

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022—a.m.

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tim Kaine presiding.

Present: Senators Kaine [presiding], Menendez, Booker, Rubio, Portman, and Hagerty.

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

Senator KAINE. Good morning to all. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We are here to consider important ambassadorial nominees: William Duncan to be Ambassador to El Salvador; Hugo Rodriguez to be Ambassador to Nicaragua; Candace Bond to be Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago; Heide Fulton to be Ambassador to Uruguay; and Robert Faucher—did I get that right, Robert?

Mr. FAUCHER. That is correct.

Senator KAINE. Robert Faucher to be Ambassador to Suriname.

I want to congratulate all of you on your nominations and provide thanks to you and your—for your willingness to serve and thanks especially to members of your family because you cannot do one of these posts without them sacrificing.

I will, first, introduce the nominees. Then I will offer opening remarks and turn to Ranking Member Rubio for opening remarks, and then we will then have opening statements from each of the nominees before proceeding to questions.

William Duncan is senior inspector in the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of State, previously served as consul general in Monterrey and before that as DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

Foreign Service Officer since 1992. Happy 20th anniversary. He also served in Asuncion, Madrid, Baghdad, Mexico City, Bogota, San Salvador, and Matamoros. A native of Louisiana, Mr. Duncan has a bachelor's degree and a juris doctorate from the University of Arkansas and is fluent in Spanish.

Hugo Rodriguez, Jr., is a senior advisor in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at State. He most recently served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheres, focused on Central America and Mexico. Previously, Mr. Rodriguez served as

the DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion, Paraguay, and as consul general at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

Other overseas assignments include Lima, Peru, Rome, Italy. He is a native of Pennsylvania but, to my liking he holds an MBA from the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree from Hampden-Sydney College. He is fluent in Italian and Spanish.

Candace Bond currently serves as the president and CEO of AESA, Inc., a Los Angeles-based real estate and community development business advisory services company. She is also a board member of California Head Start, the chair elect of the board of the Greater L.A. Education Foundation, and chair of the MLK Health and Wellness Community Development Corporation.

She served on the board of the L.A. County Office of Education, the nation's largest regional educational agency. Ms. Bond also serves on the California State Treasurer's Housing, Economic Development, Jobs, and Opportunity Zone Committee. She graduated with both a bachelor's degree and an MBA from Harvard.

Heide Fulton is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

She previously served as the director of the Office of Mexican Affairs, led the U.S. Embassy in Honduras as DCM and Chargé d'Affaires. She served overseas in Kabul, Quito, Phnom Penh, and Manila and is a former Pearson Fellow, which is a prestigious fellowship of members of the State Department and Senate offices where she had the fortune to serve in the office of Senator Menendez.

Ms. Fulton was also an active duty Army officer as a quartermaster with the U.S. Army in Virginia, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Italy. She retired from the U.S. Army Reserve in June of 2020 after 28 years of service. She was born in Buffalo, a graduate of Boston College and Troy State University, and is fluent in Spanish.

Finally, Robert Faucher most recently served as the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. Prior, he was director of the Office of Western European Affairs in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, and has held positions in the offices of U.N. Political Affairs and U.N. Specialized and Technical Agencies in the Bureau of International Organizational Affairs.

Faucher has served as the DCM at U.S. embassies in Belgium, Ireland, Suriname, and Luxembourg. He grew up in Arizona, holds degrees from Arizona State University, Edinburg University, and the National War College, and he is fluent in Dutch and French.

Very, very talented panel. So my remarks, I want to congratulate all of you on the nominations. Representing the U.S. and the American people in any capacity is an honor.

To represent with the title of ambassador is a true, true distinction and I am sure, based on each of your impressive professional backgrounds, you will serve with real distinction in these roles.

I am pleased to chair the nomination hearing for these five important posts throughout the Western Hemisphere—El Salvador, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Suriname.

I always talk about the importance of this region to the United States. Not only do we share deep and important cultural, historical, and economic ties, but we also have interests in addressing the shared challenges together with countries throughout the region. Having our best team in the field is absolutely critical to advancing those interests as well as our values in the Western Hemisphere.

Our relations with Salvador are fragile. We have watched with growing concern as El Salvador's government has taken an increasingly authoritarian turn after a somewhat promising beginning with a government that was not connected with sort of past challenges in El Salvador.

Having an ambassador in place to advance values and interests in El Salvador and continue our support for the Salvadoran people will be critical.

In Nicaragua, the Ortega regime sham elections last year, including the imprisoning of many, many presidential candidates and their intensifying attacks against opposition figures or other critics including religious leaders—the order connected with Mother Teresa just got kicked out of Nicaragua by President Ortega—these are significant concerns.

We need to continue pressing for the restoration of democratic rights in Nicaragua and work with regional and international partners to support the Nicaraguan people in finding a way forward.

So, Mr. Rodriguez, you will have your work cut out for you and we look forward to hearing about your approach in Managua, should you be confirmed.

In the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago share a commitment to democracy. They have remained a steadfast partner of the United States in the Caribbean. We have strong cultural ties, a vibrant diaspora community in the United States, and this August, Trinidad and Tobago will be celebrating 60 years of independence.

Having a confirmed ambassador will send an important signal reaffirming our partnership with Trinidad and Tobago and, in particular, I will ask questions in this regard with respect to the ability of Trinidad and Tobago to be a force for energy security in a world where there is significant energy insecurity.

Uruguay is considered one of the strongest democracies in the world and that fact deserves a lot more recognition in Washington and elsewhere. Uruguay seeks greater cooperation with the U.S.

My view is that we should support that cooperation and I look forward to hearing from Ms. Fulton about how we can strengthen ties with this very important partner.

Finally, Suriname's 2020 election of President Santokhi offers the potential to a new chapter in U.S. relations with Suriname following President Bouterse's decades-long rule which included his and his son's separate convictions as drug traffickers and his own conviction for the 1982 December murders in Suriname.

Suriname, like Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, also offer prospects for advancing energy security in the world and I would like to direct questions to Mr. Faucher about how we can work on that.

So we look forward to hearing from each of you today. I look forward to working with you.

And now I am proud to introduce the ranking member, Senator Rubio, who has been such a strong champion for U.S. relations in the Americas. I am very, very glad we have a chance to work together.

Senator Rubio?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator RUBIO. Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling this hearing, and you have been a great partner to work with on this and I appreciate and look forward to working with you on this.

Again, I want to congratulate each of you for your willingness to serve. Thank you for your willingness to serve and congratulate you on your appointments and your nominations.

And I guess I do not really have an opening statement. I do have sort of a mini rant to open, and it is not about any of you individually. It has more to do with our region.

When I hear people talk about we need to care more about the Western Hemisphere, it is reminiscent of, like they say, you also need to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. It is a good thing for you, it is good for your health, and you should really do it. But most of us never get around to it. Well, speaking for myself anyway.

So the point being is this is not just a nice thing to do. It is critical to our national security and our national economic interests. Geography matters. It matters for a lot of different reasons and—but it matters because proximity matters.

Because we see it firsthand. There is economic—look at the migrant crisis that we face on the border today. Those are all people coming from places where life is not good, and at the cornerstone of why life is not good in those countries—the violence, the economic deprivations, whatever it may be—is poor governance and bad decisions made over a sustained period of time.

That alone is a national interest. But then not to mention we do have near peer adversaries. We did not 25 years ago. The United States lived in a unipolar world where we were the only show in town.

Now there are at least one unprecedented near peer adversary. The Chinese Communist Party is a challenge to the United States, unlike—greater even though what the Soviet Union was because they are a commercial rival, a technological rival, a geopolitical rival, a diplomatic rival, and a commercial one.

And in addition to all of that, they are also a military threat to the country as they continue to develop and have an interest in the region. They want to extract minerals and have mineral rights, certainly.

But they also want leverage. They want control over countries so that they will vote with them in international fora and, ultimately, so they could potentially position themselves either on a rotational basis or permanently all over the world militarily and the like.

In essence, they would love nothing more than to encircle the United States and to have—put themselves in a position in each of the countries, for example, that all of you have been nominated to serve in but, more broadly, in the region.

They want to be in a position one day to, no matter who gets elected in those countries, do whatever they want because that country owes them too much money and they own too many things in that country to break away from it.

And so that is the fundamental challenge that all of you are walking into, and in the context of that is how I think we need to guide our foreign policy and so I hope we will have a chance to talk about that today.

If you go through some of the countries highlighted here in today's hearing, in Uruguay we have a president who has been trying to work with the United States on things like reducing barriers to trade.

But, unfortunately, because we do not have a strategic approach to that relationship—this is not a partisan attack. I think you can say that of virtually any administration in the last 30 years.

Because we do not have a well thought out and executed a strategic approach to the region you have someone who, basically, feels like his only options for development are to cut a deal with the Chinese Communist Party—do a deal with the devil in that regard.

In Suriname, you have a president who is struggling to manage more than a billion dollars in Chinese debt that he—that his predecessor took on, and we have this administration that has the single-minded focus on climate change and, therefore, does not seem interested in helping them develop markets and/or their capabilities because it happens to be oil and gas.

And in El Salvador we have a very interesting situation. On the one hand, we have seen some of the—obviously, there has been economic chaos, some of the internal political things.

I am not a big fan of everything that has been done there. But I am—I also think it is a relationship that it is important for us to manage appropriately, and, you know, our charge, I believe, has left post and sort of announced some strategic pause in efforts to reach out to them.

So as we talk about going there, Mr. Duncan, you are—it is a very, very challenging situation and one that I would love to hear your thoughts as to what the road forward is because I am hoping that we can still have a relationship in El Salvador that is pragmatic.

