like to focus on the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. And I welcome your statement that our relationship with Pakistan should be beyond the one-dimensional security lens. And you indicate that, if confirmed, you will build on our long history of friendship with Pakistan to advance human rights, religious freedom, counterterrorism cooperation, and an improved business environment for American investors.

And I look forward to working with you to achieve those goals. Of course, a key issue that impacts the United States, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the surrounding area, is the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. And what that means. We had Ambassador Khalilzad before this committee in late April. And I just

want to see if you are on the same page with him as to the situation here. So I have a couple of very, yes/no questions.

First, do you agree that if Afghanistan descends into total chaos, even more than the conflict we see today, that that could mean an influx of thousands of refugees into Pakistan?

Ambassaador LU. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Okay. And do you agree that it is in Pakistan's interest to achieve stability and a political settlement in Afghanistan?

Ambassaador LU. Yes, absolutely.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And do you agree with Ambassador Khalilzad that in the Doha talks, Pakistan has facilitated the discussions between the Afghan Government and the Taliban?

Ambassaador LU. Yes. The African Government and the—certainly the Taliban and the United States, and I think we would like to see Pakistan do even more to facilitate Taliban's involvement in talks with other Afghan leaders. Yeah.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And would you agree that a political settlement is the only viable long-term path forward?

Ambassaador LU. A hundred percent, yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. So, one of the things that some of us were proposed on a bipartisan basis, Senator Young from Indiana, Senator Cantwell, myself, and others, is the idea to give all parties some kind of hope and a better economic future. People in Afghanistan, people in those border regions of Pakistan. And the idea is to establish what we call Reconstruction Opportunity Zones.

And the idea is that textiles and certain other goods that are produced and manufactured in those areas would have duty-free access to the United States. In order to establish the potential of a peace dividend and a good future for people in the region.

Ambassador Khalilzad said he supported the concept. I know the administration has been looking at it, had interest in pursuing this with you and the administration. Have you had a chance to look at their proposal, and what you think it could mean in terms of, you know, building a better future?

Ambassaador LU. Senator Van Hollen, first let me say huge thanks on behalf of my colleagues at the State Department. It is wonderful to have such a strong supporter of our relations with South Asia sitting in the U.S. Senate.

I believe strongly that enhanced economic integration is one of the keys to a durable peace in Afghanistan and throughout the region. I support a deepening of economic ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And if confirmed, I will work to expand trade and investment between these two countries and the United States. I believe we should be exploring all of the options on the table.

I am personally very interested in the legislation that you and other members of the Senate have proposed. And I look forward, if confirmed, to be providing technical feedback and dialogue to you and other members of the committee, from State Department, Department of Congress, and the USTR.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Do we have your commitment that you and the State Department would provide our staff with technical feedback on the legislation?

Ambassaador LU. Absolutely.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Now, just in closing, you know, I think we have established the important role Pakistan can play in trying to facilitate some kind of negotiated settlement in Afghanistan. I think all of us hope for the best, although we all understand that there are huge risks that we are witnessing right now. But I cannot understand why, given that importance, President Biden has not yet contacted directly and called the Prime Minister Khan. Can you explain that? It is a mystery to me.

Ambassaador LU. Senator, I completely agree with you, the dialogue is essential between the United States and Pakistan at a high level. As you know, there have been several high-level administration discussions with Pakistan to include multiple engagements by Secretary Blinken with the Pakistani Foreign Minister. These talks have focused on critical issues.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Ambassador, I do not—I am aware of all that but, as you know, the President has reached out to lots of foreign leaders. Given the importance of the future developments in Afghanistan to us, given the importance of the relationship with Pakistan, it seems to me a totally unforced error that the President of the United States has not made that phone call. There is no need for you to comment. I appreciate your service.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Ms. Chairman. Congratulations to each of the nominees. Senator Salazar, good to see you. I enjoyed visiting with you yesterday in my office.

As you know, I am increasingly concerned about what appears to be a deliberate and a systematic campaign by the Mexican Government to undermine American companies and especially American energy companies. Just a few weeks ago the Mexican Government gave its state oil firm, Pemex, a major-shared oil find, over a private consortium led by Houston-based, Talos Energy, which had first discovered the crude and had already invested nearly \$350 million in the project.

This decision was just one of a series of moves that the Mexican Government has pursued to roll back Mexico's historic 2013 energy sector liberalization reforms, which benefited both them and us. It goes without saying that these moves are in significant tension with both the Mexican Constitution and the USMCA.

On July 29th, I joined Senator Cornyn, Senator Inhofe, and sent a letter to President Biden highlighting these concerns. The next morning President Lopez Obrador dismissed the letter saying quote, "There is really no problem, and that the concerns are insignificant".

Let me start by asking you, do you agree with the Mexican President that the concerns about Mexico's tilt away from U.S. companies towards Mexican Government control of the energy sector towards open hostility to American companies, do you agree with the Mexican President that those concerns are insignificant?

Mr. SALAZAR. Senator Cruz, the rule of law is important, obviously important to us here in the United States, and to interests here that are investing in Mexico, and my understanding is the ambassador, the U.S. Trade Representative for the United States

has said that energy is covered under the United States-Canada-Mexico Agreements. So I think what we need to do is to raise these issues and make sure that we are protecting American investment in Mexico.

Senator CRUZ. So I am deeply concerned that right now the Mexican Government is feeling no meaningful pressure from the Biden administration to reverse its campaign, to undermine American energy firms, and so what I would like to ask you, is first of all, to what degree do you assess that the Mexican Government's moves in the energy sector are harmful both to them and us?

Mr. SALAZAR. Senator Cruz, I intend to work on these issues, if confirmed, and if I get your support, coming out of this committee, and on the floor of the Senate. You know, I was very involved in the negotiation of the Gulf of Mexico Transboundary Agreement with Secretary Clinton and with the support of President Obama. It was because of those Transboundary Agreements which, frankly, had resolved an issue that had been outstanding for some 50 years, that we have had the investment of the movement that we have had in the energy sector.

It is a complicated issue, but I intend to give it everything that I have to see how we can work with the Mexican Government that are sovereign, I respect their sovereignty, but we will work together to see whether we can find some solution to this challenge.

Senator CRUZ. So if you are confirmed as Ambassador, what specific steps do you expect to take to halt and reverse the Mexican Government's targeting of and discrimination against American energy firms?

Mr. SALAZAR. Yeah, we will work closely with my colleagues in the Biden administration, both in the White House, as well as within USDR, and the State Department, the Commerce Department, to see how we can address these issues.

Senator CRUZ. Do you think it is a problem?

Mr. SALAZAR. It is a problem, sir.

Senator CRUZ. Why is it that the Mexican Government seems to be moving away from American interest, and American priorities, and seems to be moving rapidly away from them in the last six months, during the Biden administration?

Mr. SALAZAR. Senator Cruz, there is a reality that I do not believe that the United States has engaged in the kind of bilateral relationship with Mexico during the last four years under the former administration, or even before that. And so what we need to do is we need to engage in the kinds of dialogues that will make sure that we are developing sustainable issues and a sustainable framework between the United States and Mexico.

We cannot afford to have our relationship with Mexico go into an abyss of dysfunction. And that is in the shared interest of both the United States and Mexico. And I commit to working not only with the President, and the Vice President, my colleagues in the State Department, Secretary Blinken, but with you, to see how we can come up with a kind of framework that will address the issues that this committee, both on the Democratic side, through Senator Menendez, and on the Republican side through Senator Risch, has an interest in dealing with, because if we do not deal with these issues in this very difficult time in the relationship between the

U.S. and Mexico, we will be facing some very significant issues on down the road.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And congratulations to each of you on your nominations, we appreciate your willingness to continue in public service.

I am going to give Senator Salazar a little rest for a minute, and start with you, Ms. Lewis. And again, we will miss you with the committee, but are delighted that you are going to be continuing to do your good work.

I think you were with the committee when we passed the Women Peace and Security Act, which I am very proud of. It has been a bipartisan effort. We have seen it starting to be implemented in the Department of Defense, I think less so in the Department of State.

And so can you talk about how you might be able to promote WPS goals and your strategy, if confirmed, to make sure that it is incorporated into global peace operations, and into international military education, conventional weapons, and how you would work with DOD?

Ms. LEWIS. Absolutely. First of all, Senator, thank you so much for your leadership on this issue. You really have been a guiding light for all of us.

In the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, there already has been a focus on this issue. One of the changes they have implemented is to make sure that in the training that we provide that as we look at working with individual militaries, we make sure that the representation of women is equal to the representation of women in their services when we train them. And I was pleased to learn about that. That would be something I would want to continue and grow moving forward.

I also think, as you look at all of the pieces of the work that the Bureau does, other issues such as the great work that the Bureau does demining, making sure that our civilians—civilians are protected from some of these landmines also has a great impact on local communities, but also specifically on women. And I know that is something that they take into consideration.

And then finally, as I said, in my opening statement, I know that really looking at the workforce inside the Bureau would also be something that would be a priority for me. If confirmed, I believe I would be the first woman in this position, but I also am aware that the Bureau has an incredibly talented pool already. And it would be my job to look closely at the unique makeup of this Bureau, which includes civil service, foreign service, also a number of people in uniform who come over, to make sure that we are also looking at the issue of women moving forward and really using the talents of women inside the Bureau.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I appreciate that. And look forward to working with you. And as you know, the importance of this initiative is that when women are at the table we are more successful, in conflict areas, in ensuring that success is spread to all elements of the community. So thank you.

Ms. LEWIS. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Salazar, now that you have caught your breath. As you may be aware, New Hampshire has a real challenge with substance misuse. It has been an issue, not just in our state, but throughout the country. And we saw in 2020 that we had more overdose deaths, drug deaths than we have had any time in our history.

And one of the things that we know in New Hampshire is that many of the illegal substances that come into the United States come in through Mexico. And as I understand, there have been some tensions in recent years with Mexico in terms of how we can best work together to intercept and interdict those drugs. So can you talk a little bit about what your approach would be to addressing that with Mexico?

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen, for the question. The issue of drugs north is something that has been around for a very, very long time. And that issue is exacerbated in part by what China is doing in Mexico with fentanyl.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Mr. SALAZAR. And all of those issues that are affecting the people of New Hampshire, and throughout the United States of America. It is a shared problem between the United States and Mexico, and I commit to working with the Mexican Government, and United States authorities to look for solutions to the problem.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I hope you will come back to this committee and let us know what resources we can help you with in order to continue to address that in a successful way.

Mr. SALAZAR. Thank you. I will.

Senator SHAHEEN. And Ambassador Lu, I have been very concerned about what is happening in Afghanistan now, as I am sure you are, as we look at the gains made by the Taliban. And one of my biggest areas of concern is what happens to the women and girls in Afghanistan. It has been one of the greatest successes of our efforts there, not only of the United States but the international community.

So tell me what you think, what more you think we can do as the United States to raise concerns about what is happening there in the international community? How can we support ensuring that the freedoms that women and girls, and other ethnic minorities in the country enjoy now, are not totally erased as the Taliban continue to make gains?

Ambassaador LU. Senator Shaheen, I was really moved by your tribute to Afghan women who were killed by the telephone in the hearing in May with Ambassador Khalilzad. I actually knew one of those young women. Fatima Khalil was a senior at the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, the posting I just left. I spoke at her graduation, one of the brightest, most capable and self-confident people I have ever met in my life.

She had an American education, spoke fluent English, a worldview that was unlike anyone else. And she could have gone anywhere, done anything. And she decided what she really wanted to do is go back to her home country to work on human rights, and the rights of women and girls, and the Taliban killed her for that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Ambassaador LU. So it is personal for me, as I know it is for many of us who have worked in and around this region, I share your deep concern about what is happening now in Afghanistan, and the women and girls who are now at risk. I think it is critical that we continue our robust assistance to the programs that we have been running for years in Afghanistan that have promoted such progress over 20 years, training, education, legal services.

But now we have to expand that. We need to look at how we are caring for those who are at risk. And as we know, we are good at doing that all over the world, including in very difficult places, in Cuba, and Russia, and Iran, and North Korea, we need to up our game. And I know there are very smart people in the interagency right now, putting together plans about how we would use the U.S. refugee admissions process, or emergency humanitarian relief to try to mitigate some of these risks. And we look forward, if confirmed, to working with you and other members of Congress to put together that plan.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I look forward to that. My time is up, but I just want to relay to you what I heard from some of the women leaders in Afghanistan who were urging us in the United States to have our President, our Vice President, all of our high-level officials speak out in the international community about what the Taliban are doing and raise international awareness and condemnation for what is happening there. So I hope you will agree to do that if confirmed.

Ambassaador LU. Absolutely.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. And thank you for your leadership in this disregard. We appreciate your clarity and voice on this all the time.

Some final questions, there is a vote going on.

So, Ms. Lewis, I do not think you would get away that easy. When the Department of Defense through existing authorities, and seeking new ones, has assumed an outside role in providing security assistance to foreign countries, providing foreign assistance is, and in my view, always should be the purview of the Secretary of State and the State Department conferred by diplomats in the service of our foreign policy.

I want to ask you. Will you use all means at your disposal, if confirmed, to conduct oversight on U.S. security assistance for foreign countries, and foreign persons, regardless of which U.S. agency is providing it?

Ms. LEWIS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And if confirmed, will you work closely with the committee to prevent any further loss or duplication of state security assistance authorities?

Ms. LEWIS. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. All right, one last question. You fully support the Taiwan's Relations Act, is that correct?

Ms. LEWIS. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And U.S. support for Taiwan self-defense?

Ms. LEWIS. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you commit to treating Taiwan the same as every other state in the Arms Process Sale?

Ms. LEWIS. Yes, sir, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Lu, let me ask you. At this point as the security environment grows more precarious in Afghanistan, what leverage, what efforts can we realistically take to support members of civil society? Senator Shaheen just talked about Afghan women and girls, and I echo that, but also civil society. And what measures can we take to take care of those partners who worked for the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, CIPI, Internews and IFAS, they do not qualify for special immigrant visas, but they created extraordinary service at all times?

Ambassaador LU. Absolutely. Mr. Chairman, in my first job in the State Department, I worked in the American Consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan. In one of my jobs, I was an admin officer, was to support our staff of our embassy in Kabul, our local staff. And they had long since stopped working in the embassy. The embassy had been closed for three years at that point.

But we maintained the commitment to our people. And that commitment went on for 12 years until we reopened our embassy, we paid their salaries, we took care of them. It is critical that we take care of the people who have shown loyalty, and service to us. Whether that is our own employees, people who have been interpreters and translators for the Military and the State Department, or it is folks that have worked in civil society supporting our programs. These were dangerous jobs even then, and they are even more at risk today.

I hear you on, the fact that they would not qualify for special immigrant visas. I do think there is a discussion within the inter-agency and with the Congress about how to safeguard these people at risk. It is a broad category, and we are looking at the full range of possibilities. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Process, humanitarian parole, humanitarian emergency assistance.

I welcome, if you, sir, or your staff have ideas about how we can make sure we are showing loyalty to those people, who have risked their own safety and their lives to support our common goals. I think it is not something we are going to get done alone as an administration. It will take the administration, plus Congress, and international partners to safeguard all of these people.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate that. We do, and we will share them. But, you know, these entities that are promoting the core values through the different roles they play, are important to be able to preserve, not only in this case, but send a global message that when you do this work, whatever it is in the world, however dangerous it is, that you in fact will be backed up. And I think that that is incredibly important.

One last question for you, Ambassador, I have been very involved in supporting labor rights in Bangladesh. I appreciate the efforts since the Rana Plaza disaster, but there is a lot of work that remains to make sure, that Made in Bangladesh does not mean made in the blood of Bangladeshi workers.

Do I have your commitment to press the Bangladeshi Government to allow unions to register and function without repression?

Ambassaador LU. Yes, you do, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

And then finally, Ms. Escobari, I do not want you to think nobody cares about what you are doing. We do a great deal. I think you have extraordinary experience in the development aside of the role that you are going to play and you even referenced it in your remarks. And so I will not dwell on that, but I do want to say that part of what USAID is, it has to do with, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, is the democracy side of it. And sometimes at AID, not under Samantha Power, but in the past I have feared that we have lost the democracy side of the USAID mission.