We do not have to clap or celebrate all the stuff people do that we do not necessarily think is good. But I also think we have a national interest concern there that needs to be balanced.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the prime minister, unfortunately, continues to be a supporter of the Maduro regime and it is signing agreements to join the Belt and Road Initiative of the Communist Party.

Nicaragua is a horrific disaster. I think it is the second poorest country in the hemisphere. But more importantly and just as important is the—I mean, this is a country where the president arrested every one of his political opponents. If you ran for president you went to jail.

I mean, that is—I mean, not even Putin, everybody. He at least has an official opposition. Here, this is—it is pretty stunning the direction that has taken, and even more troubling is they have now

rolled out the red carpet. It is an open invitation for both Chinese and Russian military stationing in the region.

I think the Russians have their hands full right now but you could see a presence there. But the Chinese may one day take them up on it and that would be—I mean, if we wake up in a world where the Chinese have a military basing arrangement in our own hemisphere it would be a very troubling turn in regional affairs and one that, I think, is a threat that we cannot overlook.

So all of these places we are facing some real challenges and I am hopeful that we will be able to talk about those today.

Again, I am grateful for your willingness to serve. But we have got big problems on our hands in this region and we better start taking it seriously or we are going to wake up in less than a decade living in a very different world than the one we live in now and the one we grew up in.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator.

So there is an embarrassment of riches. I have already done introductions, but for Ms. Bond you have got a second introducer that is even better and that is Senator Booker.

After he does an introduction of you we will go, beginning with Mr. Duncan and move from my right to left, and each of you will do your opening statements, if you could.

Senator Booker?

**STATEMENT OF HON. CORY A. BOOKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

Senator BOOKER. Mr. President, I cannot tell you how great—
Senator KAINE [continuing]. Mr. President? I really love that.
[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. You will always be my president, sir.

Senator KAINE. Because I was Lieutenant Governor of Virginia and president of the Senate. That has been a title that has been applied to me in that August.

Senator RUBIO. But you were referred to as Your Excellency in that role.

Senator KAINE. No. As Governor I was your Excellency. As Lieutenant Governor I was Mr. President.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Grand—

Senator KAINE [continuing]. Virginia does things differently.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Grand Poobah.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. I cannot tell you how thrilled I am that I get this privilege to introduce somebody that I have known for some years now, and I wonder, Mr. President, if you know what an Alaskan sled dog, a worker bee in the spring, and an Olympic athlete all have in common. They are all jealous of Ms. Bond's work ethic.

She is an extraordinary person and, in fact, if James Brown was the hardest person—working person in show business, she is one of the hardest working people I have ever met in public service.

She brings a long and distinguished record of leadership to this position. She is chair of the Malibu Foundation, board member of the Women's Founders Network and a member of the Southern California Edison Clean Energy Access Working Group.

She also serves on the California State Treasurer's Housing, Economic Development, Jobs, and Opportunity Zones Ad Hoc Committee. Earlier in her career, she was president—a title that has eluded us, all of us here—and CEO of Infusion Media Partners and serves as both VP and general manager of Essence Entertainment, which is—has biblical importance to the Black community.

Her wide-ranging business background, her commitment to effecting meaningful, substantive, thorough social change is just awesome. She has experience addressing a host of critical issues for the larger American community from health, housing, education, workforce development, and is, for all of those reasons, an extraordinarily well qualified person to be Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago.

If there is any criticism I have, and I should lay that plain on the table, is that her education is one of two safety schools. She has her BA from Harvard and her MBA from Harvard Business School.

But despite that blemish, she is a recipient of numerous awards of leadership from her peers, awards of leadership and service, including the Women Leaders of Los Angeles 2021 award selected by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Women of Distinction award by the Special Network of Needs, just to name a few.

Presently, she serves as a board member of California Head Start, a program and organization very dear to me. She is chair elect of the board of the Greater LA Education Foundation and chair of the MLK Health and Wellness Community Development Foundation.

Ms. Bond also served on the board of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the nation's largest regional education agency.

Look, I am confident that her distinguished record of leadership, of service, of love of country and patriotism demonstrated by action will make her a great Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

And then, finally, I will say all my Trinidadian friends have told me throughout the years that the best carnival all throughout the Caribbean is in Trinidad.

Well, I do not know what kind of celebration they will have in the future but I know that when this incredible person is confirmed as Ambassador, we, in the Senate, should have a carnival to celebrate that good and wise choice.

Thank you.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Ms. Bond, he set a pretty high bar. You better be good.

[Laughter.]

Senator Kaine. But now what we will do is we will begin with Mr. Duncan. Your full statements are in the record. We would ask you to keep your verbal statement to less than five minutes. We are glad to hear from all of you and we will just move right to left—from my right to left across the dais.

Mr. Duncan, welcome.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. DUNCAN OF TEXAS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I deeply appreciate the privilege and responsibility it is to be considered for confirmation as Ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate and the work of ensuring that our nation has a foreign policy that reflects our values.

Please allow me to recognize my wife, Nora, who is with me today, and our daughters, Clare, Irma Nora, and Laura, and our grandson, Ace.

Let me also thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity and for their confidence in me.

My 30-year Foreign Service career has taken me to many countries, including El Salvador, also Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay, among others, as well as many domestic assignments working on Western Hemisphere affairs.

It has also given me the opportunity to work in service of U.S. policy supporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The relationship between El Salvador and the United States has been very close for the last four decades, through a terrible civil war, a complex peace process, and into today's challenges such as fighting transnational organized crime and promoting prosperity.

The United States has stood with El Salvador, and over those years many Salvadorans have become our fellow citizens. Two and a half million Salvadorans now live here. They make an enormous contribution to our national story through their extraordinary creativity and work ethic, and to El Salvador through billions of dollars in remittances returned each year.

I started my Foreign Service career at a consulate on the U.S.-Mexico border. I learned there that there is no higher duty for us than the protection of American citizens. If confirmed, that would be my number-one priority.

We face a serious challenge from irregular migration from northern Central America, some of it from El Salvador. During many years in Mexico, I had the opportunity to learn what it means to make that trek.

One thing is clear to me. It is a dangerous journey undertaken by desperate people. I know from living there that Salvadorans are proud. If they could make a better, safer, and more stable life in El Salvador, I believe most would choose to stay.

If confirmed, I would do everything in my power to see that the assistance provided by Congress to address the root causes of irregular migration is spent effectively, and while we are not the only country offering assistance, we are notable for supporting and promoting the long-term well-being of our partners as opposed to seeking our own short-term advantage.

El Salvador has no better friend than the United States of America. I recognize there are concerns about the strength and direction

of El Salvador's democracy, and while I will always act with respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the government of El Salvador, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for democracy, human rights, and combating corruption and impunity.

These are not only moral imperatives, they are the best guarantee for the long-term stability and prosperity of any country. No country in the Western Hemisphere can alone successfully confront transnational organized crime. We must work together.

Strengthening the rule of law in El Salvador is essential if we are going to discourage irregular migration. Without the rule of law, El Salvador will never have the economic growth it needs nor will it be able to prevent human rights abuses and attacks on civil liberties, reduce gender-based violence, or defeat the threat from criminal gangs, all drivers of irregular migration.

Promoting the interest of U.S. businesses in El Salvador would also be a priority if I am confirmed. It is important to prosperity here at home, but I am also convinced U.S. businesses at their best set an example of transparency and fair dealing that will be emulated.

I have had the honor to serve in challenging leadership positions such as deputy chief of mission in Mexico City. In that tour of duty and others, I was fortunate to work with the representatives of many U.S. government agencies.

If confirmed, I would dedicate myself to the success of each U.S. agency's mission in El Salvador.

I have also had the honor to work with fellow Americans and foreign national employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. We are a diverse nation and should have an overseas presence that proudly respects that diversity.

I look forward to this opportunity to advance America's interest in El Salvador, if confirmed, and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have today and in the future.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Duncan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. DUNCAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I appreciate the privilege and responsibility to be considered for confirmation as ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate in the work of ensuring that our nation has a foreign policy that reflects our values.

Please allow me to recognize my wife Nora and our daughters Clare, Irma Nora, and Laura and our grandson Ace. Let me also thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity and their confidence in me.

My 30-year Foreign Service career has taken me to many countries, including El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, and Paraguay, among others, and myriad domestic assignments. It has also given me the opportunity to work in service of U.S. policies supporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The relationship between the United States and El Salvador has been very close for the last four decades. Through a terrible civil war, a complex peace process, and into today's challenges such as fighting transnational organized crime and promoting prosperity, the United States has stood with El Salvador. And over those years, many Salvadorans have become our fellow citizens. Two and a half million Salvadorans now live here. They make an enormous contribution to our national story through their extraordinary creativity and work ethic and to El Salvador through billions of dollars in remittances returned each year.

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And while we are not the only country offering assistance, we are notable for supporting and promoting the long-term well-being of our partners, as opposed to seeking our own short-term advantage. El Salvador has no better friend than the United States of America.

I know there are concerns about the strength and direction of El Salvador's democracy. While I will always act with respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the Government of El Salvador, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for democracy, human rights, and combating corruption and impunity. These are not only moral imperatives; they are the best guarantee for the long-term stability and prosperity of any country.

No country in the Western Hemisphere can alone successfully confront transnational organized crime. We must work together. Strengthening the rule of law in El Salvador is essential if we are going to discourage irregular migration. Without the rule of law, El Salvador will never have the economic growth it needs, nor will it be able to prevent human rights abuses and attacks on civil liberties, reduce gender-based violence, or defeat the threat from criminal gangs, all drivers of irregular migration.

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I have had the honor to serve in challenging leadership positions such as Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico City. In that tour of duty and others, I was fortunate to work with the representatives of many U.S. government agencies. If confirmed, I would dedicate myself to the success of each U.S. agency's mission in El Salvador. I have also had the honor to work with fellow Americans and foreign national employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. We are a diverse nation and should have an overseas presence that proudly displays that diversity.

I look forward to this opportunity to advance America's interests in El Salvador if confirmed, and I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.
Mr. Rodriguez?

**STATEMENT OF HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR., OF PENNSYLVANIA,
A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE,
CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AM-
BASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
NICARAGUA**

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Good morning.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence in me and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Nicaragua.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to thank my parents, Gail and Hugo Rodriguez, Sr., my five brothers and sisters,

my teachers and professors, and my State Department colleagues. I have learned from them all the value of hard work, especially in service to others, and the importance of listening deeply before speaking.

I want to thank my daughters, Alison and Annalia, for making our peripatetic life richer and more meaningful, hardly ever complaining about our many moves and long working hours.

And most of all, I want to thank my wife and fellow Foreign Service Officer, Karen Rodriguez. This career has been a team effort and I owe anything I have achieved to Karen's enthusiastic support, her wise counsel, and her enduring willingness to shoulder more than her share of the home burden in addition to her day job. She inspires me every day.

In 1958, my father left the Dominican Republic, fleeing a dictatorship that allowed average Dominicans no space for freedom and no hope of achieving their dreams.

Unfortunately, Nicaraguans now face a similar situation since last November's election when Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo deprived Nicaraguans of any real choice and Nicaraguans' hopes for democracy and prosperity were dashed.

More than 180 political prisoners, including political opposition figures, human rights defenders, student leaders, journalists, religious groups, and civil society representatives remain behind bars, deprived of their human rights.

The Nicaraguan government also closed civic space at an alarming rate, shuttering more than 700 associations, universities, foundations, and other nonprofits in 2022 alone.

As a result of the escalating climate of repression, fear, and hopelessness, along with the Ortega-Murillo government's failure to address people's basic needs, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans are now refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants throughout the region.

The United States has spoken out against these abuses and, if confirmed, I will continue to do so, not because we have any intention of meddling in Nicaragua's internal affairs but because it is our commitment under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which both the United States and Nicaragua signed in 2001.

As President Biden has stated, the Inter-American Democratic Charter obligates the hemisphere to stand up for the democratic rights of the Nicaraguan people.

If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress, interagency colleagues, and international partners to press for a return to democracy, respect for human rights, and the immediate release of all political prisoners in Nicaragua.

While we fundamentally disagree with the actions of the Ortega-Murillo government, the relationship between our two countries goes much deeper than political leadership.

More than 400,000 people of Nicaraguan descent live in the United States. Around 6,000 Americans visit Nicaragua each year and another 20,000 reside there.

The United States has long supported economic development throughout Central America and a prosperous, stable, and democratic Central America is, clearly, in our interest.

That is why, if confirmed, I will engage with voices across Nicaraguan society to share our vision of inclusive economic growth, as stated by the President at the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.

We will look to support civil society groups that provide essential services in the areas of health care, education, and poverty relief, including organizations the Nicaraguan government has targeted.

We will do what we can to offer the Nicaraguan people a better future in their own country. We know that addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement throughout Central America and including Nicaragua involves ensuring respect for human rights, generating economic opportunity, and improving citizen security. These improvements require governments to uphold the rule of law and combat corruption.

If confirmed, I will advocate for a change of course so that the Nicaraguan people may work to recover their democracy, provide for their families, and regain hope for their future.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and committee members, I thank you again for your consideration of my nomination and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rodriguez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua.

I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their trust and confidence in me, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to advance the interests of the United States in Nicaragua.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my parents, Gail and Hugo Rodriguez Sr., my five brothers and sisters, my teachers and professors, and my State Department colleagues. I have learned from them all the value of hard work, especially in service to others, and the importance of listening deeply, before speaking. I want to thank my daughters, Alison and Annalia, for making our peripatetic life richer and more meaningful, hardly ever complaining about our many moves and long working hours. And most of all, I want to thank my wife, and fellow Foreign Service officer, Karen Rodriguez. This career has been a team effort, and I owe anything I have achieved to Karen's enthusiastic support, her wise counsel, and her enduring willingness to shoulder more than her share of the home burden in addition to her day job. She inspires me every day.

In 1952, my father left the Dominican Republic, fleeing a dictatorship that allowed average Dominicans no space for freedom and no hope of achieving their dreams. Unfortunately, Nicaraguans now face a similar situation since last November's election, when Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo deprived Nicaraguans of any real choice, and Nicaraguans' hopes for democracy and prosperity were dashed. More than 180 political prisoners on unfounded charges, including political opposition figures, human rights defenders, student leaders, journalists, and civil society representatives, remain deprived of their human rights. The Nicaraguan Government also closed civic space at an alarming rate, shuttering more than 700 associations, universities, foundations, and other nonprofits in 2022 alone, and more than 800 since 2018. As a result of the escalating climate of repression, fear, and hopelessness, along with the Ortega-Murillo Government's failure to address people's basic needs, hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans are now refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants throughout the region.

The United States has spoken out against these abuses, and, if confirmed, I will continue to do so, not because we have any intention to determine Nicaragua's internal affairs, but because it is our commitment under the Inter-American Charter, which both the United States and Nicaragua signed in 2001. As President Biden has stated, "the Inter-American Democratic Charter obligates the hemisphere to stand up for the democratic rights of the Nicaraguan people." If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress, interagency colleagues, and international partners to press

for a return to democracy, respect for human rights, and the freedom of political prisoners in Nicaragua.

While we fundamentally disagree with the actions of the Ortega-Murillo Government, the relationship between our two countries goes much deeper than the political leadership. More than 400 thousand people of Nicaraguan descent live in the United States, around 6,000 Americans visit Nicaragua each year, and another 20,000 reside there. The United States has long supported economic development throughout Central America, and prosperous, stable, and democratic Central America is clearly in our interest. That is why, if confirmed, I will engage with voices across Nicaraguan society to share our vision of inclusive economic growth, as stated by the President at the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. We will look to support civil society groups that provide essential services in the areas of healthcare, education, and poverty relief, including organizations the Nicaraguan Government has targeted. We will do what we can to offer the Nicaraguan people a better future in their own country. We know that addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement—throughout Central America and including Nicaragua—involves ensuring respect for human rights, generating economic opportunity, and improving citizen security. These improvements require governments to uphold the rule of law, respect human rights, and combat corruption. If confirmed, I will advocate for a change of course so that the Nicaraguan people may work to recover their democracy, provide for their families, and regain hope for their future.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, committee members, I thank you again for your consideration of my nomination, and I welcome your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Ms. Bond?

STATEMENT OF CANDACE A. BOND OF MISSOURI, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Ms. BOND. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my honor to appear as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have my husband, Steve McKeever, our daughter, Maddox, and my brother, Les Bond, Jr., here today. They have been constantly supportive through this process. I am also thankful for the love and support of my son, mother, and many family members who are watching this hearing.

Our family represents a proud line of Black educators, professionals, and community leaders. Descended from slaves, our family has made meaningful contributions to the fabric of our nation. Ours is a very American story.

My mother, Anita Bond, was the first Black female graduate from St. Louis University. She graduated magna cum laude and she recently received her honorary doctorate. She also served as president of the St. Louis School Board and on President Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Commission.

My late father, Dr. Les Bond, was a prominent physician, surgeon, and community leader and was appointed to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners.

Other prominent members of our family, including Julian Bond, former NAACP chairman, were passionate about improving the quality of life for their communities. Theirs are the shoulders on which I proudly stand. I have sought to apply my abilities to devise solutions that lift people up, strengthen communities, and inspire sustainable change.

After completing my graduate education, I held senior executive positions at leading cultural, media, and entertainment companies. At AESA, Inc., I advised public and private entities in areas of social impact, community and business development.

I played a key role in advancing transformational infrastructure and commercial projects that served my community. I also worked to improve our public education system for over 2 million families as an official for the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

As chair of the MLK Community Development Corporation, I am working to improve health equity and access to care for underserved populations.

Additionally, I have fought to ensure that no community is left out of our clean energy future, representing small businesses and environmental groups on California's utility consumer advisory panel.

The values instilled in me by my family and my experiences as a business and community leader have equipped me to advance the common interests of the United States in Trinidad and Tobago as Ambassador.

As a specialist in building strong public-private partnerships, I understand the value of good governance and promoting equitable economic prosperity and ensuring that democracies can meet the needs of and deliver for their people.

If confirmed as an ambassador, I will work to promote accountability and transparency and combat corruption, which not only helps improve overall climate for foreign direct investment and trade but also enables inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all citizens.

As the U.S. looks to partner with countries to reduce climate impacts and bolster energy security, Trinidad and Tobago is well positioned to help speed the development of clean energy infrastructure and climate adaptation projects in the region.

While natural gas remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, it is looking ahead towards diversifying its energy resources. Through support for improved access to financing and technical assistance, the U.S. can help spur Trinidad and Tobago's transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Of course, my greatest responsibility, if confirmed, will be ensuring the safety and security of the 13,000 American citizens living in Trinidad and Tobago, and the thousands more who visit each year for business and tourism.

Keeping Americans safe also requires the diligent implementation of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative-funded citizen security programs that work to prevent gang violence, reduce violent crime, and strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system.

Trinidad and Tobago is a regional leader on security and a partner in the fight against transnational organized crime. I look forward to working with the government of Trinidad and Tobago and international partners to help better support vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

I hope to work together with this committee to address pressing diplomatic matters in Trinidad and Tobago and the broader region.