When I see protests in Cuba, when I see what is happening in Haiti, when I see what is happening in Nicaragua, and elsewhere, I see a tremendous backsliding on the question of democratic governance and human rights. Can you speak a little bit as to how you will see your mission at AID in that regard?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Senator, thank you for your question, and for always speaking very forcefully on behalf of democratic rights and accountability in the region.

I do see good governance as a prerequisite to progress on everything else. Corruption is corrosive for many reasons, but in particular because it undermines citizens' beliefs that governments can deliver for them. USAID's efforts have focused on the—you know, in supporting civil society, human rights defenders, free press, all of these efforts reinforce citizens' demand for democracy.

And on the supply side, as you know, there are also great efforts on just improving the rule of law and making it more available. And if confirmed, I will double down on those efforts, and also pursue other new approaches that that can address the recent backsliding. That is very particular in key—in key countries that you mentioned.

The CHAIRMAN. As I said to Administrator Power, I am keen on this issue, and I have both put in language support to help the Agency as well as in the appropriations process, so we look forward to working with you with that.

Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me thank all four of our nominees for their willingness to serve and continue to serve our country. And I thank your families.

I wanted, particularly, to acknowledge and thank Jessica Lewis for her extraordinary help to me and to our committee. You have the diplomatic skills to take on this new assignment. If you can handle the egos of the members of this committee, you can handle any challenge that you might confront in the State Department. So we wish you only the best.

It is good to see my former colleague, Ken Salazar, before us. We always enjoyed his company in the Senate, and look forward to his service to our Nation in Mexico.

I am going to ask one question to Mr. Salazar and Ms. Ms. Escobari. And that is to deal with corruption.

Mexico is a great neighbor of ours. They have a serious problem on protection of human rights, particularly journalists, they have a corruption issue. Our hemisphere, unfortunately, has a systemic corruption issue in many democratic states. And I know the President has identified corruption as a national security core interest.

We have in this committee passed additional resources to deal with corruption.

I just really want to underscore the importance of this subject in your portfolios. I had a chance to talk to Mr. Salazar yesterday, or the day before, and we had a, I think, a good conversation on this subject.

So, Ms. Escobari, if you could just share with us your strategies for how you are going to deal with countries that have free elections, but have elected—have not been able to deal with systemic corruption, which has led to significant erosion of human rights and stability in these nations.

Ms. ESCOBARI. You know, as I mentioned in my last comments, I do think good governance is a prerequisite for progress on everything else. In the last quarter of the 20th century, Latin America actually saw the greatest gains in liberal democracy, but these gains were not accompanied with the investments in human capital, physical capital to really create a middle class. And now we have political and economic elites that remain entrenched, corruption permeates everyday transactions. And unequal growth has left citizens frustrated. And this has become really fertile ground for authoritarian and populous leaders.

So I think that focusing on the ability of these states to deliver the goods and services, but also to support civil society, to hold those governments accountable to deliver is the kind of ingredients that we need to strengthen rule of law at a time that all the pressures on these economies make them increasingly fragile.

Senator CARDIN. One of the areas that we really need to improve upon, is to build a capacity in our embassies, in each of these countries, to be able to identify the weaknesses of the countries in which they are representing the United States in, and to be able to work with our different agencies as to how we can work with the country to make significant progress on any corruption issues.

It seems to me that is one of the areas that should be a priority of the position you have been nominated for. And just again, we welcome your commitment to really work to make a major difference in our capacity in each of these countries.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes. You have my commitment. And I think it is really beneficial that USAID has a presence and has had a presence in these countries for many years, and can add that perspective to regional embassies.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

That brings this nominations hearing to a close. The record for the hearing will remain open until the close of business on Thursday, July 29th, which is tomorrow, I would urge members to get their questions in for the record today.

I would urge the nominees, if you are in receipt of questions for the record that you answer them fully and expeditiously so that the committee can consider your nominations before a business meeting.

With the thanks of the committee, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Violence and Crime in Mexico

Question. Violence and the influence of organized crime in Mexico have reached highly concerning levels. In the lead up to the June midterm elections, over 100 politicians were murdered, 36 of whom were running for office. These trend lines and the serious implications for our national security mandate that we must find ways to strengthen U.S.-Mexico security cooperation.

- Would you please lay out your priorities for strengthening our security cooperation with Mexico?

Answer. I understand U.S.-Mexico security cooperation remains a top national security priority, and neither country can successfully confront transnational organized crime alone. It is critical that efforts to dismantle transnational criminal organizations, address illicit drug production and trafficking, reduce impunity and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law receive the full cooperation of the Mexican Government. If confirmed, I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican Government on how we can best align our security and law enforcement efforts, so this cooperation deepens and works for the benefit of both our nations. I will also not hesitate to raise any concerns that I believe to be obstacles to our bilateral cooperation.

If confirmed, I also look forward to engaging in a review with appropriate U.S. and Mexican officials to ensure specific programs are effective in addressing our shared challenges, and will look for opportunities with Mexico to make additional adjustments to our programming where necessary and appropriate to reflect changes in conditions and priorities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In April, the Supreme Court of Mexico unanimously ruled in favor of the U.S. position concerning a long running trade dispute with Mexico involving fresh potato exports. If confirmed, would you make it a priority to ensure that the regulatory process in Mexico reinstates and maintain market access for U.S. fresh potato exports and U.S. potato growers in general?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my top priorities as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico will be securing and maintaining fair market access for U.S. businesses in Mexico. Agricultural trade between the United States and Mexico is an important component to our overall trade relationship, and as Ambassador, I would work with the U.S. Trade Representative and the Department of Agriculture to ensure U.S. agricultural products are not disadvantaged.

Question. American investors in Mexico are experiencing significant and growing regulatory challenges under the administration President Lopez Obrador, including increasing difficulties in getting permits for a range of activities. These actions are contrary to Mexico's obligations under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. If confirmed, would you make it a priority to ensure that Mexico abides by its obligations under the USMCA?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the U.S. Trade Representative and other U.S. agencies to ensure Mexico fully adheres to its commitments under the USMCA. Mexico is one of the United States' most important trading partners and represents a crucial market for U.S. businesses. As Ambassador, one of my top priorities would be ensuring the full implementation of the USMCA.

Question. Mexico has a broader definition of refugee than the United States and the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention. For example, Mexico recognizes a right to asylum based on "generalized violence; foreign aggression; internal conflicts; massive violations of human rights; and other circumstances leading to a serious disturbance of public order." As a result, many would-be asylum seekers arriving in Mexico from Central America could qualify as refugees in Mexico. If confirmed, do you commit to ensure the Government of Mexico enforces its own legal obligations towards would-be asylum seekers arriving in Mexico?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador to Mexico, I will work with colleagues at the State Department and international organization partners to continue to support ef-

forts to improve access to protection, humanitarian relief, and local integration opportunities for displaced persons and vulnerable migrants in Mexico. I understand that, through its international organization (IO) partners, the Department supports humanitarian assistance for refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants. This assistance includes support for local integration for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as helping Mexico to strengthen the capacity of its asylum system.

Question. In June 2020, the Treasury Department designated a number of Mexico-based individuals and entities that were part of a sanctions evasion network supporting the corrupt regime of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. Earlier this year, there were reports that at least three Cuban-flagged oil tankers designated by the Treasury Department for transporting Venezuelan oil to Cuba have been serviced in the Mexican port of Veracruz, in apparent violation of U.S. sanctions. If confirmed, do you commit to ensure robust understanding and enforcement of U.S. sanctions policy in Mexico?

Answer. Mexico can play a critical role in helping to address some of the most complex issues in the region pertaining to democracy, governance, human rights, and the rule of law. Building an effective U.S.-Mexico partnership requires ensuring Mexico has a fulsome understanding of all U.S. policies, including those related to sanctioning authorities. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Government of Mexico fully understands U.S. sanctioning authorities and policies. I will also commit to working with Mexico to advance democratic and human rights priorities throughout the region.

Question. Mexican transnational criminal organizations are producing increased quantities of fentanyl and cartels, such as the Sinaloa and the New Generation Jalisco Cartel, are the primary trafficking groups responsible for smuggling fentanyl into the U.S. from Mexico. If confirmed, do you commit to encourage Mexico take meaningful actions to tackle transitional criminal activities throughout its territory, including the production and trafficking of fentanyl and other illicit narcotics? Do you commit to periodically review International Narcotics and Law Enforcement programs in Mexico to ensure they are focusing on meaningfully reducing the flow of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids to the U.S.?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to encourage Mexico to take meaningful actions to tackle transnational criminal activities throughout its territory, including the production and trafficking of fentanyl and other illicit narcotics.

If confirmed, I also commit to periodically reviewing INL programs, and all U.S. Government interagency counterdrug efforts in Mexico, to ensure they are focused on meaningfully reducing the flow of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids to the United States.

Question. In December 2020, Mexico approved reforms to its national security law, limiting the power of foreign law enforcement agents in the country and restricting their ability to operate. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring effective law enforcement cooperation with Mexico?

Answer. Yes. I understand U.S.-Mexico security cooperation remains a top national security priority. It is critical that efforts to dismantle transnational criminal organizations, reduce impunity and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law in Mexico receive the full cooperation of the Mexican Government. If confirmed, I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican Government to ensure our law enforcement cooperation deepens and works for the benefit of the United States and Mexico.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mexico was identified as Tier 2 due to its overall increasing efforts but still not fully meeting the minimal standards for eliminating trafficking. What steps would you take as Ambassador, if confirmed, to engage with the host government and civil society organizations on bolstering efforts to improve prosecution and protection efforts?

Answer. Trafficking in persons (TIP) is a heinous crime perpetuated throughout the region that must be addressed through a holistic approach. The Department of State supports various programs that help develop the capacity of investigators and prosecutors at the state and federal levels to combat this crime. The State Department also supports efforts to prevent human trafficking and assist victims through support for shelters.

If confirmed, I pledge to support the administration's policy to counter TIP in Mexico, including the implementation of the Operations Group on Human Smuggling and Human Trafficking that Vice President Harris announced during her June visit to Mexico, and the recommendations from the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report. I will work with my staff to identify areas where we can make headway in

state- and federal-level prosecutions, including prosecutions of forced labor crimes and complicit officials, and in significantly enhancing comprehensive protection services for trafficking victims. I plan to discuss bilateral cooperation on the issue in high-level discussions and under a potential Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. I will also engage Mexico on its commitments under USMCA's labor chapters, particularly as they pertain to forced labor.

Question. In the State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom report, Mexico was described as having instances of intolerant behavior towards religious minorities. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Office of International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom in-country?

Answer. I understand there were some instances of intolerance towards religious minorities highlighted in the 2020 Religious Freedom Report; however, Mexico has been a strong partner in promoting religious freedom in its own country and the region. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of International Religious Freedom to promote and protect religious freedom in Mexico. I pledge to work with the Mexican Government, religious leaders and communities, and civil society to ensure the country maintains momentum on assuring religious freedoms and address the instances where those freedoms may be threatened.

Question. In the State Department's 2020 Human Rights Report, Mexico was identified as having committed severe human rights abuses, including impunity for government and military employees, corruption, torture by security forces, violence against journalists and human rights defenders, and more. If confirmed, what steps will you take to address these instances with the host government?

Answer. The promotion of human rights is central to U.S. national security and prosperity. The United States uses a wide range of diplomatic tools to advance respect for human rights, including working directly with the Mexican Government and civil society. USAID and the Department of State have implemented projects to address various human rights concerns, including forced disappearances, violence against human rights defenders and journalists, and impunity, as well as public diplomacy programs to support and train human rights defenders.

The Department promotes accountability for human rights violations and abuses by implementing human rights-related sanctions and visa ineligibilities, and Leahy Law assistance restrictions. Consistent with U.S. law and Department policy, prior to furnishing assistance to security force units and individuals, all candidates are subject to Leahy vetting to assess if there is credible information of gross violations of human rights. The Department also submits reports consistent with the requirements of the relevant annual appropriations act.

If confirmed, I plan to utilize all the available tools at my disposal to promote human rights in Mexico and support all programs being implemented. I will seek to work with the Government of Mexico to ensure human rights is a central tenet in high-level security discussions, as well as look to relaunch the annual Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue, which last met in December 2017.

Question. How will you direct your embassy to work with civil society organizations to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. Respect for human rights is fundamental, and a free and active press is an integral part of a healthy democracy. The killing of journalists and human rights activist undermines freedoms of expression and association, as well as regional security.

I am committed to supporting efforts to promote respect for human rights and press freedom. Through USAID, the U.S. currently supports Mexico's National Protection Mechanism for Journalists and Human Rights Defenders, and works with state-level counterparts to expand the protection measures available for these groups. USAID also supports the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression to investigate and sanction aggressions against journalists and defenders. My understanding is that we also build and support professional networks and provide training to equip journalists to face challenges and professional risks specific to Mexico. Working with the Committee to Protect Journalists, we support training on journalist safety, investigative journalism guidelines, and best practices to increase transparency and accountability.

If confirmed, I will work to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and reduce impunity. I will continue calls for Mexican authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against journalists and human rights defend-

ers wherever they occur, and will actively engage with civil society organizations working these issues.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. If confirmed, how will you address human rights concerns with the López Obrador administration and ensure that U.S. funds are not supporting policies or entities that are committing abuses?

Answer. The promotion of human rights is central to U.S. national security and prosperity. The United States uses a wide range of diplomatic tools to advance respect for human rights, including working directly with the Mexican Government and civil society. USAID and the Department of State have implemented projects to address various human rights concerns, including forced disappearances, violence against human rights defenders and journalists, and impunity, as well as public diplomacy programs to support and train human rights defenders.

The Department promotes accountability for human rights violations and abuses by implementing human rights-related sanctions and visa ineligibilities, and Leahy Law assistance restrictions. It is my understanding that, prior to furnishing assistance to security force units and individuals, the Department conducts Leahy vetting to assess if there is credible information that such units committed gross violations of human rights. The Department also submits reports consistent with the requirements of the relevant annual appropriations act.

If confirmed, I plan to utilize all the available tools at my disposal to promote human rights in Mexico and support all programs being implemented. I will seek to work with the Government of Mexico to ensure human rights are a central tenet in high-level engagement, as well as look to relaunch the annual Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue, which last met in December 2017.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with civil society groups, independent journalists, and human rights defenders that have been targeted by the Government?

Answer. Respect for human rights is fundamental, and a free and active press is an integral part of a healthy democracy. The killing of journalists and human rights activist undermines freedoms of expression and association, as well as regional security.

The Department is committed to supporting efforts to increase respect for human rights and press freedom. Through USAID, we currently support Mexico's National Protection Mechanism for Journalists and Human Rights Defenders and work with state-level counterparts to expand the protection measures available for these groups. USAID also supports the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression to investigate and sanction aggressions against journalists and defenders. We also build and support professional networks and provide training to equip journalists to face challenges and professional risks specific to Mexico. Working with the Committee to Protect Journalists, we support training on journalist safety, investigative journalism guidelines, and best practices to increase transparency and accountability.

If confirmed, I will work to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and end impunity. I will work with the Department to continue calling on Mexican authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against journalists and human rights defenders wherever they occur, and actively engage with civil society organizations working these issues.

Question. How can Congress help advance human rights concerns, including violence against journalists?

Answer. Respect for human rights is fundamental, and a free and active press is an integral part of a healthy democracy. Congress can help advance administration priorities on human rights in Mexico by ensuring the Department and USAID maintain appropriate resource levels for security and development assistance, which include programming on human rights, the protection of journalists, and development of Mexico's capacity to investigate and prosecute aggressions against journalists and human rights defenders.

I would also recommend Congressional members engage with Mexican authorities whenever possible to discuss human rights issues. If confirmed, I would invite Congressional delegations to come to Mexico to observe the human rights situation on the ground.

Question. Will you commit to working with me to advance the Combating Global Corruption Act and to raising the profile of efforts to fight international corruption as a U.S. national security priority, particularly in Mexico?