I am humbled by the honorable mission President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken have asked me to take on as Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, and if confirmed, I pledge to dedicate my skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago to advance U.S. interests in the world and to promote American democratic values.

I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have and I look forward to working with you, if confirmed.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bond follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CANDACE A. BOND

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my honor to appear as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have my husband, Steve McKeever, our daughter, Maddox and my brother, Les Bond Jr. here today. They have been constantly supportive through this process, and I am thankful for the love and support of my son, mother, and many family members who are watching this hearing.

Our family represents a proud line of Black educators, professionals, and community leaders. Descended from slaves, our family has made meaningful contributions to the fabric of our nation. Ours is a very American story.

My mother Anita Bond was the first Black female student to graduate magna cum laude from Saint Louis University where she recently received her honorary doctorate. She also served as president of the St. Louis School Board and on President Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Commission. My late father Dr. Les Bond was a prominent physician, surgeon, and community leader and was appointed to the St. Louis Board of Police Commissioners. Other prominent members of our family, including Julian Bond, former NAACP Chairman, were passionate about improving the quality of life for their communities. Theirs are the shoulders on which I proudly stand. I have sought to apply my abilities to devise solutions that lift people up, strengthen communities, and inspire sustainable change.

After completing my graduate education, I held senior executive positions at leading cultural media and entertainment companies. At AESA, Inc. I advised public and private entities in the areas of social impact, community, and business development. I played a key role in advancing transformational infrastructure and commercial projects that served my community. I also worked to improve our public education system for over two million families as an official for the Los Angeles County Office of Education. As chair of the MLK Community Development Corporation, I am working to improve health equity, access to care for underserved populations. Additionally, I have fought to ensure that no community is left out of our clean energy future, representing small businesses and environmental groups on California's utility consumer advisory panel. The values instilled in me by my family and my experiences as a business and community leader have equipped me to advance the common interests of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago as ambassador.

As a specialist in building strong public-private partnerships, I understand the value of good governance in promoting equitable economic prosperity and ensuring that democracies can meet the needs of and deliver for their people. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work to promote accountability and transparency, and combat corruption, which not only helps improve the overall climate for foreign direct investment and trade but also enables inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all citizens.

As the United States looks to partner with countries to reduce climate impacts and bolster energy security, Trinidad and Tobago is well-positioned to help speed the development of clean energy infrastructure and climate adaptation projects in the region. While natural gas remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, it is looking ahead toward diversifying its energy resources. Through support for improved access to financing and technical assistance, the United States can help spur Trinidad and Tobago's transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

Of course, my greatest responsibility if confirmed will be ensuring the safety and security of the 13,000 American citizens living in Trinidad and Tobago and the thousands more who visit each year for business and tourism. Keeping Americans safe also requires the diligent implementation of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative-funded citizen safety programs that work to prevent gang violence, reduce violent crime, and strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system.

Trinidad and Tobago is a regional leader on security and a partner in the fight against transnational organized crime. I look forward to working with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and international partners to help better support vulnerable populations, including victims of human trafficking as well as Venezuelan migrants and refugees. I hope to work together with this committee to address pressing diplomatic matters in Trinidad and Tobago and the broader region.

I am humbled by the honorable mission President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken have asked me to take on as Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I pledge to dedicate my skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago, to advance U.S. interests in the world, and to promote American democratic values. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Senator KAINE. Thanks so much.

Ms. Fulton?

STATEMENT OF HEIDE B. FULTON OF WEST VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY

Ms. FULTON. Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I am humbled by the trust and confidence that President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by putting my name forward for consideration at this pivotal moment in our bilateral relationship and, if confirmed, look forward to working with you and your teams to enhance the opportunities presented before us.

I am grateful for the support of my family, including my husband, James Fulton, a Foreign Service specialist and retired Army Special Forces Officer, and our two children, Anam-Cara and Cormac Fulton.

I would also like to thank my parents, Bob and Gretchen Bronke, who have instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication, and integrity, which they have modeled throughout their lives. I regret that travel and work commitments have prevented any of them from joining me but I am very happy to have the support of a long-time friend and Senate staffer, Barbara Prior, with me today.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement where I oversee Western Hemisphere programs and our aviation portfolio.

In this capacity, I oversee more than \$2 billion of programming in 28 countries. I have hands-on experience combating corruption, strengthening the civilian law enforcement capacity of our partners, shaping our rule of law programs throughout the hemisphere, and fighting to stem the flow of synthetic drugs and other narcotics that have killed more than 100,000 Americans over this past year.

I helped to shape the Bicentennial Framework with Mexico, which reset and rejuvenated our security cooperation with this key partner.

I led the U.S. mission in Honduras during a tumultuous period of contested 2017 national elections where I protected U.S. interests and preserved our strategic objectives.

I have drawn on my formation of 28 years as an Army officer and 25 years as a public diplomacy practitioner to forge strong relationships based on open communication and mutual understanding. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and this committee and others in Congress to use these skills to enhance our robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay and to advance the interests and security of the American people.

This will include significant focus in three areas: enhancing economic ties between our nations, working with Uruguay as a democratic leader in the hemisphere, and strengthening the position of the United States as one of Uruguay's key diplomatic partners.

Uruguay is a valued partner in the Western Hemisphere. With its large middle class, strong history of democratic values, and dedicated engagement in multilateral organizations, Uruguay is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in Latin America.

Uruguay has spoken out strongly against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and democratic backsliding in the region, in addition to welcoming more than 20,000 refugees fleeing the dictatorship in Venezuela.

Uruguay has historically played a key role in global peacekeeping efforts as one of the world's top troop contributing nations per capita.

Uruguay is recognized as a global leader in its use of renewable energy sources, and we are expanding our joint efforts towards more sustainable agriculture.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen economic ties and develop new business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies.

As Uruguay prepares to implement its 5G networks, I will also, if confirmed, encourage Uruguay to embrace the principles of competition and technology neutrality while prioritizing security, resilience, and innovation.

In closing, I look forward to working closely with you and your teams and other relevant stakeholders to advance our national security interests, to maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, and to support continued cooperation on defending democratic institutions in the region.

I think that we have tremendous opportunities with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a country with an outsized influence in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here before you and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fulton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HEIDE B. FULTON

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador of the United States to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

I'm humbled by the trust and confidence President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have shown by sending my name to the Senate for consideration at this pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship. I'm also grateful for the support of my family, including my husband James Fulton, a Foreign Service Specialist and retired Army Special Forces officer, and two children, Anam-Cara and Cormac Fulton. I also want to thank my parents, Bob and Gretchen Bronke, who instilled in me the values of hard work, dedication, and integrity, which they have modeled in all aspects of their lives.

Throughout my career at the State Department, I have led complex organizations and negotiated large-scale initiatives. This includes my present position serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement's Offices of Western Hemisphere Programs and Aviation. In this capacity, I oversee more than \$2 billion in programs in 28 countries in the Western Hemisphere. I have hands-on experience combatting corruption, strengthening the civilian law enforcement capacity of our partners, shaping our rule of law programs throughout the hemisphere, and fighting to stem the flow of synthetic drugs and other narcotics that killed over 100,000 Americans last year. I shaped the Bicentennial Framework with Mexico, which has reset and rejuvenated our security cooperation with this key partner. I led the U.S. Mission in Honduras during the tumultuous period of the contested 2017 elections, where I protected U.S. interests and preserved our strategic objectives. I have drawn on my formation as an Army officer and public diplomacy practitioner to forge strong partnerships based on open communication and mutual understanding. These have been hallmarks of my career.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and others in Congress as I use these skills to continue to enhance our robust bilateral relationship with Uruguay and advance the interests and security of the American people. This will include significant focus on three areas: expanding economic ties between our two nations, working with Uruguay as a democratic leader in the hemisphere, and strengthening the position of the United States as one of Uruguay's key diplomatic partners.

Uruguay is a valued partner in the Western Hemisphere. With its large middle class, strong history of democratic values, and dedicated engagement in multilateral organizations, Uruguay is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in Latin America. Uruguay has spoken out strongly against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and democratic backsliding in the region and welcomed more than 20,000 refugees fleeing the dictatorship in Venezuela. Uruguay has historically played a key role in global peacekeeping efforts, as one of the world's top troop-contributing countries per capita. With U.S. support, Uruguay's peacekeepers help protect civilians, support political processes, and achieve lasting peace. Uruguay is also recognized as a global leader in its use of renewable energy sources, and we are expanding our joint efforts toward more sustainable agriculture. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently to strengthen cooperation with the government of Uruguay and international organizations to combat transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. The United States buys over 70 percent of Uruguay's services exports, estimated at a value of \$1 billion. The IT and software sector is booming, creating increased opportunity for U.S. investment, which is mutually beneficial. If confirmed, I will seek to deepen economic ties and develop new business opportunities in Uruguay on behalf of U.S. companies. As Uruguay prepares to implement its 5G networks, I will also, if confirmed, encourage Uruguay to embrace the principles of competition and technology neutrality, while prioritizing security, resilience, and innovation.

In closing, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and other relevant stakeholders to advance our national interests, maintain a strong relationship with Uruguay, and support continued cooperation on defending democratic institutions in the region with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, a country with an outsized influence in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is an honor to be here, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator Kaine. Thank you so much.
And, finally, Mr. Faucher?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT J. FAUCHER OF ARIZONA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

Mr. FAUCHER. Thank you. Good morning.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname.

I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me and I look forward, if I am confirmed, to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Suriname and the Caribbean region.

Before I start, I would like to introduce today my wife, Noraly, who is here with me today. Noraly has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom throughout our years together and I owe much to her.

I would also like to express my profound thanks to my daughters, Stephanie and Melissa, who cannot be here but are watching from Rotterdam. I would like to recognize them for their repeated personal sacrifices as they, too, have proudly served our nation as representatives abroad.

Suriname is a peaceful young democracy that is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse countries in the world. Although not well known in the United States, Suriname's roots are intertwined with our nation's founding through English colonization in the early 17th century.

With the 1667 Peace of Breda, the Netherlands traded its New York colonies, including Manhattan, for the English colony of Suriname. This was later followed by the establishment of Maroon communities in Suriname's interior alongside indigenous Amerindian communities.

In addition, enslaved Africans were freed in 1863 and contract laborers were recruited from China, India, and Java. As a result, Suriname enjoys a rich ethnic mosaic. It is a nation where Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religions live peacefully and productively together.

Since independence in 1975, Suriname has strengthened its democratic institutions and traditions. Reinforcing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Suriname.

If confirmed, I will vigorously continue these efforts and will support civil society and independent media and human rights defenders, who play a critical role in these efforts.

Suriname was once one of the more isolated countries in the Western Hemisphere. It increasingly serves as a crucial nexus among South America, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world. Suriname is a key U.S. partner in the region and the well-being of the United States is connected to Suriname through ties of commerce and geography.

Decades of diplomatic relations between our two countries have developed strong economic and security partnerships. If confirmed, I commit to deepen our mutually beneficial economic, security, and democracy partnerships.

Suriname also has tremendous development potential and, if confirmed, I will work with the Surinamese government to develop opportunities for economic growth and increased trade and assist its economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the biggest exporter to Suriname and its third largest importer, the United States provides critical high value materials for Suriname's economy.

Our partnership looks likely to expand as major offshore oil reserves have been discovered, explored, and secured by American companies. The massive new oil wealth will transform Suriname and, if confirmed, I will deepen our economic and commercial relationship to advance both Surinamese and American prosperity and equitable economic growth, mindful of the threat of corruption.

Suriname is also emerging as a global leader on the climate crisis response. More than 93 percent of the land surface in Suriname is covered by protected native forests. It is one of the few carbon negative countries in the world.

Yet, problems persist. The gold fields of Suriname have drawn U.S. companies and the U.S. government is supporting efforts to curb illicit mining and deforestation and the use of mercury, all of which gravely damage Suriname's environment.

If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with Suriname to support its efforts to expand its positive environmental record.

Suriname seeks greater military and law enforcement cooperation with the United States. It is a key member of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and partners with us in combating narcotics and human trafficking, and if confirmed, I will work to bolster Suriname's security capabilities, fight corruption, and strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation.

Finally, our embassy in Paramaribo has an exceptional team that works hard to advance bilateral relations, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and work with the government of Suriname to accomplish our foreign policy goals. Ensuring it is safe, secure, and well-resourced will be a top priority for me if I am confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Faucher follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT J. FAUCHER

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Suriname and the Caribbean region.

I would like to introduce to you my wife, Noraly, who is here today. Noraly has been a source of inspiration, strength, and wisdom through our years together. I would also like to express my profound thanks to our daughters Stephanie and Melissa, who cannot be here but are watching from Rotterdam. I would like to recognize their repeated personal sacrifices as they too have proudly served our nation as representatives abroad.

Suriname is a peaceful, young democracy that is among the most ethnically and religiously diverse in the world. Suriname's roots are intertwined with our nation's founding through English colonization in the early 17th century. With the 1667 Peace of Breda, the Netherlands traded its New York colonies including Manhattan for the English colony of Suriname. This was followed by the establishment of maroon societies in Suriname's interior alongside the indigenous Amerindians. In addition, enslaved Africans were freed in 1863, and contract laborers were recruited from China, India, and Java. As a result, Suriname enjoys a rich ethnic mosaic. It is a nation where Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religions live peacefully and productively together.

Since independence in 1975, Suriname has strengthened its democratic institutions and traditions. Reinforcing democracy and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to U.S. relations with Suriname. If confirmed, I will vigorously continue our efforts to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and will support civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders who play a critical role in this effort.

Suriname serves as a crucial nexus among South America, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic world. Suriname is a key U.S. partner in the region, and the United States is connected to Suriname through ties of commerce and geography. Decades of diplomatic relations between our two nations have developed strong economic and security partnerships. Suriname currently holds the chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a regional body vitally important to regional development and security. Suriname has tremendous development potential, and if confirmed, I will work with Suriname's Government to develop opportunities for economic growth and increased trade and assist its economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. As the biggest exporter to Suriname and its third-largest importer, the United States provides critical, high-value materials for Suriname's economy. Our partnership looks likely to expand as Suriname's economy continues to grow in the coming decades. If confirmed, I will deepen our economic and commercial relationship to advance both Surinamese and American prosperity and equitable economic growth, mindful of the threat of corruption.

Suriname is emerging as a global leader on the climate crisis response. More than 93% of its land surface is covered by protected native forests. It is one of a few carbon-negative countries in the world. Yet, problems persist. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting U.S. Government efforts to curb illicit mining and deforestation and partnering with Suriname to support its efforts to expand its positive environmental record.

Suriname seeks greater military and law enforcement cooperation with the United States. A key member in the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, Suriname partners to combat narcotics and human trafficking. If confirmed, I will work to bolster security capabilities, fight corruption, and strengthen our security and law enforcement cooperation.

Finally, our Embassy in Paramaribo has an exceptional team that works to advance bilateral relations, protect U.S. citizens abroad, and work with the Government of Suriname to accomplish our foreign policy goals in the region. Ensuring it is safe, secure, and well-resourced, will be a top priority for me if confirmed.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much to all the witnesses.

Before we begin five-minute rounds of questions, I do have a few questions to ask each of you. This is an important part of the hearing and it is designed to make sure that you will all be responsive to this committee, should you be confirmed.

In these questions I am going to ask I would ask each of you to provide just a yes or no answer.

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[All witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

We will now begin five-minute rounds of questions.

I will start with you, Mr. Rodriguez.

What a difficult time in Nicaragua and what a difficult post to which you have been nominated. I attended the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June and it was interesting.

There was quite a flap, as you know, about who should be invited to the summit, and a number of the nations in the Americas were critical of the United States for not having a full invitation of all countries in the hemisphere.

As I was speaking to some of those leaders who were critical—some chose not to attend, some attended and were critical—it was interesting, they complained to me about the fact that Cuba and Venezuela had not been invited. No one complained that Nicaragua had not been invited, and I found that interesting.

And when I asked them, hey, you have talked about Cuba and Venezuela but you have not mentioned Nicaragua, even those who strongly believe that Cuba and Venezuela should have been invited pretty much said Nicaragua was a disaster.

We have got no—we cannot, with a straight face, make an argument that a president who imprisoned all of his rivals and has installed his wife as vice president and is throwing Mother Teresa and other—Mother Teresa's organization and others out of the country—we cannot with a straight face claim that they should have been invited to the summit.

So what a difficult, difficult time. What space for U.S. sort of pro-democracy pro-human rights activity or support for organizations that are engaged in pro-human rights activity, what space exists within Nicaragua that you could promote, should you be confirmed?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

You are exactly right. It has really been a really lamentable turn of events, really, since 2018 in Nicaragua.

The space has been increasingly limited. However, we still maintain a strong and well-led USAID contingent in country, working with those human rights defenders and other NGOs that continue to operate in country and increasingly working with those who are operating or directing operations from outside of the country.

So those spaces still exist and, if confirmed, I look forward to redoubling our efforts to make sure that those voices are able to be heard across Nicaragua and across the region.

You mentioned the opinion that our neighboring countries across the region have for Daniel Ortega and for the, really, terrible undemocratic turn the country has taken.

That is a huge opportunity for us. Bringing that opinion forward from our neighbors in the region, elevating that sentiment, ele-

vating those voices, has a big effect, not just across Nicaragua but also on the government of Nicaragua.

They are increasingly becoming a pariah state within the region and I think we need to focus on bringing along that regional support to help raise that additional voice and those additional pressures on the government of Nicaragua.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

I want to turn now to Mr. Faucher and Ms. Bond.

Three nations in the region the democracy trend is in the right direction and they have significant energy resources at a time when there is global energy insecurity—Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

Senator Rubio and I just had a meeting with the president of Guyana, President Ali, right before this hearing began. He was in our office and it was a productive visit.

Guyana had a proposal on the table for an IDB loan to develop their natural resources. The U.S. vetoed the loan in March. The IDB would not provide the \$180 billion loan to allow Guyana to develop their energy resources and it was the U.S. that vetoed it.

I am really struck by an incoherence in this administration's sort of energy policy. So there is three goals. We want to battle climate change. We want to help nations who are allies wean themselves away from dictators in terms of getting energy supply.

We also have an interest in any country with whom we have an alliance to help them develop their economies in a positive way to produce economic activity that can help their people.

I am very confused at the message that the administration is sending on energy policy. Vetoing an IDB loan for Guyana but encouraging Saudi Arabia to pump more oil to help our allies, often canceling U.S. domestic oil leases at the same time as we are trying to help our allies wean themselves away from Russian energy.

I do not expect you to solve these three goals and harmonize them. But what I have been waiting for is the administration putting some policy on the table that expresses how they are trying to harmonize these goals.

In particular, what might you do, should you be confirmed—and I will begin with you, Mr. Faucher—what might you do to help Suriname or Trinidad and Tobago appropriately develop their energy resources, guarding against corruption and some of the other issues?