Answer. I understand Department of State priorities include supporting Mexico in addressing public corruption, transparency, and the rule of law. U.S. assistance programs train justice sector operators; establish, improve, and certify internal affairs departments; increase transparency and accountability through culture of lawfulness and ethics programs; and promote civil society and media participation. I understand all Mexican security officials receiving training or other assistance are subject to Leahy Law human rights vetting. I am also aware that the Department considers human rights, ties to organized crime, and corruption when implementing foreign assistance programs, as well as assesses the applicability of visa ineligibility authorities to target officials involved in significant corruption or gross violations of human rights.

If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to assess all potential tools that can be deployed to help in the fight against international corruption, as well as discuss potential areas of cooperation on anti-corruption in high-level engagements.

Question. Do you see opportunities to work with the Organization of American States to further our anti-corruption agenda?

Answer. The OAS has a unique and vital role and mandate in the Americas: to promote a hemispheric commitment to representative democracy, human rights, and development and security organization. More than any other multilateral organization, the OAS today is the premier forum through which the member states can work together to improve the lives of our citizens and bring to life the democratic principles articulated in the OAS Charter and the landmark Inter-American Democratic Charter.

I understand the OAS's Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACC) adopts a comprehensive approach in which 34 member states work together to fight corruption. There are also opportunities in the OAS to work with countries to review legal frameworks and institutions through the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the IACC (MESICIC).

With the Lopez Obrador administration having made anti-corruption a central tenet of his administration, if confirmed, I will work to engage with Mexico to ensure we use every available tool at the bilateral and multilateral levels to address corruption.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address corruption concerns with the Lopez Obrador administration and ensure that U.S. funds are not ending up with corrupt entities and individuals?

Answer. The United States supports Mexico's efforts to address corruption, transparency, and the rule of law. President Lopez Obrador has made anticorruption a focal point of his presidency. If confirmed, I will work with the Mexican Government to further discussions on anticorruption efforts and will continue to support U.S. anticorruption programming that assists Mexican Government and civil society efforts to counter corruption at federal, state, and local levels. If confirmed, I, and the Department, will continue to ensure all Mexican security officials receiving training or other assistance are subject to Leahy Law human rights vetting. Furthermore, I will continue to ensure we assess and mitigate the risk of corruption before providing assistance.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. KENNETH LEE SALAZAR BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. What is your view of the current situation in Cuba?

Answer. I have been watching the historic protests in Cuba and the Cuban Government's troubling response very closely. I can assure you that Cuba is among this administration's highest priorities. If confirmed, I will carry out the administration's aims to support peaceful protesters; to denounce human rights abuses, including violence, detentions, and Internet shutdowns and censorship; and to urge countries—even those opposed to U.S. sanctions—to support the Cuban protestors' demands for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These are universal values every country should support.

Answer. If confirmed, will you press the Mexican Government to support the bipartisan U.S. policy on Cuba?

Answer. If confirmed, I will carry out the administration’s aims to denounce human rights abuses, including violence, detentions, and Internet shutdowns and censorship; and to urge countries—even those strongly opposed to U.S. sanctions—to support Cuban protestors’ demands for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Question. In your opinion, how has implementation of the USCMA been affected by the COVID–19 pandemic?

Answer. While the COVID–19 pandemic limited the possibility of in-person collaboration, I commend our interagency colleagues and their counterparts in Mexico and Canada for finding ways to advance the USMCA implementation process despite the challenges. For example, Mexico took significant steps to undertake its herculean task of labor reform. While the recent report shows there is still work to be done, what was accomplished in establishing the labor courts, especially under the circumstances, is laudable. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work with the interagency and our Mexican counterparts to continue the implementation process and address the areas where COVID–19 has complicated our joint efforts.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take as Ambassador to ensure that economic cooperation with Mexico under USMCA supports the growth of American businesses?

Answer. Since the USMCA entered into force July 1, 2020, I understand it has proven a valuable tool for improving trade relations between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. As Ambassador to Mexico, I will work with the State Department, the U.S. Trade Representative, and other U.S. Government agencies to continue building areas for cooperation and ensure full regulatory compliance with the agreement. I will also prioritize engagement on labor issues and support USTR’s efforts through the Rapid Response Mechanism to ensure U.S. businesses are on an equal footing.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JESSICA LEWIS BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How do you see the relationship between making the United States “the security partner of choice” and ensuring that U.S. security partners respect human rights and international humanitarian law, especially when using U.S.-origin defense equipment?

Answer. The President and Secretary Blinken have stated that human rights must be at the center of our foreign policy and have made it clear that the United States will cooperate with allies and partners where our priorities align and not shy away from defending U.S. interests and American values where they do not. Strong U.S. security partnerships around the world come with a multitude of benefits, including the opportunity to positively influence a country’s human rights practices. These relationships allow us to work closely with partners, set an example for human rights standards, and, when appropriate, provide training and education to enhance professionalism and adherence to human rights standards.

If confirmed, I will support assistance to help ensure our partner forces are taking steps to comply with international law and protect human rights. Additionally, I will work to ensure human rights concerns are given full weight in arms transfer decisions.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that human rights concerns are given equal weight as other considerations when assessing potential arms sales?

Answer. I understand the Administration is working to develop a new Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) Policy to ensure arms transfer decisions reflect the Administration’s foreign policy priorities, including the respect for human rights and the rule of law. Promoting the protection of human rights in our arms transfer process bolsters our own national security, as well as that of our partners. If confirmed, I will review the arms transfer decision-making process to ensure human rights concerns are given full weight in arms transfer decisions, in accordance with the CAT Policy. I will also seek to assist partner forces in taking steps to comply with international law, build security sector governance capacity, and protect human rights.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JESSICA LEWIS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Does the current global amount, allocation, and geographical distribution of State Department security assistance sufficiently account for the strategic challenges facing the United States and its allies and partners?

Answer. State ensures that its security assistance strategically advances U.S. diplomatic and defense relationships, and that investments in foreign security forces advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests, within the parameters set by the law and Congress. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that State's security assistance investments continue to focus on addressing strategic challenges facing the United States and its allies and partners, to ensuring our assistance and diplomatic efforts are the foreign policy tool of first resort, and to continuing to engage with Congress on this important issue.

Question. Does the Department have sufficient visibility into Department of Defense security cooperation activities so that State can guide planning for those activities, not just concur or object prior to implementation?

Answer. As I understand it, there is a coordination process that has been developed between the Departments of State and Defense, including State's participation in fora hosted by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and combatant commands, as well as the annual State-Defense Joint Security Sector Assistance Review. This process provides key State stakeholders the opportunity to participate in planning for security assistance activities prior to receipt of formal concurrence requests in order to ensure both departments' programs are complementary and mutually supportive. If confirmed, I commit to work to improve mechanisms that allow State to ensure that Defense's security assistance supports U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives.

Question. Do you commit to maintaining the tiered review process, and ensuring that this committee retains its role as the body in the Senate charged with reviewing the policy implications of potential arms sales?

Answer. I commit to maintaining the tiered review process, and I will work with the Committee in its role as the body in the Senate reviewing potential arms sales.

Question. Does the Department and its interagency partners sufficiently prioritize and expedite sales essential to the vital national interests of the U.S. and its most critical allies?

Answer. I understand the Department's top priority, working together with the interagency, is to advance vital national interests, including those shared by our allies, within the framework of existing laws. If confirmed, I will continue to seek efficiencies to improve the interagency process and work closely with our partners and allies to streamline vital capabilities for our critical partners that support U.S. foreign policy and security interests, and commit to continuing to engage with you and your office on this important issue.

Question. Does the Department spend sufficient time and attention in working with critical allies to develop requirements together to address those capabilities most needed for our shared interests? Does the Department have the personnel, especially at posts, to build and maintain the relationships required to jointly develop requirements?

Answer. The Department, working with colleagues at the Department of Defense, staffs embassies with Security Cooperation Officers (SCOs) who serve under Chief of Mission authority as well as their respective Combatant Command. These SCOs form the "first line" as key interlocutors with foreign Defense Ministries and services and are responsible for the development and maintenance of professional working relationships to advance U.S. strategic objectives and jointly develop requirements. If confirmed, I will work with the Department and DoD to ensure these vital positions are adequately trained and staffed to meet our foreign policy objectives

Question. Do you support changing the arms sales process to require a resolution of approval for sales? Why or why not?

Answer. It is my sense that arms transfers are a key part of our security cooperation with allies and partners—and it is our relationship with allies and partners around the world that gives the United States a critical edge over our competitors and adversaries. If confirmed, I will examine this matter and consult with the Committee.

Question. Do you support restricting the arms sales emergency authority to those articles and services that can be delivered within 60 days?

Answer. I understand Congress's concern that the emergency authorities within the Arms Export Control Act be used to respond only to genuine emergencies. If confirmed, I would consult with subject matter experts in the Department of State and Department of Defense to identify whether there would be any negative policy or logistical implications to such limitations before giving any specific proposal my full support.

Question. Should the United States seek the return of U.S.-origin defense articles if issues emerge with end use by the foreign country or international organization customer?

Answer. I understand that there are many legal issues and other more practical matters of logistics and finance involved in such an option. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our foreign partners only use U.S.-origin defense articles and services for the purposes for which they were provided, and that the Department considers the full range of consequences if a partner cannot or will not protect U.S.-origin defense articles; if confirmed, as well, I commit to continuing to engage with Congress on this important issue.

Question. Do you support imposing a new requirement for Leahy-like vetting for all U.S. arms sales?

Answer. The President has made it clear that respect for human rights must be at the center of U.S. foreign policy, which includes policy decisions on arms transfers.

If confirmed, I will review the arms transfer decision process to ensure it adequately considers human rights and the risk of civilian casualties when making such decisions, including preventing U.S. origin items from being transferred to foreign security force units that have committed gross violations of human rights. I will also insist on adherence to our agreements on the use of U.S.-origin defense equipment by our allies and partners, compliance with both the laws of armed conflict and respect for human rights, and will consider the full range of consequences should violations occur. If confirmed, I will continue to engage with Congress on this important question.

Question. If confirmed, how will you balance vital U.S. national interests when we have values-based disagreements or human rights concerns with partners? In your opinion, do security partnerships give us more influence when we have human rights disagreements with partners, not less?

Answer. The President and Secretary Blinken have stated that human rights must be at the center of U.S. foreign policy. If disagreements with our partners arise, I believe we must address them openly and have frank conversations when necessary. The United States will cooperate with allies and partners where our priorities align and not shy away from defending U.S. interests and American values where they do not.

Answer. Among the many benefits of U.S. security partnerships around the world is an opportunity for us to influence the training, doctrine, and professionalism of partner armed forces in ways that enhance adherence to human rights standards and build security sector governance capacity. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure we take every opportunity to leverage our security relationships to enhance human rights around the world.

Question. Should the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) have a veto over arms sales?

Answer. DRL plays an integral role in the arms transfer decision process, and their input is essential to ensuring human rights are considered.

If confirmed, I will review the arms transfer decision process and work closely with DRL to ensure human rights concerns are given full weight in arms transfer decisions.

Question. Do you support reversing the Obama Administration's Export Control Reform initiative, and making large categories of articles FMS-only once again?

Answer. As you are aware, the export control reforms initiated under the Obama Administration were completed, and the categories of items from the munitions list moved to Department of Commerce control are now being regulated under the Export Administration Regulations. Separately, if confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to work closely with our DoD colleagues to maintain an appropriate FMS-Only list that guarantees the successful development of partner capabilities and the protection of U.S. technology. If confirmed, I would be glad to continue to engage with Congress on this issue.

Question. Many Americans believe U.S. allies free-ride off of U.S. military commitments. If confirmed, how would you plan to ensure sufficient burden-sharing by our allies?

Answer. I support President Biden's call to reinvigorate our alliances. Security simply costs more in today's complex environment, and, if confirmed, I will work to reframe the burden sharing conversation at NATO to increase focus on capabilities, readiness, and force generation, in addition to defense spending. In that same spirit, when appropriate, I believe the United States should seek fair and equitable cost-sharing arrangements with our partners. We saw how this diplomatic approach secured quick results in the new multiyear cost sharing agreement with the Republic of Korea that was signed in April. If confirmed, the PM bureau, under my guidance, will continue to impress upon our allies that only with greater mutual investment in defense can we ensure our alliances are able to adapt quickly to a changing security landscape with the necessary capabilities and military readiness.

Question. Is being a signatory to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons consistent with being a U.S. ally?

Answer. While the United States understands and shares the desire to advance nuclear disarmament goals, we do not support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). I believe the TPNW is incompatible with U.S. extended deterrence relationships that are still necessary for international peace and security, and it may reinforce divisions that hinder the international community's ability to work together to address pressing proliferation and security challenges. All NATO Allies share our opposition to the TPNW, and the U.S. position on this issue has spanned administrations. Seeking to ban nuclear weapons through a treaty that does not include any States Parties that possess nuclear weapons will not reduce nuclear arsenals.

Question. What is the Department doing to expedite delivery of critical capabilities to those priority allies and partners most in danger from growing threats from the People's Liberation Army?

Answer. There is no doubt that the People's Liberation Army's growing capabilities pose significant challenges to our allies and partners in the region. PM prioritizes security cooperation activities, including arms sales and security assistance to bolster our allies' and partners' capabilities to secure their land and maritime borders and increase Maritime Domain Awareness, security, the rule of law, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will support efforts to increase interoperability with partners, and force projection and posture in the region. Empowering our partners and allies in these ways serves to deter more aggressive PRC military behavior in the region.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to encourage Taiwan to invest in its own defense, and to acquire capabilities most suitable for defense against the Peoples Liberation Army?

Answer. The United States has sold nearly \$30 billion worth of arms to Taiwan since 2009, but arms sales alone cannot ensure Taiwan's ability to defend itself, nor should the impact of arms sales be judged on total value alone. Taiwan should focus on an asymmetric defense concept and prioritize modern, resilient, and cost-effective approaches. As I understand it, our expanding security cooperation, which is calibrated to meet the threat from the PRC, seeks to encourage and support Taiwan in developing those capabilities. As part of that cooperation, if confirmed, I will encourage Taiwan to spend on defense an amount commensurate with the growing threat it faces and to prioritize the appropriate capabilities.

Question. How can we best capitalize on Japan's increasing focus on Taiwan, and its efforts to improve its own defensive capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to working closely with allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Indo-Pacific region. I believe Japan can be a critical partner in that respect. For the first time since 1969, a U.S.-Japan Leaders' statement referenced the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait; in addition, Japan's annual defense white paper stressed this year that "stability of the situation around Taiwan is important, not only for the security of our country, but for the stability of the international community." If confirmed, I will commit to exploring opportunities to collaborate with Japan to reinforce peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure that the U.S. Department of State consults with Congress before taking action on issues that could jeopardize U.S. access to or

create significant tensions in our relationships with key defense partners in the Indo-Pacific, especially those in Southeast Asia?

Answer. Advancing defense cooperation in Southeast Asia and supporting our defense partners throughout the Indo-Pacific remains critical to ensuring our national interests in safeguarding the rules-based international order and global peace and prosperity. If confirmed, and as I committed at my nominations hearing, I look forward to consulting extensively and meaningfully with Congress as we advance U.S. objectives in the Indo-Pacific.

Question. Do you consider the Philippines to be a strategically important ally of the United States? Please explain your position.

Answer. The U.S.–Philippine alliance is a relationship founded on shared strategic interests, shared history, culture, and strong connections between our nations. As Secretary Blinken has stated, the United States stands with the Philippines in the face of the PRC’s provocations, pressure and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea. I understand that we share the Philippines’ concerns regarding the PRC’s problematic and coercive activity in the South China Sea, and that we will continue to work with our Philippine counterparts through bilateral and multilateral cooperation to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. At the same time, I take seriously the matter of human rights abuses in the Philippines and, if confirmed, will work with State to consistently raise this as an issue of great concern with their government.

Question. The United States military currently cooperates with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on counterterrorism and maritime security. Multiple members of Congress have proposed limiting or cutting off U.S. security assistance to the Philippine military because of concerns over human rights abuses. Do you believe that taking such a step is in U.S. interests?

Answer. A longstanding treaty ally, the Philippines continues to be a critical partner in the Indo-Pacific on an array of issues. I take seriously the matter of human rights abuses in the Philippines, and my understanding is that we consistently raise this as an issue of great concern with their government. When violations have occurred, the United States works with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to promote accountability for violators. My understanding is that PM does not provide assistance to the Philippine National Police. If confirmed, I will ensure that any provision of security assistance is closely aligned with the Administration’s bilateral and regional foreign policy objectives, remains in compliance with the Leahy Law and maximizes human rights training in military-to-military security cooperation activities.

Question. The United States military currently cooperates with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on counterterrorism and maritime security. Multiple members of Congress have proposed limiting or cutting off U.S. security assistance to the Philippine military because of concerns over human rights abuses. Do you believe that taking such a step would improve human rights conditions in the Philippines?

Answer. I understand State consistently underscores the importance of respect for human rights and accountability for any violations to all levels of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and civilian leadership. Maintaining our security assistance relationship can be an important way the United States can continue to engage on the human rights agenda. If confirmed, I will ensure the provision of security assistance is closely aligned with the Administration’s bilateral and regional goals, remains in compliance with applicable law, including the Leahy Law, and maximizes human rights training in military-to-military security cooperation activities.

Question. Do you agree that it is in our national interest to strengthen our security cooperation with Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand? If so, please elaborate specifically on the U.S. interests it serves.

- If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to advance security partnerships with these nations, including your views on continuing arms sales, engaging in capacity-building, and cooperating on advanced technology with South and Southeast Asian partner countries facing China’s coercion and growing military power?

Answer. It is absolutely in the national interest of the United States to strengthen security cooperation with allies and partners to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region, build interoperability, bolster U.S. force projection, ensure freedom of navigation and overflight, uphold rule of law, counter transnational crime and terror organizations, respond to natural and humanitarian crises, and reassure our allies and partners of U.S. commitment to the region, empowering them against coercion

and malign influence and enabling them to play an effective role in global peacekeeping. Security cooperation can provide opportunities to instill U.S. values in support of preserving the rules-based international order.

If confirmed, I will work to expand engagement with these nations at all levels, including by promoting the United States as the region's preferred security partner and helping to ensure they can protect and advance shared interests in the region. I will also seek to deepen and expand our overall defense cooperation with these nations by advancing key foundational defense agreements, which will help enable the transfer of defense articles and establish mechanisms that allow for greater overall defense cooperation.

Question. Does the TPNW present a threat to the integrity of the NATO alliance, and the security of NATO member states?

Answer. All NATO Allies share our view that the TPNW is inconsistent with the Alliance's nuclear deterrence policy, is at odds with the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, risks undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and does not take into account the current security environment. NATO has made several statements opposing the TPNW, most recently in its June 2021 Summit Communiqué. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our Allies carefully consider the impact on their security and the Alliance prior to making any decisions relating to the TPNW.

Question. If Egypt takes receipt of Russian Su-35s, what impact do you anticipate it will have on U.S. security sector assistance to Egypt?

Answer. If confirmed, I will join my colleagues at the Department in urging the Government of Egypt to refrain from new major Russian arms purchases, including Su-35 fighter aircraft, which risk triggering Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) Section 231 sanctions and would damage our bilateral security sector cooperation and assistance. While it is too early to prejudice the Administration's response to the scenario you outlined, if confirmed, I will work with my State colleagues to fully implement CAATSA, and I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this matter.

Question. Can you commit to advocating for strong U.S. support to the Multinational Forces and Observers (MFO) in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula?

Answer. As I understand it, the Multinational Forces and Observers (MFO) plays an integral role in maintaining security and provides a framework for an enduring military-to-military relationship between Egypt and Israel. So long as that is necessary and cooperation continues between the two partners, if confirmed, I will advocate for strong U.S. support for the MFO.

Question. The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) was founded in 2005 and over the last 15 fiscal years, has received almost \$1.3 billion in funding. This funding has accomplished several objectives, including building self-sufficient peace operations training, supporting partner country development, enhancing partner country operational readiness, and expanded the participation, integration, and leadership women in peace operations, to name a few. GPOI has improved the capacity and operations of U.N. peacekeeping forces in Africa and globally. Please describe the efforts you will take, if confirmed, to continue to integrate women into GPOI's work in both peacekeeping troops and in leadership positions in peacekeeping missions.

- GPOI provides critical training to partner countries looking to deploy peacekeepers, which includes topics like preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), violence against women, as well as technical training. Given the high number of instances of SEA committed by peacekeeping troops globally, how would you direct GPOI to enhance trainings to counter these occurrences?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support PM's work through GPOI to increase the meaningful participation of women in peace operations by promoting efforts to: encourage partners to increase recruitment, training, and deployment of women at all levels of peace operations—including in leadership and decision-making positions; incorporate gender topics into training for all peacekeepers; and invest in gender-responsive upgrades at partner training centers.

Moreover, if confirmed, I will direct PM to pursue activities through GPOI that enhance and expand upon existing SEA prevention and accountability training incorporated into pre-deployment training, as well as National Investigation Officers training.

Question. Do you commit to ensuring the State Department advertises the GPOI programming as part of our assistance to U.N. peacekeeping efforts?

Answer. Yes, I do. In fact, I understand there will be a particularly valuable and timely opportunity to do so as we approach the U.N. Peacekeeping Ministerial in December.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JESSICA LEWIS BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. How do you see the relationship between making the United States the security partner of choice and ensuring that U.S. security partners respect human rights and international humanitarian law, especially when using U.S.-origin defense equipment?

Answer. The President and Secretary Blinken have stated that human rights must be at the center of our foreign policy and have made it clear that the United States will cooperate with allies and partners where our priorities align and not shy away from defending U.S. interests and American values where they do not. Strong U.S. security partnerships around the world come with a multitude of benefits, including the opportunity to positively influence a country's human rights practices. These relationships allow us to work closely with partners, set an example for human rights standards, and, when appropriate, provide training and education to enhance professionalism and adherence to human rights standards.

If confirmed, I will support assistance to help ensure our partners' forces are taking steps to comply with international law and protect human rights. Additionally, I will work to ensure human rights concerns are given full weight in arms transfer decisions.

Congressional Review of Arms Sales

Question. During the previous administration, I have been concerned that congressional review periods have been bypassed for certain arms sales and the administration refused to respond to congressional inquiries regarding those sales.

- What steps will you take to address these concerns?

Answer. Given my experience on the committee, I very much understand the importance of Congressional oversight, whether in terms of the need to respond to inquiries, to respect and maintain both the formal and informal Congressional review processes, as well as the value that Congressional perspectives bring to the Executive Branch's own policy deliberations. If confirmed, I will respect the role of Congress in the arms transfer process, will adhere to all statutory requirements, and will ensure the Bureau is responsive to Congressional requests for information.

Question. In your experience working in Congress, what observations have you made about factors that may hinder Congress from effectively exercising its oversight role over the arms sales process?

Answer. In addition to the absolute prerequisite of Executive Branch cooperation with Congress on these matters, I would note that arms sales are authorized under different sections of U.S. law and may involve equities under the jurisdiction of the Senate's Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Appropriations, and even Banking Committees.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JESSICA LEWIS BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Recent protests against the Government in Colombia have resulted in more than 40 reported deaths and thousands of injuries. In some cases, protests had turned violent and erected blockades to prevent the distribution of food and medicine to communities in need. Colombian military personnel and law enforcement had been deployed for crowd control and have broken up these blockades. The Colombian Government has been proactive in investigating instances of alleged human rights abuses committed by security personnel.

- In your opinion, to what degree will the human rights conditions on Colombia's FMF program evolve based on state security forces' response to the mass demonstrations that began in late April 2021?

Answer. I understand that Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Colombia supports efforts to strengthen the appropriate role of the Colombian military, including to provide aviation, riverine, and maritime security, in a democratic society. All

FMF for Colombia is provided consistent with the Leahy Law, and therefore human rights are taken under consideration. If confirmed, I will continually review the impact and effectiveness of our foreign assistance programs, as well as opportunities to augment and reinforce human rights-related components.

From 2008 to 2017, previous administrations had bundled Taiwan arms sales notifications together, announcing multiple notifications on a single day, which led to extended periods of time between arms sales announcements. Since September 2018, this approach changed, with the administration announcing one or two Taiwan arms sales packages at a time, with shorter gaps between notifications.

Question. Do you agree that the former approach had significant downsides, particularly with regard to strategic planning and signaling U.S. support for Taiwan?

Answer. I understand the concern with previous approaches, and commit to moving requests for transfers of defense articles upon receipt of each request. If confirmed, my overriding goal will be to make available to Taiwan the defense articles and services necessary to enable it to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and our “one China” policy. U.S. security cooperation with Taiwan is calibrated to meet the threat from the PRC and ensure we fulfill our commitments to Taiwan, as reflected in the Taiwan Relations Act.

From 2008 to 2017, previous administrations had bundled Taiwan arms sales notifications together, announcing multiple notifications on a single day, which led to extended periods of time between arms sales announcements. Since September 2018, this approach changed, with the administration announcing one or two Taiwan arms sales packages at a time, with shorter gaps between notifications.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to further improve upon the approach developed since 2018, and ensure that the United States maintains a regularized and robust arms sales process that addresses Taiwan’s defense needs as expeditiously as possible?

Answer. I recognize the serious and growing threat that the PRC poses to Taiwan, and the urgency of Taiwan improving its self-defense capabilities. If confirmed, I will support moving requests for transfers of defense articles upon receipt of each request. This is identical to the arms sales process used for other partners.

The United States sold nearly \$30 billion worth of arms to Taiwan since 2009, but arms sales alone cannot ensure Taiwan’s ability to defend itself, nor should the impact of arms sales be judged on total value alone. Taiwan should focus on an asymmetric defense concept and prioritize modern, resilient, and cost-effective approaches. Our expanding security cooperation seeks to encourage and support Taiwan in developing those capabilities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD LU BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. How many Afghan allies who have or are now applying for SIVs will the U.S. relocate?

Answer. The Department of State remains committed to Afghan partners who assisted the United States over the past two decades in Afghanistan. On July 29, 2021, the first relocation flight arrived in the United States with 221 Afghan special immigrant applicants, including 70 minors. A second flight arrived on August 2, 2021 with 181 SIV applicants. The Department is leading a worldwide effort to continue relocating eligible applicants and their families over the course of the next several weeks. There are approximately 20,000 Afghan principal applicants at some stage of the SIV application process, but about half of these applicants need to take action and provide legally-required documentation before the U.S. Government can begin processing their case and determine their eligibility for consideration for an SIV. It is my understanding that the U.S. Government intends to support all SIV applicants who are determined to be eligible for the program.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to press the Bangladeshi Government to allow unions to register and function without repression?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to press the Bangladeshi Government to allow unions to register and function without repression, so that they may continue their important work to try and improve working conditions in Bangladesh.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to ensure that a labor attaché is sent to our embassy in Dhaka this year?

Answer. Knowing the importance of having a labor attaché and how one can support the improvement of labor conditions in country, I commit to ensuring that a labor attaché is sent to Embassy Dhaka as soon as possible. The Department is working with the Department of Labor to establish and fill this important position.

Question. If confirmed, do I have your commitment that USG assistance for labor unions will not diminish under your leadership?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to work with interagency stakeholders to support labor unions. Their work has been vital to improvements to strengthening safety improvements in the ready-made garment sector, and we will need to continue to support their work so that labor conditions can improve in all industrial sectors in Bangladesh.

Question. What are the prospects for the Indian Government to further diminish arms sales from Russia?

Answer. In recent years, India has taken significant steps to reduce its defense cooperation with Russia and increase cooperation with other partners, especially the United States, through increasingly sophisticated joint military exercises, increasing defense purchases, and deepening implementation of interoperability agreements. If confirmed, I will urge India to continue to turn away from major defense equipment purchases from Russia, and continually convey our concerns that Russia does not share the common strategic interests and values underpinning the U.S.-India partnership.

Question. Beyond the purchase of the S400, are you concerned that the Indian Government will seek to make further significant purchases of Russian arms?

Answer. In recent years India has increasingly diversified its defense purchases away from Russia. I will continue to support and encourage U.S. defense sales with India and urge all of our allies and partners to avoid purchasing new major defense equipment from Russia.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to engage with the Indian Government on the challenges faced by the Sikh farmers community in Punjab and their ability to peacefully protest now and in the future?

Answer. The farm laws themselves are an issue for the people and Government of India. However, peaceful protests are a hallmark of any thriving democracy as the Indian Supreme Court described on a case regarding the farm protests. If confirmed, I will underscore our strong support for the right to peacefully protest with the Indian Government.

Question. If confirmed, do you have a plan to advocate for effective accountability in Sri Lanka?

Answer. Accountability and impunity for human rights abusers continues to be an issue of great concern in Sri Lanka. If confirmed, I will continue to seek a commitment from the Sri Lankan Government to credibly address longstanding human rights cases and respect civil society, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and human rights defenders. Additionally, I will seek to utilize available tools to promote accountability, including, as applicable, Section 7031(c) visa restrictions and/or Global Magnitsky sanctions, in a targeted manner, to advance our human rights goals.

Question. Given the concerns that several Senators have raised on security cooperation with Sri Lankan officials who have been implicated in human rights abuses during the war, do you commit to consult closely with this committee and staff on any arms sale or future security cooperation effort with Sri Lanka?

Answer. The Biden administration takes very seriously the need to incorporate human rights into our engagements with Sri Lanka, including our security and law enforcement cooperation objectives. Our long-term strategic interests are best served by a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Sri Lanka. If confirmed, I commit to closely consult with the committee to ensure that in any engagement with or equipment transfer to the military, law enforcement, counterterrorism or security officials, we continue to emphasize respect for democratic governance, human rights, accountability, and rule of law.

U.S. Businesses in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

Question. Several U.S. businesses have expressed concerns about the rule of law their ability to operate in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Do I have your commitment to work with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on these cases as they happen to ensure that U.S. businesses are not treated unfairly?

Answer. Promoting United States investment in Central Asia is a key pillar of the U.S. Central Asia Strategy, and facilitating U.S. exports and investments supports the G7 Build Back Better World initiative. If confirmed, I will work with our host government partners to improve the business and investment climate in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and I will work with those in federal agencies and private industry to address issues when they arise. I will also work closely with the committee to ensure you are apprised of key developments.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD LU BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In your view, has India taken significant steps to reduce its defense cooperation with Russia? What are some of the most notable steps? Other than the S-400 purchase, what else concerns you about the Indian-Russian relationship?

Answer. In recent years, India has taken steps to reduce its defense cooperation with Russia and increase cooperation with other partners, especially the United States, through ever more sophisticated joint military exercises, increasing U.S. defense purchases, and concluding defense enabling agreements, such as COMCASA. If confirmed, I will urge India to continue to diversify away from Russian arms and reiterate Russia does not share the common strategic interests and values underpinning the U.S.-India partnership.

Question. What specifically can we do to strengthen our security relationship with India in the short-term? What about the longer-term?

Answer. U.S.-India defense ties have expanded significantly over the past two decades, as evidenced by the conclusion of five major defense enabling agreements and over \$20 billion in bilateral defense trade.

In the coming years, the United States will look to increase the interoperability of our forces through additional logistics cooperation, expanded defense information sharing, increasingly complex multi-service exercises with like-minded partners, maritime domain awareness, peacekeeping, and joint development of defense technologies in line with India's status as a Major Defense Partner of the United States. In addition, the United States will look to deepen defense cooperation in important domains such as emerging technologies, space, and cyber.

Question. What will you do to work with the Indians on boosting COVID vaccine manufacturing in the region and ensuring these vaccines are available for export to support dire global vaccine needs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Indian Government to expand COVID-19 vaccine production to make vaccines globally available and affordable both through the Quad Vaccine Partnership and bilaterally. If confirmed, I will coordinate with the Indian Government to address global medical supply chain constraints that limit necessary inputs for vaccine production.