Because, look, if we are going to veto loans to nations like Guyana, China is just going to step in and do those loans—I mean, let us not kid ourselves here—and then we end up losing influence with nations that would rather partner with the United States.

What can you do, should you be confirmed, to help advance appropriate development of these nations' economies?

Mr. FAUCHER. Mr. Senator, thank you very much for that question.

This is really one of the critical issues in front of us right now as we look for Suriname's continued forward development of its democracy, its human rights structures, as well as its economy.

Suriname is sitting on vast oil reserves, as we understand it, off its coast and American companies have been involved in developing

and extracting that oil wealth. They have done this without support from the United States government.

They have not asked for our support, as I understand it, nor has, if I am aware of it, Suriname asked for any kind of loans through the IDB or other organizations of that nature.

My role, if I am confirmed as Ambassador, is to ensure that American companies can continue to compete for those oil licenses and contracts in the region and make sure that there is a fair and level playing field for that form of competition so that they do not lose out to countries like the PRC and others who might then be able to influence Suriname in negative ways.

I would note, however, that Suriname's move toward democracy predates the discovery of oil off its shores and it has been making the right steps in that.

And if I am confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to support and work with the Surinamese government to ensure that it continues its economic and development as a democracy.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. With the sufferance of my colleagues, I am over time but I would like to give Ms. Bond the chance to briefly answer the question as well.

Ms. BOND. Yes. This is an important issue that came up in the Summit of the Americas, and the Vice President brought forth a new U.S.-Caribbean initiative that would really look at energy security and the development of three specific areas and taking a regional approach as opposed to an individualized country approach focused on energy security, focused on food security as well as finance.

What we are really looking for is to leverage that opportunity and to look at long-term sustainable growth and focus in these areas, working on a regional basis as opposed to an individual basis.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Rubio?

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, again, all for coming in.

Let me start with you, Mr. Faucher. I am just going to go down the row here, if I can, in the time I am allotted.

We have talked about energy, the role that it plays, its development when it comes to Suriname, its importance, and so I did want to ask, there is a—the President has an executive order and it tasks the Treasury and the State Department to develop a strategy to only support financing programs and stimulus packages and debt relief initiatives that are aligned with and support the goals of the Paris Agreement.

And, I mean, it has already had an impact on an IDB decision with regards to Guyana, but I am real concerned about how that would impact the ability of U.S. companies and us to continue to encourage the development, even as we want them to diversify in their economy and we want to support them in that.

I mean, why—are we here—does that executive order hold the potential of being viewed as us telling the people of Suriname that they cannot develop an advanced and modern economy because it clashes with our support of the Paris Agreement?

Mr. FAUCHER. Thank you, Mr. Senator, for that question. It is a very important issue that we talked a little bit about this morning.

I would say if American companies come to me, if I am confirmed as Ambassador, and ask for assistance in dealing with the Surinamese government on oil issues or oil commercial contracts, I will have to look at each case individually to make sure that the assistance I am able to give them conforms with any executive order that is delivered by the President.

I am unaware of any kind of a push at all or statements by us that we do not want Suriname to develop its oil reserves or move forward and improve its economy. I think there is a recognition that there will be a need for oil for the decades ahead even though we are trying to diversify energy resources throughout the world.

Suriname, as I stated in my statement, is a carbon negative country. It is meeting its requirements under the Paris Accord at this time and I think it is committed to continuing to do so.

And so I will work with Suriname to make sure it also meets its environmental—

Senator RUBIO. Again, and when you have an executive order that, basically, asks Treasury and the State Department to structure financing programs and stimulus work and debt relief initiatives to be aligned to the climate agreement, there is the real concern—I think, the legitimate concern—that that would impact our ability to be of assistance in anything that has to do with oil and natural gas exploration, and we will see how that plays out. I hope that is not the case because I think that would negatively impact our relationship.

Ms. Fulton, on Uruguay, I have talked about a couple—I think it is the first in the ranking by Freedom House and the World Justice Project in terms of democracy and rule of law, and as they are looking to revise the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the U.S.—I am sorry, in their new trade protocols that mirror what we have done with Brazil and Ecuador—it is clear that they are eager to establish even more transparency measures and anti-corruption measures.

So I have outlined a couple things, I think, we can do to really strengthen this relationship. We have a willing partner and a stable country. There are a lot of good news coming out.

Unfortunately, I will tell you, for a while, they think we are not—we do not care, like we are not paying attention to them and that we are not—we are ignoring. It is one of those countries that says, we are doing everything right. We are everything you say that you want countries in the region to be but we are not getting the attention we want.

I have talked about a couple things that we should do. The first is expanding the Development Finance Corporation's role in facilitating investment there. The problem we have is they are classified by the World Bank as a high-tech country, and so the World Bank sort of prevents us.

But I think that is one of those things that requires us to go back and reexamine how that is used and I really hope that we will look for ways to restructure that program so that countries like this, the country that JPMorgan, by the way, says is the least risky country

in Latin America for investment, that the existence—that we are not prevented to DFC's facilitating programs there.

And then the other thing, I think there is a real opportunity to expand cooperation on security space and counternarcotics, and cooperation with them on space and satellite data sharing, for example, would help us crack down on the black market that now exists in data.

Are those two things that you would commit to exploring and, perhaps, pushing forward?

Ms. FULTON. Absolutely. Thank you, Senator.

I agree with what you are saying and would be, if confirmed, looking forward to finding opportunities to working with you and your team to see how we can rethink some of the impediments that currently prevent us from expanding our cooperation and seeking additional tools to enhance these areas of opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Before I run out of time here, Mr. Rodriguez, the CAFTA is an agreement—preferential trade arrangement—among free nations.

Is Nicaragua a free nation? And if they are not then what is the—should we continue to provide the preferential trade benefits that CAFTA provides to free nations?

I mean, the point of it was to encourage the opposite of everything that Ortega and his crazy wife, who is the vice president, are doing.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Let me just say, if confirmed, I would support using all economic and diplomatic tools to bring about a change in direction in Nicaragua.

Removing Nicaragua from CAFTA-DR is a, potentially, very powerful tool and something we have to seriously consider. I know we currently exclude Nicaragua from supporting functions under CAFTA-DR—trade development capacity[CE3] building activities, and the like.

But if confirmed, I commit to working with USTR and other agencies within the U.S. government to evaluate all possible means for bringing that pressure to bear on Nicaragua.

Senator RUBIO. Mr. Duncan, real quick. I am already over time by a minute, but I did want to touch on El Salvador. It is a difficult puzzle to unpack.

Certainly, the trend lines there in terms of President Bukele's view of the United States deteriorated rapidly in the last couple of years to the point now where it is now a really troubling situation.

I am very troubled by it, and he did not seem to care a lot about what U.S. foreign policy is with regards to the country, very openly criticizes and mocks the U.S. and other Western institutions.

And the reality of it is that, despite all this, we have to contend with the fact that his popularity remains pretty high and his party has enjoyed electoral gains as a result.

So for whatever reason he is tapping into some populist sentiment in the country that is converting itself into political support and that, I think, gives him license, at least domestically, to continue down this trend line.

But there is an interesting dynamic. On the one hand, we are carrying out this name and shame campaign from Washington

where we are sanctioning individuals and calling them out for their alleged corruption and behavior and the like, and on the other hand you see them negotiating with the IMF where we are the leading contributor towards, and it seems like the—our administration is holding open the possibility that there would still be an IMF arrangement, I would imagine, because the understanding that if we did not there could be a mass migration event that would impact neighboring countries and/or they could turn to alternative means of financing outside of the structured system that the United States has influence over.

How do we balance our national interest and desire to have not just stability there but some relationship with this campaign that is being carried out to—that, I think, has led to pretty open diplomatic hostility?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I think, first and foremost, we have to approach the Salvadoran government as we should most governments, from a position of respect and acknowledge, as you said, that they choose their own leaders and it appears that their current president is, indeed, at this point, very popular. That is a reality and we must recognize that.

However, I think it is also true, as you indicated in your opening statement, that there have been some developments in El Salvador that do not seem to be conducive to strengthening Salvadoran democracy and there have also been some economic trends that are somewhat concerning.

With respect to the sanctions you referenced, I think it is important for us to use the tools Congress has given us, whether that is Global Magnitsky or the Section 353 list or Section 7031(c)—to use those tools appropriately to target individuals who have been involved in acts of corruption or acts that undermine democracy or the rule of law, and I think we can do that while continuing to maintain a respectful relationship with the government of El Salvador. I do not see any inconsistency there.

With respect to the IMF negotiations, which you mentioned, I am not up to date on exactly where those negotiations are. I believe they are still talking to the IMF.

I know the IMF has publicly expressed some concerns that they, as I understand it, want to see satisfied before they move forward with that loan. So as far as I know, no final decision on that has been made.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Menendez?

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you and the ranking member for holding this hearing.

As the chairman of the full committee, I appreciate that chairs and rankings who preside over nomination hearings is one of the fundamental responsibilities that we have to move nominees forward and I appreciate those of my colleagues who have fulfilled that duty during this work period.

Congratulations to all the nominees and your families who are with you. This hearing comes at a time when human rights and fundamental freedoms face numerous challenges in our hemi-

sphere, and champions of democracy are needed now more than ever.

In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega has become what he once fought to overthrow—a ruthless dictator. His disdain for democracy and decency are a test to the international community as we confront the rising global tide of authoritarianism.

In El Salvador, President Bukele is wielding populism and new digital tools to perpetuate a cult of personality even as he undermines El Salvador's democratic institutions at an alarming rate.

If confirmed, the leadership of each of the nominees here today will be indispensable to confronting the challenges in forging new opportunities for the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Let me take a point of personal privilege to briefly recognize Deputy Assistant Secretary Heide Fulton.