Question. What role do you see India playing in the Indo-Pacific region in light of the growing challenges from China?

Answer. The United States and India share a vision of a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. The United States welcomes India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues and the interagency to encourage India to continue its important contributions toward capacity building, maritime security, economic development, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief in the Indo-Pacific.

Question. What will be your main priorities in cooperating with India through the Quad and cooperating with India in Southeast Asia?

Answer. The Quad aims to build relationships with partners that share our values, perspectives, and approaches to regional and global challenges on a range of political, economic, and security issues. If confirmed, I plan to work with my counterpart in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and interagency to encourage Quad partners, including India, to expand our robust cooperation on priorities including maritime security, counterterrorism, COVID-19 vaccine production, and climate change. If confirmed, I will work with the Indian Government to reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN's unity and centrality, enhance our coordination in the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, and look forward to exploring ways of working with India in the Mekong sub-region and across the Indo-Pacific.

Question. Do you commit to making the resolution of the Lincoln House issue a priority with India, and to directing the U.S. Ambassador to India to do the same?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will also consult closely with Members of Congress on this issue.

Question. The Indian Ministry of Defense is also involved in this issue. Do you commit to ensuring relevant U.S. Department of Defense officials are briefed on the issue, and to ensuring they raise it with their own counterparts as well?

Answer. Yes.

Question. In 2016, the Obama administration labeled India a “major defense partner,” a designation supported by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. Some have called for an amendment to the Arms Export Control Act to facilitate more defense sales to India and help solidify it as a Major Defense Partner. Does the Biden administration support such a step?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to consult closely with the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, the Department of Defense, and Congress on this and other steps to advance our defense and security partnership with India.

Question. The Obama administration launched the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative with India to promote joint co-development and production of defense systems. Thus far, that objective has not been realized. To what do you attribute this?

Answer. The U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) has been a valuable mechanism in building linkages between the U.S. and Indian defense establishments. While some DTTI working groups have faced challenges, many, such as the Aircraft Carrier Technologies Working Group, have resulted in productive technical exchanges. In 2019, the United States and India concluded a DTTI Industry-to-Industry Framework to promote greater collaboration with the private sector.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of Defense to advance progress under the DTTI.

Question. Will the Biden administration pursue greater cooperation under DTTI with India? If so, what will be the administration’s key priorities?

Answer. The U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) has catalyzed exchanges on a range of technologies, including related to aircraft carriers and small unmanned aerial vehicles. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with my Department of Defense counterparts to further deepen cooperation with India through DTTI.

Question. Will the Biden administration advocate for India’s membership on the U.N. Security Council and in the Nuclear Suppliers Group?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with my counterparts. The administration will review reform proposals and work closely with Allies and partners at the U.N. to ensure that UNSC reforms are undertaken in such a way as to enhance the efficiency of the Council, promote U.S. values, and leave unaltered the veto power. Moreover, I intend to work across the interagency to continue U.S. support for India’s membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Question. How will the Biden administration cooperate with India on 5G, digital security, and other emerging technology issues? Please be specific.

Answer. The Biden administration has prioritized cooperation with India on a host of emerging technologies issues, both bilaterally and through the Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group. The United States and India, along with other Quad partners, intend to focus on the coordination of technology standards development and the joint efforts to maintain the integrity of standards-setting bodies, cooperation on telecommunications development, including the diversification of equipment suppliers, and convening dialogues on the security of technology supply chains, especially microelectronics and critical minerals.

Question. Pakistan played a positive role in bringing the Taliban to the table, but has publicly refused to host U.S. CT [Counter-Terrorism] assets and has been unable to force the Taliban back to the table. What is an appropriate role for Pakistan in Afghanistan? Is it time for a change in U.S.-Pakistan policy?

Answer. I believe Pakistan has an important role in Afghan peace negotiations. I understand the Department continues to make clear that progress toward a political settlement in Afghanistan, and collaboration on regional stability efforts, including against terrorist groups, are vital elements of an expanded U.S.-Pakistan relationship. If confirmed, I will also encourage Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve economic ties and expand trade, which will help build incentives to reap the divi-

dends of peace. Further, if confirmed, I will also work to expand trade and investment between the United States and these two countries to help enhance broader regional economic integration.

Question. The Taliban continues to seize more territory and threaten population centers while our embassy footprint is increasingly confined to Kabul. How do we provide adequate oversight of taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan? Absent issuing OFAC waivers, what should the policy be about assistance to Taliban-held areas?

Answer. The Department continues to monitor U.S. Embassy Kabul's staffing to ensure the necessary flexibility and sufficient resources to advance U.S. interests, including supporting efforts to reach a political settlement and supporting Afghanistan's stability. Maintaining an appropriate diplomatic presence is essential to ensure that we can support our Afghan partners and that we have the staff to monitor our assistance and programming. Both the Department and USAID have been developing scenario-based contingency plans to adjust U.S. assistance programming as the operating environment warrants, including to ensure it continues to advance U.S. interests and is consistent with U.S. law and policy.

Question. What is the administration's strategy for processing the large volume of pending SIV applications from Afghanistan given the deteriorating situation on the ground?

Answer. The Department of State remains committed to Afghan partners who assisted the United States over the past two decades in Afghanistan. For that reason, the Department has taken steps to address the large volume of pending Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applications from Afghanistan. The Department is currently working to relocate SIV applicants who are in the advanced stages of processing to either the United States or other third country locations while we complete their special immigrant applications. We began relocating SIVs and their families to Fort Lee in Virginia in late July and appreciate Congress' generous support in this regard. We have also increased our consular staffing levels to augment our processing capacity across all stages of the SIV application process, and we are currently examining ways to make the application process more efficient. The Department looks forward to working with Congress on this issue and appreciates your attention to this matter.

Question. Efforts to combat trafficking in persons vary country to country in the South and Central Asian region. Some made significant progress during the 2020 reporting period. How can you, if confirmed, bolster these efforts?

Answer. Trafficking in persons is a serious crime which affects all countries. If confirmed, I will press South and Central Asian states at the highest levels of government to build on foundational improvements to prevent vulnerability of populations to trafficking, including marginalized individuals; increase prosecution of traffickers; and protect victims of trafficking. I will continue to seek opportunities for collaboration between the United States and regional partners to increase government anti-trafficking capacity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly increased vulnerability to trafficking around the world. I will continue to prioritize close collaboration with other key Bureaus within the Department of State and the international and local NGO community to address this important concern.

Question. In the State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom report and the 2021 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report, some countries in the South and Central Asian region were identified as intolerant of religious freedom or having a significant hand in repressing religious minorities. What is your assessment of this particular issue and if confirmed, how will you work with the Office of International Religious Freedom to bolster religious freedom regionally?

Answer. Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law are fundamental principles of the United States. Intolerance of religious freedom and the repression of religious minorities anywhere is deeply concerning and counter to U.S. values, including in the South and Central Asian region. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of International Freedom and other relevant Bureaus in the Department of State and the larger interagency community to bolster religious freedom in South and Central Asia through work with the NGO community, direct engagement with governments and other avenues as appropriate.

Question. The protection of fundamental human rights remains a priority in the region. If confirmed, how will you direct the bureau to engage with civil society to bolster these rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will press our partners at the highest levels to recognize the valuable role of civil society in building open, inclusive, and just societies by protecting fundamental freedoms. Civil society—particularly women-led civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Civil society, when respected and allowed operational space, can be a positive force in addressing many of the most pressing issues in the region, particularly those that affect vulnerable communities, and we will continue to seek opportunities through diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance to support their work, develop their capacities, and strengthen their role in their communities. We will press our partners to engage in the legal reforms needed to protect free speech, assembly, association, and religion as vital components of a free society.

Question. How will U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan affect our interaction with Central Asia nations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to bilaterally engage our Central Asian partners on counterterrorism and security priorities, including as related to Afghanistan, in support of their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. I would also continue to utilize the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform for the United States and the Central Asian states to expand regional security cooperation and increase connectivity between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Question. Do you believe that the nations of Central Asia will prove to be useful partners in helping to stabilize Afghanistan? If so, how would you expect to see these nations act to maintain peace and security in the region?

Answer. The nations of Central Asia have been supportive partners of the United States in reducing terrorist threats in the region and working to support stability in Afghanistan. If I am confirmed, I intend to continue working with the five Central Asian nations to improve security and stability in the region through such as efforts as improving border security, countering the flow of narcotics, sharing information across borders, as well as assisting refugee populations and increasing economic connectivity.

Question. As the U.S. leaves Afghanistan, do believe that the U.S. should begin to interact with the Central Asian nations differently? If so, how?

Answer. For 30 years, the United States and the five Central Asian nations have built shared commitments to peace, prosperity, and security in the region. I believe our consistent engagements to strengthen those commitments should continue as the United States maintains its support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Question. How can we counteract Chinese attempts to gain a foothold in the region's economy?

Answer. While most South and Central Asian countries seek to maintain positive relationships with the PRC and look towards Beijing for development financing and trade, they do not view their relationships as zero sum and actively seek to diversify their economic relationships to avoid becoming too dependent on Beijing. In Central Asia, for example, the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform strengthens countries' independence, sovereignty, and economic connectivity, in turn increasing their negotiating power in relations with the PRC and other regional actors. Investments in exchanges and increasing capacity in higher education are also mechanisms that allow the United States to maintain influence with South and Central Asian Governments and society, and positively shape their economic development and empower local communities. I will work intensively with U.S. Government investment institutions such as the Development Finance Corporation, our representatives to multilateral development institutions such as the World Bank, IFC and, and like-minded 3rd country bilateral partners, and U.S. private sector partners to develop creative options to enable the economies in the region to develop in a healthy, balanced manner.

Question. To what extent does the BRI lead to the expansion of China's institutions and legal norms in Central Asia? How can and should the U.S. work to counter that growth?

Answer. From its inception, the land-based "Belt" portion of BRI prioritized developing China's economic and logistical linkages to its western neighbors in Central Asia and it continues to be a region of focus for the initiative. In addition to rail infrastructure investments, BRI projects have since expanded to include energy projects, port developments along the Indian Ocean, and information communications technology (ICT). While countries in the region look to BRI to meet their devel-

opment financing needs, the opaque nature of BRI financing leads to increased corruption and elite capture, creates unsustainable debt, and limits countries' flexibility in their bilateral relationship with Beijing. In cooperation with our international partners, the private sector, and the interagency, we are promoting alternatives to PRC financing and advancing regional economic development, including through the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and also working to improve transparency.

Question. In Central Asia, China has already begun funding and building the Digital Silk Road. Telecommunications infrastructure, surveillance networks, and other modernizing technologies are being lent and sold to Central Asian Governments. These give China a foothold in the Governments and societies which will be a platform for Beijing to spread influence. How can the United States compete and counter Chinese influence in the Central Asian tech space?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage our Central Asian partners to work with trustworthy vendors for their Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and services. As part of a long-term approach that sets Central Asia on a path toward working with trusted partners, we will continue looking for opportunities to promote global and regional programs, such as the World Bank's Digital Central Asia and South Asia (CASA); ways to further bilateral cooperation in the tech space; and programs to foster greater ICT transparency. I will work with the Development Finance Corporation and other USG partners to develop creative approaches to the challenge, and collaborate closely with the Congress on the matter.

Question. To what extent do you believe that there is an emerging Russia-China axis? Some suggest that the U.S. should try to drive wedges between the two nations to destroy any emerging axis. Do you agree with that analysis? Could such a thing be accomplished in Central Asia?

Answer. We face competition from China and Russia like never before, and must recommit ourselves to robust engagement with the countries of Central Asia to support their sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity in the face of many challenges. Over the past two decades, China has supplanted Russia as the region's largest trade and investment partner, though Russia remains an important security partner for many of the countries in the region, and there are signs that Moscow is wary of losing influence. Through our own bilateral and multilateral engagement within the region, we are working to build Central Asian countries' resilience and independence from malign influence from any and all external actors of concern.

Question. President Biden and his administration have repeatedly made commitments to upholding universal rights at home and abroad. In Turkey, authorities are abusing people's human rights and attacking peaceful dissidents at an alarming rate. Turkey's abuses have spilled into Central Asia, where the Governments have been pressured to scrutinize and close down Gulenist schools. The most recent abuse involved Turkey's kidnapping and illegal extradition of a Turkish-born Gulenist teacher in Kyrgyzstan. How can the U.S. better use its influence to prevent protect Central Asian nations from undue Turkish influence and work to protect those who may be subject to persecution once back in Turkey?

Answer. U.S. diplomacy in Central Asia, including through the C5+1 diplomatic platform, balances against regional over-reliance on foreign powers and addresses a core objective of our Central Asia strategy: protecting the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Central Asian states. If confirmed, I will work in concert with colleagues from EUR and the rest of the Department of State to continue efforts to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights in Central Asia bilaterally, regionally through the C5+1 platform, and multilaterally through the OSCE and other fora. I will remind Central Asian partners at the highest levels that requests for extraditions or transfer of individuals across international borders must happen transparently and with respect for the legal process. I will also continue to remind Central Asian partners of their non-refoulement obligations to prevent individuals from facing the threat of torture or mistreatment abroad. The Department of State is in direct contact with the spouse of the missing Turkish schools director and is working to ascertain what happened to him.

Question. What do you believe the role of sanctions should be in the creation and execution of U.S. foreign policy?

Answer. I believe the sanctions tools provided by the various sanctions authorities are critical for the creation and execution of U.S. foreign policy. I have seen firsthand the powerful impact our sanctions have when formulating policies and diplomatic strategies. When used thoughtfully to further U.S. and like-minded countries' democratic and human rights goals, these tools can dissuade, deter or even stop the

behaviors they were designed to address. Well-developed sanctions advance our bilateral relationships and help our regional partners.

Question. With respect to Russia, how do you believe the sanctions imposed on that country since 2014 have affected the Russia's economy and foreign policy decision making?

Answer. I believe the sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014 were effective in raising the economic cost for Russia to pursue aggressive and hostile activities. These sanctions also deterred many of Russia's traditional trading partners from continuing to do business as usual.

Question. What secondary impacts do you believe U.S. sanctions on Russia have had on Central Asian economies and politics?

Answer. Most countries in Central Asia have longstanding trade relationships with Russia and have faced secondary economic impacts from U.S. sanctions on Russia, including effects related to Russia's devaluation of its currency.

Question. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment was passed in 1974 and mandated sanctions on the Soviet Union until it allowed Soviet Jews the option to leave the USSR. Despite the fact that all Jews who wish have long since left the post-Soviet Central Asian nations, they all still remain cursorily sanctioned under Jackson-Vanik. Practically, what effect has the continued existence of Jackson-Vanik sanctions (waived though they may be) have on the nations who remain thus labeled?

Answer. The Jackson Vanik (JV) Amendment imposes trade penalties on non-market economies that restrict emigration. When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, the amendment was applied to all of the newly independent states. However, since 1998, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan have received and maintained Presidential Waivers to the JV restrictions, based on the Department of State's semi-annual certification that they are fully compliant with the Amendment's requirements for free and open emigration; in other words, they are granted Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status, but it is not permanent (PNTR).

Given their longstanding compliance with the law, JV is no longer relevant for these countries. PNTR status would allow Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to compete fairly with the rest of the world when forming trade relationships.

Question. Do you believe that the Jackson-Vanik sanctions on the Central Asian nations should be repealed without condition? Should they only be repealed when the nations in question make further human rights concessions?

Answer. The denial of PNTR under Jackson-Vanik is an ongoing bilateral irritant, and one that limits our trade potential in the region. Trade discrimination under laws such as JV is technically prohibited under the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), of which both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are members. Uzbekistan is in the process of joining the WTO in 2021. The Kyrgyz Republic was granted PNTR in 2001 when it acceded to the WTO. Restoring PNTR to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan now would reassure them that the United States supports peace and economic development in the region. Ending the applicability of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to these countries would allow the United States to grant them PNTR and would advance our goals of promoting economic growth and regional connectivity. The Department's position is that it should be repealed based on the countries' compliance with the terms of the original legislation.

With regards to human rights concessions, the Department of State uses more effective and targeted tools—such as the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, the Human Rights Report, and the Religious Freedom Report, to apply leverage and motivate reform. Withholding PNTR would not be as effective as these existing mechanisms.

Trafficking in Persons in Central Asia

Question. The State Department just released the 2021 Trafficking in Person's Report, and while some Central Asian nations showed improvement in the past year, there are still serious issues with the fight against trafficking. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan were removed from the Tier 2 watch list, however Tajikistan and Turkmenistan remain at Tier 3.

- Please outline what steps you will take to address this issue with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to help them make improvements.

Answer. Tajikistan demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period and was ranked Tier 2 in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, but many improvements in anti-trafficking remain to be seen. If confirmed, I will work with the Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons

to press the Government to increase efforts to combat trafficking, including by adopting and implementing standard operating procedures for identifying trafficking victims and referring them to care. I will also encourage the Government to train law enforcement to screen for signs of trafficking among vulnerable groups.

While some progress has been made, trafficking in Turkmenistan remains a serious concern. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Turkmenistan to implement its new National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking, as well as continue to press for further action to end government policies or actions that compel or create pressure for the mobilization of forced labor, to include eliminating the cotton and silk production quotas and mandatory participation in public works. I will work with regional partners, including international organizations, to encourage the Government of Turkmenistan to grant independent observers full access to monitor cotton cultivation and cease the harassment, detention, and abuse of individuals for documenting labor conditions.

Question. As Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have all recently made key improvements in fighting the trafficking of persons, what steps do you believe the U.S. can and should take to help those nations maintain that success and make further improvements?

Answer. Though the tier ranking upgrades in Central Asia are promising, human trafficking must be fought tirelessly and efforts must always increase. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the positive trajectory of efforts in the Central Asian region by increasing coordination among states on anti-trafficking efforts, including through the C5+1 platform and partnering with international and regional partners to increase government capacity to protect victims, prevent trafficking among vulnerable populations, and increase prosecution of traffickers across all states. However, many countries risk overemphasizing a multilateral approach out of a misconception that trafficking requires cross-border movement. In reality, all these countries could do more to prevent, detect, and address trafficking within their own borders. I will therefore work to ensure Central Asian countries do not pursue multilateral approaches to the exclusion of their own urgently needed policy reforms and improvements, particularly in regards to legislation, steps to eliminate state-sponsored forced labor, and the identification and protection of victims among vulnerable or marginalized groups and those subjected to forms of trafficking that do not involve cross-border movement.

Question. In Central Asia, media freedom is still severely limited due to both the active efforts of governments to silence dissent, and the lack of legal protections afforded to independent journalists. Abuse, imprisonment, torture, and killings of reporters are not uncommon. Free media is all but eliminated in some of these countries. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary, how will you address this problem in Central Asia and make clear that we will not allow the abuse and imprisonment of journalists anywhere in the world?

Answer. Central Asia must take tangible steps to enshrine fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and the press, into laws that enable an environment of political pluralism. If confirmed, we will encourage the region to allow space for peaceful dissent and non-violent speech, both online and offline—it is more important than ever that the press be allowed to continue to report freely on events as they develop. We will continue to support democratic principles, rule of law, and protection of human rights for all in Central Asia, as they are key elements to the development of any society, and will help unlock the full potential of the region.

Anti-Corruption / Rule of Law

Question. Several high-profile scandals have exposed the Western financial system's inability to prevent corruption. In the FY2021 NDAA, the U.S. Congress updated its anti-money laundering laws to shift the burden of disclosure from the banks to the corporations and beneficial owners. And the EU has been working on a rule-of-law mechanism to link EU funds to good governance, as well as cracking down on "golden visas." This corruption hurts both the citizens of the countries where the money was stolen and stored. Many of the high-profile cases have involved Central Asian rulers, their families, and oligarchs.

- What concrete actions will you take as Assistant Secretary for SCA to push countries to reform their systems and crack down on corruption?

Answer. As President Biden said last month in establishing the fight against corruption as a core national security interest, "corruption attacks the foundations of democratic institutions, drives and intensifies extremism, and makes it easier for authoritarian regimes to corrode democratic governance." The Department currently works to combat corruption through development and promotion of internationally

recognized standards, commitments, and obligations, such as those enshrined in the U.N. Convention against Corruption. Further, the Department uses diplomacy to promote reform, foreign assistance to strengthen institutions, and visa restrictions to promote accountability for corrupt actors. If confirmed, I will work to push countries to reform their systems and crack down on corruption, including through the use of the FY 2021 NDAA anti-money laundering provisions and other tools in U.S. law. Recognizing the fight against corruption cannot be won by governments alone, I will also take steps to strengthen the ability of civil society and media to reveal corruption, foster public demand for change, and address weak governance and poor human rights conditions that cultivate corruption.

Question. How important is it that the United States and its European allies take steps to make our own systems less friendly to kleptocracy and less penetrable by dirty money?

Answer. It is key that the United States leads by example with our partners and allies to make our own systems less friendly to kleptocracy and less penetrable by dirty money, to increase coordination, and share lessons learned in the fight against corruption globally. By undertaking measures to protect our financial system from dirty money, we protect our own institutions and make it harder for authoritarians and corrupt authorities to syphon away their countries' economic resources. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Treasury Department and other relevant interagency partners on this important effort.

Question. Will the administration make a concerted push on anti-corruption in the EU and its periphery with the dual purpose of benefitting European citizens and making it more difficult for malign actors like Russia and China to gain a foothold?

Answer. Yes. The administration has established countering corruption as a core U.S. national security interest. The Department will develop plans for increasing efforts to combat corruption by December 2021 under the National Security Study Memorandum process, and will continue to work closely with allies and partners to prevent and expose the PRC's and Russia's efforts to export corruption as a tool of influence, sow instability, and gain market access. We must also continue efforts to foster government transparency and, separately, protect the enabling environment for civil society and journalists as part of our efforts, given their crucial role in combatting corruption.

Question. Since the change of Government in Uzbekistan in 2016, there have been many positive changes, but they have come at a slow pace. International organizations have only slowly been allowed to register to work in the country. If confirmed, do you commit to working to help more international NGOs register in Uzbekistan?

Answer. The United States supports Uzbekistan's political and economic reforms. Civil society is a crucial component to any functioning democracy and is necessary to continue these reforms. If confirmed, I will continue our work with Uzbekistani partners to ensure local and international NGOs can easily register and operate freely to serve all persons of Uzbekistan, including those from vulnerable communities.

Question. The U.S. Peace Corps has not been able to operate in Uzbekistan since 2005. They have been working to try and restart operations in Uzbekistan, but the process has been very slow, both because of bureaucratic inertia in Uzbekistan and the problems posed by the Coronavirus pandemic. If confirmed, do you commit to working to facilitate the reentry of the U.S. Peace Corps into Uzbekistan?

Answer. I understand the Uzbekistani Government has invited the Peace Corps to return to Uzbekistan, and that the Peace Corps has begun a virtual assessment of conditions in Uzbekistan for possible re-entry. I understand that once pandemic conditions allow the Peace Corps to visit Uzbekistan, the Peace Corps will make a final determination of whether or not it can establish a program in Uzbekistan. If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Peace Corps in the re-entry process.

Question. What spheres do you consider as most ripe for future reform and positive changes in Uzbekistan? If confirmed, are there specific areas in which you will push Uzbek authorities to make progress? Please specify which.

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to lead U.S. support for Uzbekistan's political and economic reforms, including strengthening human rights and democracy, and improving healthcare, education, agriculture, and rule of law. I will also continue to work with the Government of Uzbekistan to support improvements to the business and investment climate, including privatization of state-owned enterprises, and to strengthen climate ambition. I also look forward to working with our Uzbekistani partners, including through the C5+1 diplomatic platform, to support

greater regional engagement, building on Uzbekistan's initiatives to improve relations within Central Asia and foster connectivity with Afghanistan.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD LU BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Central Asia

Question. The five “Stans” are all under increasing pressure from both China and Russia—neither of which is encouraging the development of market economies or rule-of-law. As co-chair of the Helsinki Commission, I have noted that these governments, and civil society groups from them, are active participants in OSCE proceedings, including the annual Human Dimension gathering in Warsaw. They seem very interested in staying connected to Europe and North America. Based on your time in Kyrgyzstan, what are your thoughts on whether OSCE could provide a bridge to the democratic West for these five countries?

Answer. The OSCE, particularly through its field operations in each Central Asian country, plays an invaluable role by increasing cooperation between Western and Central Asian countries on key issues—including countering terrorism, promoting democratization and human rights, water and energy management, border control, and migration. It also provides a forum to raise concerns about regional security and violations of OSCE commitments, including human rights, and has been a main platform for the United States to challenge Russia directly for its actions. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek provides master's level education for students from Central Asia and Afghanistan and is a model for the region. I fully support further OSCE engagement in Central Asia.

Question. How do we ensure that human rights are more prominent in our engagement with India? What is your response to myriad assessments that see India's democracy and human rights record trending negatively?

Answer. As the Secretary mentioned during his recent visit to India, every democracy, including our own, is a work in progress. The U.S.-India relationship is underpinned by a commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. If confirmed, I will regularly raise our human rights concerns with the Indian Government in the spirit of our close strategic partnership. I will also ensure that our support for civil society and media in India is robust.

Question. No one group has made more significant strides since 2001 than Afghan women. In terms of the economy, women have come a long way since the fall of the Taliban regime. They have returned to work by the hundreds of thousands, many becoming business owners and entrepreneurs. Afghanistan has rebuilt an education system that had basically stopped functioning. In 2001, only 900,000 students were in primary school—all of them male. Today, more than 9 million students are in school, and nearly 40 percent of them are girls.

- What do you think the implications of the military withdrawal will be for Afghan women and girls?

Answer. While it is difficult to overstate the significant gains made by Afghan women and girls over the last 20 years, I recognize how much remains to be done. Rising insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, decades of conflict, widespread poverty, humanitarian crises, and cultural barriers continue to threaten progress made in women and girls' rights in Afghanistan. Even though U.S. military troops are withdrawing, I understand the United States will continue to support the rights of Afghan women and girls through diplomacy and by maintaining significant humanitarian and development assistance.

Question. How can the administration hold the Taliban and Afghan Government to account in preserving the rights and gains of Afghan women without the support the U.S. military provided to Afghan forces and the check it served as on the Taliban?

Answer. If confirmed, I will closely monitor the status of women and girls in Afghanistan and will consult with Afghan and international partners and civil society on how best to promote accountability. While the future of Afghanistan is for Afghans themselves to decide, the United States has made clear that future development assistance and international legitimacy depend on the actions of the Afghan Government with respect to rights and fundamental freedoms, especially those of women, children, and members of minority groups.

Question. What can we do to preserve the rights and gains of Afghan women and girls?

Answer. I believe continued high-level diplomatic engagement and programmatic support by the United States and international community is required to help maintain and build upon the gains made by Afghan women and girls in the last 20 years. I am committed to using the full force of our diplomatic, economic, and development toolkit to support the Afghan people, particularly women and girls. U.S. and international development and humanitarian assistance has been instrumental in providing Afghan women and girls with access to the resources, expertise, and tools necessary for achieving the gains of the last two decades.

Question. Pakistan has been accused of numerous reported human rights abuses, some of them even perpetrated by the Government. Watchdog groups often rank Pakistan among the world's most dangerous countries for journalists and women. How do we hold the Pakistani Government accountable for human rights abuses?

Answer. In addition to documenting human rights abuses in Pakistan through the Human Rights Report and International Religious Freedom report, the Department regularly raises concerns about issues of human rights and individual freedoms during engagements with Pakistani officials, including at the senior-most levels. Such issues include media freedom, the rights of women and girls, sexual and gender-based violence, and protection of minority groups, among others. If confirmed, I will strongly and consistently urge Pakistan to uphold the rule of law and respect human rights and freedoms in accordance with its constitution and international obligations. I will also encourage the Pakistani Government to protect press and media freedoms for all and will emphasize in engagements with Pakistani counterparts that a vibrant press and informed citizenry are key for any free nation.

Question. How do we elevate the voices of targeted communities in Pakistan, including journalists and others critical of the Government?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Pakistan engage regularly to hear the concerns of civil society organizations, activists, religious leaders, journalists, and businesses, including those from underserved and at-risk communities. If confirmed, I will maintain our robust engagement with these constituencies to continue listening to their concerns and raising these issues with senior Pakistani officials. These communities are also often represented by civil society organizations that do important work to address these concerns and advocate for change with the Pakistani Government, but these organizations are often hampered by overly burdensome restrictions on their operations. If confirmed, I will continue to stress to the Pakistani Government the imperative of a vibrant civil society to any democracy, and the value of allowing civil society organizations to help deliver vital assistance to Pakistan's most vulnerable communities, including women, children, and members of religious minority groups.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON DONALD LU BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. In your opinion, how will the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan impact future security in Central Asia?

Answer. Our Central Asian partners are deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. Each of the Central Asian republics are taking steps to reinforce their border security. In general, they share our counterterrorism and security priorities in Afghanistan and are interested in enhancing cooperation. Per the President's instructions, we are working to maintain significant counterterrorism assets in the region. If confirmed, I will continue to engage partners, allies, and key stakeholders in Central Asia on how best to monitor and counter terrorist threats in the region.

Question. What effect might it [the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan] have on the longstanding U.S. policy goal of fostering intraregional connectivity within Central Asia?

Answer. Connectivity remains a key element of United States policy across Central and South Asia. My vision of regional connectivity includes stable and secure infrastructure that meets the highest international standards; open markets operating on a fair and competitive playing field; and a sustainable and healthy environment. It also includes Afghanistan's greater integration with its neighbors, and realizing its potential as a regional transit, trade, and energy hub. Regional connectivity

is critical to long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. Peace and regional integration are mutually reinforcing.

We will continue to foster cooperation to build Central Asian connectivity with Afghanistan through the C5+1 diplomatic platform, bilateral dialogues, trilateral discussions with Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbors, and a planned quadrilateral format including the United States, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to encourage the Central Asian states to work with the Afghan Government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue strategic efforts to encourage the Central Asian states to develop closer ties with the Afghan Government across energy, economic, cultural, trade, and security sectors, which directly contribute to regional stability. This effort would include utilizing the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform for the United States and the Central Asian states to expand security cooperation and increase connectivity between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Question. The main logic behind the U.S. Government's negotiations with the Taliban is that the promise of U.S. assistance to them is enough incentive to change its policies or behavior. Do you believe this, especially given recent reports of Taliban activity that suggest otherwise?

Answer. I remain concerned about the Taliban's recent military operations in Afghanistan. The group's public position remains to find a solution to the conflict through a negotiated political settlement. I understand the Taliban and Islamic Republic negotiating teams continue to meet and discuss the parameters of a settlement, and I hope both sides can accelerate those negotiations. The Taliban also have routinely expressed their desire for diplomatic and economic relations with the rest of the world, including the United States. I am committed to using our full diplomatic, economic, and development toolkit, as well as working alongside the international community and Afghanistan's neighbors, to support efforts to establish peace and promote the future that Afghans are seeking.

Question. What can you tell me of the Taliban's views on the participation of women in the political system and the role of religion in society? Have these views really moderated since 2001?

Answer. In public statements, Taliban leaders have emphasized their commitment to upholding and guaranteeing all the rights afforded to women under Islamic law, but they have not followed through on these statements with visible reforms regarding the social and political inclusion of women in the areas they control. In a joint declaration released after the July 2019 Intra-Afghan Peace Conference in Doha, the Taliban agreed to assure "women rights in political, social, economic, educational, cultural affairs within the Islamic framework of Islamic values." Taliban leaders have also said that women can hold political office, except as head of state or chief justice. However, women do not play an active role within the Taliban's shadow administration or structures, and Taliban officials sanction repressive behavior in Taliban controlled or influenced communities. If confirmed, I will promote women's full, meaningful, and equal inclusion in Afghan society.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to step up cooperation with India in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The United States and India share a comprehensive, global strategic partnership and a vision of a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will continue to expand cooperation with the Indian Government bilaterally, regionally, and multilaterally on the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, mutual prosperity, Quad engagement, climate change, defense and security issues, and shared values.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to promote India's role in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and more generally, to strengthen this important platform?