Ms. Fulton was a Pearson Fellow in my office from 2009 to 2010. The contributions she made during her time with us, including helping draft the first version of what would later become the OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 that came into law, were a testament to her decades of experience in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I would like to take credit that all of the successes she has had since then as a result of her time with me, but it is her incredible abilities and we are glad to see her being considered for the Ambassador to Uruguay.

Mr. Rodriguez, Nicaragua has been in a state of crisis since April 18th of 2018. That was the day the anti-government protests triggered a years-long wave of repression that has killed 329 people, injured thousands, and condemned 190 political prisoners to arbitrary detention in conditions amounting to torture.

The Ortega regime has no shame. They have jailed, expelled, harassed political opponents, former lawyers, business partners, representatives of the Catholic Church.

They have shuttered organizations that feed and shelter Nicaraguans. They have closed eight of the country's universities. They have attempted to withdraw from the Organization of American States all while cozying up to Russia. They have even kicked out Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

Nicaragua is on the path to becoming a totalitarian dictatorship. We often talk about how to respond to crises instead of investing more in prevention. Our RENACER Act, which was signed into law last year, lays out a framework for U.S. policy, but we need to act now.

So if you are confirmed, what steps would you take to mobilize a robust international strategy to prevent the onset of a deeper humanitarian crisis in Nicaragua?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

If confirmed, as you point out, we really need to mobilize voices from across the region and around the world to call out the human rights abuses, to call out the undemocratic actions that the government of Daniel Ortega is taking, and we need to call for the immediate release of the 190 political prisoners that you mentioned.

If confirmed, I commit to working with U.N. Human Rights Council, OAS—excuse me—our partners in Europe and Canada, to

seek their voice and their action in the form of sanctions, to join our efforts to highlight the abuses, and to isolate the regime of Daniel Ortega.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me follow up with something that Senator Rubio raised. Our RENACER Act lays out congressional guidance on suspending Nicaragua from the CAFTA–DR trade agreement, and I know it is a powerful tool. Same thing with El Salvador.

But we entered into these agreements with a universal concept of who we were entering into. Nicaragua, certainly, does not fall in that category at this point in time.

What steps will you take to implement what the law says and do you commit to keeping this committee informed on a quarterly basis on the nature of Russia’s deepening cooperation with Nicaragua?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Yes, Senator.

I commit to keeping the committee informed. In addition, if confirmed, sir, I commit to adding my weight to the full implementation of the RENACER Act, as I mentioned, working with USTR and others on the CAFTA–DR question, continuing to implement the Act in terms of holding officials in Nicaragua accountable for the human rights abuses.

We recently sanctioned another 23 individuals under Section 353 thanks to the RENACER Act. That is a new capacity that we have and we are taking full advantage of it.

Again, Senator, if confirmed, I will work with our interagency colleagues to maximize the pressure both through RENACER and all of the tools that the Senate can—

The CHAIRMAN. I look forward to that. We need a strong voice there.

Mr. Chairman, may I have the indulgence of the chair for another minute?

Senator KAINE. Yes, you may.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Duncan, I was a little surprised at your response to Senator Rubio about President Bukele’s popularity. Hitler was popular. Putin is popular in Russia. It does not mean that because a person is popular in their country that, in fact, we do not press extremely hard on violations of human rights and democracy.

Are we agreed on that?

Mr. DUNCAN. We are, indeed, agreed on that, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. So we have an increasing challenging situation in El Salvador, one that threatens both the future of democracy in the country and bilateral relations with the United States.

Over the last two years, President Bukele has presided over a number of alarming setbacks for democratic governance: undermining judicial independence, intimidating opposition lawmakers by using security forces to occupy the legislature, negotiating political pacts with gangs, regularly attacking journalists and media outlets.

And in addition to these actions, Bukele has also repeatedly used his network of Twitter trolls to attack and threaten not only government critics within El Salvador but also United States officials, including my colleague in the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Norma Torres.

It is amazing what he is doing, directing against a member of the United States Congress and former Ambassador Jean Manes.

So I want to hear from you. Do you commit to prioritizing these issues in discussions with President Bukele and senior officials within his government?

Mr. DUNCAN. Yes, Senator, I do make that commitment to you, and I must tell you that I think the exchange with—regarding Representative Torres was absolutely unacceptable and I would, certainly, be happy to make that clear to the Salvadoran government.

The CHAIRMAN. What other steps do you believe the United States needs to take to prevent further democratic backsliding in El Salvador?

Mr. DUNCAN. Senator, I think, first of all, I agree with you. There have been a number of developments in El Salvador over the last two years that are concerning when it comes to the strength and the health of El Salvador's democracy.

I think we have made judicious use of the various sanctions tools that Congress has given us to highlight some of those problems, whether it is the removal of the supreme court magistrates in the constitutional chamber, the gang truce that you referred to, or other acts of either corruption or acts that tend to undermine democracy, and I think we need to continue using those tools appropriately, judiciously. But we need to keep using them to send the message that El Salvador's best future lies on the path of democracy.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence and I will have a series of questions for the record. I do not want the rest of you to think I have no issues for you. I do.

But in deference to my colleagues who are still here, I would like substantive—substantive underlined here—responses to them before I consider putting you on a business meeting agenda.

Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE. Thank you so much.

Senator Portman?

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Look, it is a complicated political environment and I really appreciate all of you being willing to step up and serve your country. For all of you but one you have been serving your country through Foreign Service and have accomplished a great deal to get to the level that that you are as ambassadors.

But we need your help. I mean, this is discouraging what is going on, Uruguay being the exception, and to the comments by Senator Rubio, I think we do not take advantage of these relatively pro-democracy pro-U.S. center and center right governments enough and do not show them enough love and support, and that is one reason we end up with more difficult situations, as we see in pretty much every other country represented, even with regard to Suriname with regard to their opening to China, which concerns me greatly, and the Belt and Road Initiative.

So that would be—I would echo those concerns and I think we need to redouble our efforts to demonstrate our support for those

countries that are standing up for democracy, human rights, and allied with us.

With regard to El Salvador, I am going to come at this a little differently. On the U.S. border, we are experiencing something unparalleled. We have never seen it before.

We have record levels of people, drugs, coming across the border. We have got three months left in the fiscal year until we know what the final numbers are. Already we are at record levels in the year in the history of our country, and this is based on so-called encounters.

But it is true that El Salvador has been sending people to the United States for a long time, legally and illegally. In fact, I am told that \$7 billion in remittances went to El Salvador last year. That is the World Bank figure. That is a quarter of the GDP of El Salvador.

And yet, you have Bukele treating the United States relationship in a way that would indicate that he does not want to cooperate or work with us and yet there is this strong connection. I do not know quite how to use that leverage. But \$7 billion in remittances.

One question I would have for you, Mr. Duncan, because you have been at this a while—you have got a lot of experience in Latin America—Title 42 is about to be revoked if the administration has its way and, roughly, half of the people who are stopped at the border and turn back are turned back because of Title 42. And yet, we have record levels of illegal migration.

So without Title 42 being in place it would be a flood and that is because of our asylum policy, in my view, primarily but it is also other changes that the administration made.

What do you think about that? Do you think human smugglers and drug cartels will in come from Salvador in increased numbers if Title 42 is revoked at the border?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I am afraid I cannot speak to what the effect of a revocation of Title 42 would be.

Senator PORTMAN. I think you can.

Mr. DUNCAN. Nor can I tell you because I am not involved in the conversations about Title 42. What I can say is that, as you correctly pointed out, we have been seeing irregular migration from Central America.

El Salvador is a part of that. I think they, in the last year or so, have been in fourth place, about 6 percent of the total behind Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala.

I think if I were confirmed I would be very focused on implementing the administration's strategy with regard to the root causes of migration. I think democracy needs to be strengthened in El Salvador because I think that is critical to prosperity.

I think we need to keep working with the Salvadorans to strengthen the rule of law and try and reduce crime and violence.

Senator PORTMAN. Yeah, I am just talking—let me interrupt you if I could.

I mean, that is fine. We have spent, I do not know, \$3.6 billion in the last five years in Central America with regard to the root causes and the migration has increased, not decreased.

So I am not against dealing with the root causes. But that is not the issue. The issue is the pull factor. We went to Latin America, some of us here, including the chairman recently, and the presidents of the countries we visited—four of them—in Latin America and Central America all said the same thing, basically, which is you guys are pulling our people north with your policies.

So you have a role to play there. You say you cannot speak to it. I hope you will speak to it because I think our own policies are, largely, the reason that you see this pull for the region. And the illicit drugs are not produced in El Salvador but, boy, it is a major transit country for cocaine and heroin, in particular.

So I hope that, if confirmed, you will get involved in these issues and not just the root causes, as important as they are.

The Salvadoran cooperation on counterdrug and anti-gang efforts, I assume you are aware that we do not get the cooperation that we would like to have.

Do you commit that you will work on increasing our level of cooperation in that area?

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Senator. Yes, absolutely.

Counternarcotics has been one of the areas where we have had some success in our collaboration with the Salvadorans and, if confirmed, I would seek to do everything in my power to increase that collaboration.

We have also worked with them and are working with them, I should say, on border intelligence, on alien smuggling. I think those are areas that can even be expanded and that is what I would seek to do, if confirmed.

Senator PORTMAN. I will have other questions in writing for your other colleagues. But, again, thank you all for your willingness to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Portman.

Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all of our nominees who are here today. I can think of no greater honor than to represent the greatest nation in the world in the countries that you are seeking to represent the United States of America.

I would like to start with you, Ms. Bond, on the first question to talk about the Chinese Communist Party and its interference, its malign influence, in the Western Hemisphere has grown significantly. Clearly, it has become more visible in the past decade.