Answer. The Quad aims to build relationships with partners that share our values, perspectives, and approaches to regional and global challenges on a range of political, economic, and security issues. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the interagency to encourage Quad partners to expand cooperation on maritime security, counterterrorism, COVID-19 vaccine production, democratic principles, and climate change, among other priorities.

Question. If confirmed, what needs to happen to encourage India to take a more constructive approach to its neighbors that China is actively seeking to influence?

Answer. The United States welcomes India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, underpinned by our shared commitment to the rule of law, freedom of navigation, democratic values, and regional connectivity. If confirmed, I will encourage the Indian Government to continue its important contributions toward capacity building, economic development and connectivity, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and numerous other areas of cooperation with its neighbors.

Question. How will you support South Asian states who have territorial disputes with Beijing, such as India and Bhutan?

Answer. The United States strongly opposes unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian. Parties to territorial disputes must adhere to international law and resolve differences through dialogue. If confirmed, I will engage closely with the Indian Government to understand how the United States can best support India including through defense technologies, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic support. If confirmed, I will also work to further advance our friendship with Bhutan and reaffirm our support for its sovereignty.

Question. How do you plan to counter Chinese malign influence in smaller South Asian states, such as Sri Lanka and Nepal?

Answer. I am very concerned by the People's Republic of China's activities contrary to international norms of behavior, such as promoting disinformation or excessive debt in South Asia. If confirmed, I will seek to counter the PRC's application of economic pressure through assistance and help countries manage existing debt loads, evaluate contracts for transparency and equity, and combat corruption. Economic pressure through assistance has been a key tool of manipulation used by the PRC. We will also lead with our most powerful tool—our values—which most clearly demonstrate the value of democratic leadership in the region.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with New Delhi to coordinate and strengthen U.S. and Indian support of the Tibetans in exile in India?

Answer. I commend India's hosting of Tibetan refugees over many decades. India's continued support is crucial to ensuring that a large part of the Tibetan diaspora can freely practice their language, culture, and religion. If confirmed, I'll work with the Indian Government to ensure that Tibetans in exile in India, including the Dalai Lama, can continue to promote peace and understanding around the world without external influence.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD LU BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. The State Department's 2020 Country Report on Human Rights and Practices for India notes, among other significant human rights issues, the Government of India places "restrictions on freedom of expression and the press, including violence, threats of violence, or unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists, use of criminal libel laws to prosecute social media speech, censorship, and site blocking." If confirmed, what steps do you intend to take to promote freedom of speech and freedom of expression in India?

Answer. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian constitution and as fellow democracies, the United States and India have a shared interest to engage on these issues, as the Secretary did in his recent travel to New Delhi. If confirmed, I intend to follow the Secretary's principled leadership on the matter and work closely with U.S. Mission India and colleagues across the Department to continue our robust engagement with Indian journalists and media, to raise concerns with the Indian Government, and to consult faithfully with Congress.

Question. The State Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom expressed concern about the implications of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) when it was passed by the Indian parliament in 2019. Also citing the CAA and other significant downward trends in religious freedom conditions, the U.S. Commission on International Freedom (USCIRF) recommended in its 2020 Annual Report that the State Department designate India as a Country of Particular Concern in its next annual report on International Religious Freedom. What is the State Department's policy regarding the CAA?

Answer. Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law are fundamental principles of both the United States and India. While the Indian Government has not yet actively implemented the Citizenship Amendment Act, the Department continues to call on India to protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's constitution and history of diversity.

Question. How does the Department factor USCIRF recommendations into its own deliberations when determining whether a country is included as a Country of Particular Concern in the International Religious Freedom report?

Answer. USCIRF is an independent commission established under the 1998 International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act to provide policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress with respect to matters involving international religious freedom. The Secretary considers a wide variety of factors, including USCIRF findings as required by the IRF Act, when making the annual religious freedom designations.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to hold frank conversations with your counterparts in the Indian Government regarding its obligation to commit to freedom, democratic principles, equal treatment of all citizens, human rights, and the rule of law for all?

Answer. Yes.

Diplomatic Vision for Afghanistan After U.S. Troop Withdrawal

Question. U.S. policymakers and foreign policy experts had initially expected the withdrawal of U.S. military forces to be accompanied by a diplomatic surge. Yet the security situation in Afghanistan may preclude the possibility of such a surge.

- Given the security challenges in Afghanistan, what is your vision for U.S. diplomatic engagement and presence in Afghanistan after the U.S. troop withdrawal is complete?
- If the State Department is unable to lead a diplomatic surge, how can the United States best secure the gains that we have made in human rights, education and empowerment of girls, and other important issues in Afghanistan? In other words, how can the United States best help the Afghan people and promote U.S. interests in Afghanistan?

Answer. I understand all the agencies at our Embassy will continue their important work, as long as security conditions permit, consistent with the administration's commitment to stay fully engaged on behalf of U.S. interests in Afghanistan. This will include our consular support to U.S. citizens and fulfilling our commitment to Afghans who have worked alongside us through adjudication of Special Immigrant Visas. I will remain in frequent communication with our Embassy in Kabul and the interagency to continuously evaluate information pertaining to the security of U.S. citizens and U.S. Government personnel, facilities, and interests in Afghanistan in order to mitigate any emerging threats. I will also consult with stakeholders on creative approaches, such as off-shoring, that can advance U.S. interests while keeping our mission safe.

I am committed to using our full diplomatic, economic, and development toolkit to support efforts to establish peace and promote the future that Afghans are seeking. If confirmed, I will do everything I can to sustain and further advance the gains achieved by Afghan society, particularly those made by Afghan women, girls, and minorities over the last 20 years. I am committed to using our diplomatic and assistance resources to continue to advocate for women's rights, support their meaningful participation in peace negotiations, work to create quality educational opportunities, assist women to join the workforce, combat gender-based violence, and expand access to quality healthcare.

Question. In your testimony, you noted that for the past 20 years, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been defined by the war in Afghanistan and related U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region. With U.S. troops leaving Afghanistan, there is an opportunity to redefine the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Issues such as climate change, strategic competition with China, economic development, and others may be on the table.

Despite many shared interests and priorities, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been beset by years of distrust and unaligned policies. What will it take for the United States and Pakistan to move beyond the persistent challenges in our bilateral relationship to cooperate on our shared priorities?

Answer. The Department continues to make clear it seeks further assistance from Pakistan for progress toward a political settlement in Afghanistan and collaboration on regional stability efforts, including against terrorist groups. Such actions would

contribute importantly to an expanded U.S.-Pakistan relationship. If confirmed, I will push for more bilateral cooperation based on shared priorities, including securing a responsible end to the conflict in Afghanistan, advancing regional security and fighting terrorism, expanding both bilateral and regional commercial and trade opportunities, promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development, and ad

Chinese Territorial Aggression in Bhutan

Question. China reportedly claims as many as eight areas inside Bhutan as being Chinese territory. In 2015, China announced that it had built an entirely new village called Gyalaphug inside a 232-square-mile area claimed by China since the early 1980s, but internationally understood as part of Lhuntse district in northern Bhutan.

China's efforts to fortify the Tibetan borderlands, expand its maritime control in the South China Sea, and conduct other provocative measures are nothing new. Yet building a new village inside the territory of another country is different. According to at least one report, China does not need the land it is settling in Bhutan. Its aim, rather, is to force the Bhutanese Government to cede territory that China wants elsewhere in Bhutan to give Beijing a military advantage in its struggle with New Delhi.

- What is the Department's policy on Chinese efforts to expand its borders by building towns and villages in disputed territories?
- If confirmed, what efforts will you lead to protect Bhutan's sovereignty and prevent it from becoming a pawn in China's attempts to gain an advantage over India?

Answer. The Department is very concerned with the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s construction of towns and villages in disputed territories. Parties to territorial disputes must adhere to international law and resolve differences through dialogue. If confirmed, I will work to advance our friendship with Bhutan, reaffirm our commitment to its sovereignty, and coordinate with our partners, including India, to address the PRC's buildup in the Tibetan borderlands and to support a free and open region capable of resolving differences through dialogue. I also pledge to work closely with Congress to address this concerning trend.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD LU BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. What are the limits of cooperation that we can expect to see from India given their history of non-alignment?

Answer. Over the last two decades, the United States and India have made tremendous strides across all aspects of our strategic partnership. Our cooperation encompasses a wide range of issues, including regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific; the Quad; trade and investment; defense and security; climate change remediation; clean energy; higher education and people-to-people; shared values, and science and space. India has a unique foreign policy outlook given its history, but given our growing strategic convergence the Indo-Pacific, I am confident U.S.-India ties will continue to mature and deepen.

Question. China is aggressively pushing on India's border and is now claiming areas in which they have never had a historic assertion. Do you believe China is trying to find an "off-ramp" for this issue or is it looking to escalate the dispute with India?

Answer. The United States is concerned by Beijing's pattern of ongoing attempts to intimidate its neighbors, including India. We're closely following updates of any troop disengagement, and we welcome ongoing efforts to de-escalate the situation. We continue to monitor closely as both sides work toward a peaceful resolution. We urge direct dialogue and a peaceful resolution to border disputes.

Question. What message is China trying to send with its actions? Do you believe it is pushing this issue specifically to discredit India with regional allies?

Answer. The United States is deeply concerned by a pattern of territorial encroachment and failure to abide by the previous status quo along China's disputed terrestrial and maritime borders. We will stand with friends, partners, and allies in the face of the PRC's most assertive policies and for the good of the region.

Question. Do you believe these escalations will push India into a more robust and long-term security agreement with the U.S.?

Answer. India will seek partnerships based on its interests, but our shared vision for the Indo-Pacific portends greater regional and bilateral cooperation.

Question. India is the biggest donor to the Afghan National Government and 5th globally. What are India's interests in Afghanistan? Or is this more just another front in the long running competition with their neighbor Pakistan?

Answer. The United States and India have a shared interest in a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. India does not wish to see Afghanistan turn into a terrorist safe haven that undermines its security. We welcome India's support for the peace process and its long-running development assistance program.

Question. What does India stand to lose if security situation in Afghanistan worsens?

Answer. India has expressed concern about potential terrorist attacks against Indian interests in Afghanistan, as well as the impact on regional stability should the security situation deteriorate further. In the immediate term, India is also concerned about the threat to India's personnel and nationals working in Afghanistan.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Cuba

Question. As part of USAID's work in defense of human rights, it is my understanding that USAID carries out programming focused on addressing the forced labor practices of Cuba's foreign medical missions.

- What is your assessment of these medical missions and, if confirmed, will you continue USAID's current programs?

Answer. I believe that Cuba's foreign medical missions, as noted in the Department of State's 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, represent a form of labor trafficking. As noted by the TIP report, the Cuban Government "failed to inform participants of the terms of their contracts, confiscated their documents and salaries, and threatened medical professionals and their family members if participants left the program."

I understand that USAID has programs in place currently to support the human rights of Cuban workers, including medical personnel.

Support for democracy and human rights is at the core of this administration's Cuba policy. We must be vocal in our support for the journalists, human rights defenders, and democracy activists seeking to challenge the repressiveness of Cuban authorities, who maintain a tight grip on all aspects of life on the island and are ruthless in seeking to stifle dissent. If confirmed, I will continue to promote all types of programming to support human rights and fundamental freedoms for the Cuban population and look forward to consulting with you on this issue.

COVID-19 and Economic Recovery

Question. COVID-19 has had a particularly devastating impact on Latin America and the Caribbean, claiming at least 1.2 million lives. Today, only one in ten individuals in the region is fully vaccinated.

- If confirmed, what strategies will you implement to increase access to and distribution of vaccines in the region?

Answer. To date, I understand that the United States Government has delivered over 33 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that USAID is also preparing countries to safely and effectively distribute COVID-19 vaccines. To date, I understand USAID has provided more than \$75 million globally, including \$13.5 million for the Latin America and Caribbean region, to assist countries to develop their national COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans, address misinformation and vaccine hesitancy to improve trust and confidence, strengthen supply chain and logistics to distribute vaccines with speed, equity, and safety, train health professionals to administer vaccines, and manage health information systems for better data tracking. If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Agency's efforts to increase access to vaccines in the region.

Question. How would you balance addressing the multiple consequences of COVID-19 on public health, economies, social development, and women and children in the region?

Answer. It is my understanding that USAID continues to monitor and address the evolving and varied second-order impacts of the pandemic on the region, and will leverage existing and new programs to address the most critical challenges. COVID-19 has hurt economies throughout the region, disproportionately impacting the poor and vulnerable. COVID-19 has also contributed to a humanitarian crisis in the region, increased gender-based violence, and lack of access to income-generating opportunities. The response today also needs to address the millions of children not receiving routine vaccinations and the millions displaced from school. To date, I understand that USAID has responded to such impacts with programming to support microcredit and job training for small businesses and entrepreneurs; the expansion of social protection, psycho-social and educational support in vulnerable communities; job opportunities for likely migrants; and the adoption of e-commerce strategies and tools to respond to COVID-19 economic restrictions. If confirmed, I will prioritize addressing the second-order impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Central America

Question. Successive U.S. strategies have failed to make any discernable progress in achieving or advancing the goal of reducing mass illegal migration from Central America. If confirmed, what actions would you recommend taking to build and maintain political will among the political leadership in the countries of Northern Central America to tackle the push factors of illegal migration? What specific reforms should individual governments adopt to effectively reduce illegal migration from the region?

Answer. If confirmed, my priorities in Central America will include expeditiously strengthening programs that seek to improve conditions in the region and tackle the major drivers of migration. While the specific drivers of irregular migration cannot be generalized across countries or even communities, they are generally tied to insecurity, lack of economic opportunity, and the effects of poor governance and corruption, and I will work with other U.S. Government agencies to build the political will of partner nations to address these drivers. COVID-19 has exacerbated these conditions, as have major natural disasters (including hurricanes) recently hitting the region.

If confirmed, I will continue USAID's current approach of tailoring and adapting programs to the unique needs of each country and community. I will also continue the Agency's practice of using migration data to focus resources geographically in response to specific, local drivers of migration. USAID will work with a wide range of stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to increase the impact of our efforts. I will also commit to working closely with our partners in the region. I understand that USAID works closely with multiple stakeholders in the region both in the public and private sectors as well as with civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations. And I look forward to further consultations with Congress on how to further improve the effectiveness of these programs.

Nicaragua

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to prioritize programs and activities designed to improve the capacity of the democratic forces in Nicaragua to be a credible political challenge to the Ortega regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring USAID supports viable, democratic processes, institutions and forces in Nicaragua. USAID is focused on the November 2021 national elections in Nicaragua and on restoring democratic processes and respect for human rights through expanding opportunities for coalition building and supporting electoral integrity and an active civil society.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to channel any humanitarian assistance that USAID may provide in Nicaragua solely through independent non-governmental organizations?

Answer. Yes, I commit to channeling any USAID-provided humanitarian assistance solely through independent NGOs and Public International Organizations (PIOs). U.S. humanitarian assistance is provided through impartial international

and local organizations and U.N. agencies, who are on the ground working with vulnerable populations, for the sole purpose of helping people in need.

Cuba

Question. The Government of Cuba maintains an estimated 50,000 medical personnel in more than 60 countries under conditions that meet the definition of human trafficking. The United States, the United Nations, independent media outlets, and non-governmental organizations have all documented and called out the Cuban regime's exploitative and coercive practices toward doctors participating in its overseas medical programs. Do you agree that the Cuban regime's overseas medical missions amount to human trafficking? If confirmed, do you commit to ensure USAID Missions in U.S. Embassies in countries that accept Cuban medical missions help communicate the realities of the forced labor practices employed by the Cuban regime?

Answer. I believe that Cuba's foreign medical missions, as noted in the Department of State's 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, represent a form of labor trafficking. As noted by the TIP report, the Cuban Government "failed to inform participants of the terms of their contracts, confiscated their documents and salaries, and threatened medical professionals and their family members if participants left the program."

I understand that USAID has programs in place currently to support the human rights of Cuban workers, including medical personnel.

Support for democracy and human rights is at the core of this administration's Cuba policy. We must be vocal in our support for the journalists, human rights defenders, and democracy activists seeking to challenge the repressiveness of Cuban authorities. If confirmed, I will continue to promote programming to support human rights and fundamental freedoms for the Cuban population and look forward to consulting with you on this issue.

Question. Do you commit to maintain a robust USAID democracy program focused on advancing respect for basic human rights in Cuba?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue USAID's work to support democratic activists and human rights defenders in Cuba. The role of a vibrant civil society continues to be essential to Cuban democracy. I gather that USAID has a portfolio in place to continue supporting a diverse sector of independent activists in Cuba who will push for democratic freedoms, including religious freedom. The Agency will also continue providing basic needs assistance to political prisoners, persecuted activists, and their families. NGOs are poised to continue defending the human rights of those who are abused and even jailed for their political beliefs.

Haiti

Question. Haiti is facing a complex and worsening crisis of governance. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring USAID plays an effective role in promoting economic self-reliance and meaningful dialogue among the different political forces? If confirmed, do you commit to dedicate resources to strengthening Haiti's technical capacity to hold elections?

Answer. The Haitian people deserve democracy and prosperity. Haiti has been without a functioning government for too long, and in the meantime, conditions continue to deteriorate. The political parties need to come together to end the misery, corruption and insecurity wreaking havoc for the Haitian people. While Haiti is facing a complex emergency that USAID assistance alone cannot resolve, USAID does have an important role to play in helping to promote democracy, human rights, and governance. With respect to the upcoming legislative elections, I understand that USAID's current activities aim to promote credible elections, increase political party competition, and expand civic participation in electoral processes to help end the ongoing political crisis of rule by decree. If confirmed, I will advocate for a strong whole-of-government and multi-donor approach for targeted democracy, human rights, governance and humanitarian assistance to promote democratic political reform, peace and stability.

Venezuela

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring USAID-supported humanitarian efforts in Venezuela do not bring reputational benefits to the Maduro regime and individuals or entities aligned with the regime? Do you commit to ensuring USAID does not provide direct or indirect support to a COVID vaccination campaign in Venezuela that uses vaccines developed by the Cuban regime?

Answer. I understand that USAID has no plans at this time to provide direct or indirect support to a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Venezuela, where current vaccination efforts are non-transparent and discriminatory. Venezuela is a self-financing participant in COVAX, which means that it does not receive donor-supported vaccines or other assistance. USAID would only provide COVID-19 vaccination support if Venezuela established a credible, impartial, and transparent national vaccination plan, implemented in partnership with, or under the auspices of, international partners. In addition, it is my understanding that USAID has not provided, and has no plans to provide, direct or indirect support to a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in which any Cuban vaccine is used. Cuba has not published its trial data for its vaccines, nor has the vaccine received an emergency use listing or authorization from the World Health Organization.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Addressing Corruption

Question. President Biden has taken an important step toward enhancing the ability of the United States Government to combat corruption and criminal actors worldwide with the release of the National Security Study Memorandum on fighting corruption. Defining the fight against corruption as a “core U.S. national security interest” sets a standard for how our government, our partners, and others can work together to combat such illicit, corrosive activity. I’ve reintroduced the Combating Global Corruption Act which is now in front of the full Senate and has been introduced in the House. The bill obliges the Executive to identify corruption in countries and rank them in a public, tiered system with respect to levels of corruption in their governments; establishes minimum standards for combating corruption; and evaluates foreign persons engaged in grand corruption for consideration under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

- Will you commit to working with me to advance the Combating Global Corruption Act and to raising the profile of efforts to fight international corruption as a U.S. national security priority, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean?

Answer. I agree that fighting corruption is a U.S. national security priority and I look forward to discussing the Combating Global Corruption bill with you, if confirmed. I agree that anti-corruption efforts must be a focus of our efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean. The President has articulated a comprehensive \$4 billion, four-year plan to confront corruption, enhance security, and foster prosperity to address the root causes of migration from Central America. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to most effectively implement President Biden’s plan in Central America, and to working with interagency colleagues to utilize all possible tools to increase pressure on those not doing enough to confront corruption and impunity across the region. I also will seek to deepen current investments in democracy, human rights, and governance, including by supporting civil society organizations and promoting independent media and protection for journalists critical to combating corruption in the region.

Question. Where do you see the biggest opportunities to make real strides in eliminating corruption in the Americas over the next two or three years?

Answer. I understand that the USAID institutes robust anti-corruption programming by helping host countries to strengthen controls and transparency in their procurement systems and enhance their capacity to prosecute and adjudicate cases through the courts system. Corruption is corrosive for many reasons, and in particular because it undermines citizen’s belief that government can deliver for them. Corruption also contributes to weak democratic institutions and widespread impunity in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. As a result, crime and violence flourish, which is linked to people’s intentions to migrate. If confirmed, among my priorities for USAID’s Latin America and Caribbean Bureau will include helping institutions deliver basic services with transparency and efficiency, and supporting civil society organizations and independent journalists carrying out oversight of government institutions. I also would seek to work with interagency colleagues to ensure that all possible tools are used to combat corruption in the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
 SUBMITTED TO HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. As Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at USAID, you will oversee 17 regional missions, 900+ people and over \$1 billion of development funds focused on promoting inclusive growth, human rights, democracy and governance, and citizen security. Your biography mentions that during your last tenure at USAID, you focused on the administration's priorities, including: "reinforced U.S. support for Peace Colombia, established a long-term development plan for Haiti, and prepared a proactive strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela." It says also that in response to Congress' doubling of funding to Central America, you led changes in strategy, organization and execution to combat root causes of poverty and migration in the region.

- Can you provide the committee with the major concrete steps of your strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support Interim President Juan Guaidó, the democratically elected National Assembly, and the people of Venezuela to determine their own future through free and fair elections. I commit to working with non-governmental organizations and civil society groups to advance democracy and a pathway to democratic elections in Venezuela. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with you about how we might strengthen those efforts, given the devastating costs of Maduro's repression, and that of USAID's continued work to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Venezuelans in Venezuela as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees across the region.

Question. What is your understanding of the status of current USAID programs in Haiti?

Answer. I understand that USAID is committed to working with the Haitian people in their efforts to build a healthy, prosperous, and peaceful Haiti. Given recent developments, it is a critical time to learn from the past and smartly engage foreign assistance resources in Haiti. If confirmed, I commit to supporting COVID relief, humanitarian assistance, and resilience building in Haiti. While humanitarian assistance will help alleviate some urgent humanitarian needs, it will not and cannot address the root causes of the current economic and political situation in Haiti, which will only be sustainably addressed by engaging Haitian actors with the political will to take-on much needed Haitian-driven reforms.

Question. Earlier this year, I re-introduced my bipartisan legislation, the Central American Women and Children Protection Act. This bill authorizes appropriations to provide assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras through bilateral compacts to increase protection of women and children in their homes and communities and reduce female homicides, domestic violence, and sexual assault.

- In your opinion, is this legislation something that USAID should support?

Answer. Thank you for your commitment to protecting women and children in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, a goal that I wholeheartedly share. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this legislation and will ensure that USAID continues to support gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and women at risk of GBV in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and welcome continued support for programming in this area. I understand that in the Northern Triangle, USAID supports civil society and independent watchdog institutions to deter human rights abuses, respond to human rights violations, and support vulnerable populations. This includes forcibly displaced persons, women, children, and youth affected by violence and insecurity.

Question. In a recent letter to President Biden, I asked that the United States to be prepared to provide COVID-19 vaccines, and other humanitarian assistance, to the people of Cuba, but only if it is delivered to, and distributed by, trustworthy and independent international organizations. We must not allow the regime to take possession of such relief and use it as a weapon to force the people of Cuba into compliance with their demands.

- Are you being briefed on any discussions with regard to providing humanitarian assistance to Cuba?
- What do you see as the priorities in this space?

Answer. While I am not privy to any internal U.S. Government discussions, I have been following recent developments and the U.S. Government's announcements to facilitate the shipment of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. I understand that USAID has been providing assistance, including food, medicine, and hygiene products to victims of repression, including political prisoners, their family members,

and other individuals who are persecuted because of their political or religious beliefs. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize support for these populations, which remain under even greater threat following the July 11 protests. Accordingly, I will do my utmost to ensure that assistance is delivered to, and distributed by, trustworthy and independent organizations.

FOLLOW-UP TO SENATOR RUBIO'S INITIAL QUESTIONS

Question. In your response to my question for the record (“Can you provide the committee with the major concrete steps of your strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela?”) you responded with a description of the steps you would take to address the crisis, if confirmed. While we appreciate your wholehearted support for Interim President Guaidó and the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people, the intent of my question was to receive a summary of the concrete steps you helped to develop to confront the crisis during the Obama administration.

- Please provide a description of your strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela during your last tenure at USAID, including the outcomes of those actions.

Answer. In 2016, in my capacity as Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), I worked with the Bureau and USAID and its partners to assess the worsening humanitarian conditions in the country to understand who the crisis was affecting most severely and in which parts of the country. Our ongoing analysis led to the inclusion of Venezuela in a watchlist at Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau, the Bureau that was then in charge of humanitarian response, stabilization, and democracy.

The political opposition controlled the National Assembly, but the regime was blocking them from performing their democratic functions. As a result of the ongoing situation on the ground, USAID/LAC programming focused on monitoring and reporting on human rights, electoral conditions, and living conditions in the country. USAID also worked to support independent media, and I supported providing robust assistance to the National Assembly.

Under my direction, USAID/LAC assessed what possible outcomes could evolve on the ground, and what response would be adequate. This included continuing USAID programming to defend and promote democratic rights, initiating delivery of socioeconomic relief and commodities, particularly medical supplies, through local independent partners, and expanding humanitarian assistance through local independent partners to avoid politicization by the Maduro regime. We also anticipated programming that would be needed should a political transition to democracy transpire. This assessment process continued in an iterative manner through the end of the administration.

Question. If confirmed, how will your actions to address the current political and humanitarian crises in Venezuela differ from this strategy you prepared during the Obama administration?

Answer. In 2016, the opportunity to work with an interim government was not yet a possibility—this is a difference. If confirmed, I will support Interim President Juan Guaidó, the democratically elected National Assembly, and the people of Venezuela to determine their own future through free and fair elections. I commit to working with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations to advance democracy and a pathway to democratic elections in Venezuela. This is my priority.

USAID’s engagement on health and food security also has the potential to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis and contribute to conditions for a democratic transition. With increasing access inside Venezuela by USAID’s implementing partners, I would pursue creative solutions that bring respite to the Venezuelan people outside of the Maduro regime’s control and I commit to engaging with you and your staff, if confirmed.

Question. Can you clarify your role in developing this strategy? Did you personally author this strategy?

Answer. Given the ongoing humanitarian and political situation in Venezuela, as previously stated, USAID/LAC engaged in assessing possible outcomes under my direction while Assistant Administrator for the Bureau. We analyzed the economic decline and its ramifications, summarized FEWS NET food security assessments, the worsening of the medical and security situation, and ways to circumvent the regime’s politicization of essential goods should the situation on the ground shift. This iterative process was managed, in response to my direction and under my guidance,

by the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean's Office of South American Affairs.

Question. In your response to my question for the record ("In your opinion, is this legislation something that USAID should support?"), you responded, "Thank you for your commitment to protecting women and children in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, a goal that I wholeheartedly share. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this legislation and will ensure that USAID continues to support gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and women at risk of GBV in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and welcome continued support for programming in this area. I understand that in the Northern Triangle, USAID supports civil society and independent watchdog institutions to deter human rights abuses, respond to human rights violations, and support vulnerable populations. This includes forcibly displaced persons, women, children, and youth affected by violence and insecurity."

- The intent of this legislation is to authorize the United States to enter into Women and Children Compacts with the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, modelled off of those the United States has entered into with Ghana, The Philippines, Peru and Jamaica. Do you believe that these compacts will contribute to USAID's efforts to address support women and children at risk of GBV?

Answer. When conditions on the ground are right, I believe compacts with partner governments on important issues like countering GBV can be extremely important. I understand that the Child Protection Compact Partnerships the U.S. has developed jointly with governments, for instance with Jamaica and Peru, have aimed to build on existing efforts to prosecute and punish perpetrators of child trafficking, identify child trafficking victims, coordinate and strengthen protective services, and prevent child trafficking. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee on this legislation, and with the State Department to establish such agreements, in appropriate countries.

To help create the conditions for such compacts, I will ensure that USAID continues to prioritize efforts to counter GBV. The "U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America" and the "Collaborative Migration Management Strategy," released on July 29, provide further details to guide USAID's strategic efforts for the region, including protection efforts for at-risk groups and addressing gender-based violence. Pillar V of the Root Causes Strategy focuses on "combating sexual, gender-based, and domestic violence," with objectives including: governments and civil society take steps to prevent sexual, gender-based, and domestic violence; hold perpetrators accountable; and protect and provide services for victims. I commit to working with your office to ensure that our mutual priority of protecting vulnerable populations, most specifically women and girls in Central America, is embedded in future programming.

Question. In your response to my question for the record on your awareness of the administration's discussions regarding humanitarian assistance to Cuba, you responded, "While I am not privy to any internal U.S. Government discussions, I have been following recent developments and the U.S. Government's announcements to facilitate the shipment of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. I understand that USAID has been providing assistance, including food, medicine, and hygiene products to victims of repression, including political prisoners, their family members, and other individuals who are persecuted because of their political or religious beliefs. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize support for these populations, which remain under even greater threat following the July 11 protests. Accordingly, I will do my utmost to ensure that assistance is delivered to, and distributed by, trustworthy and independent organizations."

- If confirmed, please provide what steps and actions will you take to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered to, and distributed by, trustworthy independent organizations inside Cuba?

Answer. If confirmed, I will verify that existing basic needs assistance benefiting political prisoners, dissidents, and their families, is implemented by U.S.-based or internationally recognized independent NGOs. If confirmed, I will ensure that my team requires that each of these organizations provide USAID with their delivery and distribution protocols, and that they be verified and monitored frequently to ensure assistance does not benefit members of the regime.

Question. Please be specific on how will you ensure that this humanitarian assistance does not benefit members of the Castro/Diaz-Canel Regime?

Answer. As USAID designs new solicitations for additional basic needs assistance instruments, I will ensure that all necessary safeguards are in place for such work

to be carried out only by independent organizations and to prevent the regime from benefiting from them in any way.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to provide regular briefings to my office, and other interested Senate offices, on USAID's provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Cuba?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to regular briefings with your office and other interested Senate offices on USAID's provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Cuba.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

China, COVID-19, and Economic Development

Question. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the region, and countries are struggling with record levels of debt and an anemic economic recovery. Latin America faced the sharpest economic contraction in 2020 of any region in the entire world. Unfortunately, many of these countries were struggling even before the pandemic due to weak rule of law, low investment, and poor governance.

Relatedly, I am worried by China's rising influence in the region. In 2019, Chinese companies invested \$12.8 billion in Latin America, up 16.5 percent from 2018, concentrating investments on regional infrastructure such as ports, roads, dams and railways.

I'll note that China's investments are not just making a difference in infrastructure but in the past four years, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Panama have each switched their recognition from Taiwan to China. Clearly, China is using this investment to achieve their geopolitical goals as well.

- If confirmed, how would you work through USAID to counter what China is doing in the region to ensure that the United States remains the partner of choice for our neighbors?

Answer. I understand that the administration's approach to countering PRC's influence is to provide tangible support that promotes sustainable opportunities for economic growth coupled with democratic governance, transparency, and local ownership of development work. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S International Development Finance Corporation to provide countries with choices and opportunities, rather than debt traps, digital surveillance, and development projects that are often opaque, extractive and coercive. It is important to me to work with allies and partners in the region to better leverage resources and exert influence. I will be a visible advocate for cooperative economic development and trade, human rights, democratic governance, and environmental, social, and labor standards, if confirmed.