Beijing is using its predatory economic behavior to target the region for its commodities and its raw materials. That is the target. I believe we should be doing everything we can to reshore our supply chains back to the United States from China and, as appropriate, to near shore supply chains to friendly countries like those in the Caribbean and in Latin America.

Efforts to support private sector investments in emerging markets are especially critical at this time of strategic global competition with China, and as the United States reshores its supply chains this will create big near shoring opportunities for our friends in this hemisphere.

So I wanted to get your perspective, Ms. Bond, on China's diplomatic and economic engagement in Trinidad and Tobago and how you see that unfolding and the posture you might adopt there.

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

Indeed, PRC incursions are happening all over the world and the Caribbean is no exception, nor is Trinidad and Tobago. They were one of the first to join the Road and Belt Initiative.

However, if confirmed as Ambassador, I will do everything in my power to ensure that we are positioned to be the partner of choice to Trinidad and Tobago.

I would be a strong advocate for private sector investment and continue our strong working relationship with Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in safety and security and creating a more level playing field for private investment and U.S. investment in the country.

The United States has been and continues to be one of Trinidad and Tobago's largest markets for LNG exports. It is seventh in the world in terms of LNG exports and it has one of the largest gas liquefaction facilities in the Western Hemisphere with a great deal of institutional knowledge, which I think they can share regionally.

It is also one of the top exporters of urea ammonium nitrate fertilizer and just last week the U.S. International Trade Commission approved the import of this fertilizer, which you know will address issues of agricultural production—

Senator HAGERTY. Certainly.

Ms. BOND.—as well as assist with global food supplies.

So, if confirmed, these are areas that I would continue to work on and continue to bolster trade with the United States and our partners.

Senator HAGERTY. I encourage you to continue to support stronger energy production here in this hemisphere. We are doing everything in this country to reduce energy production right now, much to my chagrin, but I see the opportunity there and I am very pleased to see that you see it as well.

In my home state agriculture is a big industry and pharmaceutical—I am sorry, fertilizer prices are a huge issue as well, compressing margins for farmers and leading to what I think will be a food crisis not only here in America but around the world.

So thank you for your diligence there and I will encourage you to cooperate and coordinate with us here as we begin to deepen our reshoring efforts because I do believe this is a big opportunity in the country that you seek to represent.

Mr. Rodriguez, can I turn to you? If you are confirmed, you are going to be taking on a challenging assignment in the Western Hemisphere.

Both the Trump administration and the Biden administration have imposed numerous financial sanctions against members of the Nicaraguan government, their legislature, their judiciary, and President Ortega's family.

In December of 2021, Nicaragua reestablished diplomatic ties with China and seized control of Taiwan's embassy and diplomatic offices, saying that they belong to China.

The Ortega regime provided Taiwanese diplomats only two weeks to leave Nicaragua. Subsequently, the Nicaraguan govern-

ment signed a cooperation agreement for China's Belt and Road Initiative. That took place in January of 2022.

In June of 2022, the Ortega regime and his rubber stamp congress authorized a limited number of Russian troops, Russian aircraft and ships and weapons to operate on Nicaraguan soil.

This seems to be a renewal and an expansion of the November 2021 authorization for Russian forces to operate there in the country.

Mr. Rodriguez, in your view, what is the most concerning aspect of Nicaragua as it relates to U.S. national security?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Senator.

Their relationships with both of the countries you mentioned are deeply, deeply concerning. The decision by the government of Nicaragua to leave off recognition of Taiwan in favor of the PRC was deeply lamentable.

The government is depriving the Nicaraguan citizens of a reliably democratic partner in favor of opacity and self-dealing, which is entirely in line with what the government of Nicaragua has been about since 2018.

Their slide towards authoritarianism and away from transparency and rule of law are deeply concerning.

With respect to Russia, Senator, they are, clearly, following the Russian playbook, and with support and guidance from Russia they are drafting and implementing laws. In fact, the foreign agents law in Nicaragua is known locally as Putin's Law. So there is, clearly, deep influence from Russia.

If confirmed, I believe we need to very loudly stand with the Nicaraguan people against anyone who is aligned with Russia or China in stifling the democratic aspirations of the people of Nicaragua and abusing and taking from them their human rights.

Senator HAGERTY. Well said.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will submit the rest of my questions for the record.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

I have one additional question that I want to direct to Ms. Fulton—an Uruguay question—and it is really more of a kind of a topic than a question, and since you are pro with long experience in the region, I just kind of want to grapple with it.

We are talking an awful lot about problems in the region and there are problems by the boatload, but there is also some real success stories. So Panama, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Ecuador have come together with the Alliance for Democracy and Development. They have said at a time of democratic backsliding we want to be forward leaning.

But in my conversations with them they have not yet been, I think, impressed with the degree to which the United States want to work with them to succeed. I will say this. There was an agreement signed in the last couple of days focusing on near shoring in the ADD. That can be great.

So Ecuador—we met with the president of Ecuador, President Lasso, a pro-U.S. president, about a year ago, and he said, look, the one thing that can really help us succeed is if the U.S. would con-

template a trade agreement with Ecuador, possibly including Ecuador in the existing trade agreement with Colombia.

We had a hearing yesterday about economic statecraft with State Department witnesses. I asked has there—are we doing anything to follow up on that, and I got a diplomatic answer but I think the answer, really, was no because I am not sure that the administration really likes trade agreements.

And then we have got this situation where Guyana, which has come through this very difficult time, and I know Guyana is not on the panel today, but they really wanted this IDB loan to develop their energy resources and it was the U.S. that vetoed the loan, which hurts their own economic development and probably also hurts an ability for Guyana to be an important and more stable energy partner in a world marked by too many unstable authoritarian energy partners.

So Uruguay is a model in so many ways. Uruguay is now doing trade agreement—free trade agreements with Turkey and China, and the president has indicated—the president of Uruguay—that it would very much like to do a trade agreement with the U.S. and also with the U.K. but the quote from the president is the U.S. government, quote, “is not looking south.”

It seems to me in a part of the world where we have got a lot of challenges the best thing we could do is take the nations that are favorably inclined to us, that want deeper relationships with us, where the trend lines for democracy are green rather than red—they are going in the right direction—and why not really invest in these nations because they can become examples for others, and if with their entreaties we are not investing in these nations that also sends a message that can be a very debilitating one.

So, I guess, should you be confirmed in Uruguay with the experience you have, with the positive track record that Uruguay has put together, what can we do to really spotlight this relationship and do it in a way that is not only good for Uruguay but sends the message in the region that if you are doing things right the United States is going to be a great partner with you?

Ms. FULTON. Thank you, Senator. I think you have touched on a question that I have, certainly, grappled with and, if confirmed, would look forward to working with you and your staff and other members of this committee to try to find better answers to exactly that question.

I think that if confirmed being an Ambassador not only means representing U.S. policies to the partner to whom I am accredited but it also means representing back the importance and the opportunity—Senator Rubio touched on the importance of thinking strategically about the investments and decisions that we make—we have tremendous challenges in this hemisphere, and I know from my current position we prioritize those with our funding and our resources based on some of the problems that are closer to home and more immediately on fire in front of us.

I, if confirmed, would look forward to being a loud proponent to arguing for strategic investments and seeking additional opportunities, seeking ways to rethink some of the impediments that we have in place and seeking new tools to strengthen a relationship that is with a partner whom, as you have noted, genuinely wants

to work with us and I think the importance of this opportunity should not be understated and it should not be lost.

Senator KAINE. I appreciate that testimony. I think you are right on sort of the human psychology. We tend to focus on the problems and that is natural. But our ability to solve problems in countries with deep problems we have to be very humble about it.

I mean, these are, ultimately, problems that need to be solved within and we can be assets. We can be helpful. But in a region where there are plenty of problems there is also plenty of good that is going on and I just feel like we are, in some instances, kind of ignoring the good or under investing our time where there is good or, in some instances, even taking steps that are counterproductive to allies that are trying to do it the right way.

I just hope we will focus more on some bright spots and try to make them even brighter. That would be my hope, and I think you are very, very well equipped to carry that mission.

Senator Rubio, do you have any additional questions?

Senator Hagerty, additional questions?

[No response.]

Senator KAINE. Listen, I really appreciate this opportunity. It has been a great discussion. Committee members are very, very interested in these countries. We will do all we can to be prompt in moving forward from this point.

I would asked members of the committee should they have questions that they want to submit in writing—a number have indicated that they would—they should submit them by the close of business on July 29th, and I would also ask that each of you, should questions be submitted for you individually, that you try to respond promptly and comprehensively.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM H. DUNCAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, El Salvador was noted for significant human rights abuses such as unlawful killings, forced disappearances by military personnel, torture or cruel and degrading treatment by security forces, arbitrary arrest and detention, serious problems with the independence of the judiciary, serious restrictions of expression and assembly, inability of the people to change their government peacefully, serious acts of official corruption, criminalization of same-sex conduct, and impunity persisted in the security forces, executive branch, and the justice system.

- What is your assessment of the persistence of these violations?

Answer. I am deeply concerned by the persistent trend of democratic backsliding and growing human rights abuses in El Salvador. Consolidation of power in the executive stymies free expression of ideas and checks-and-balances vital to the democratic process. Preserving civic space and protecting freedom of expression remain imperative tasks for the preservation of democracy and the promotion of human rights.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues? Do you commit to raising these issues directly with the host government?

Answer. I commit to continually raising these issues directly with the Government of El Salvador, highlighting the importance of respecting democracy and human rights and holding those who commit abuses accountable for their actions. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure that journalists and civil society have the space to operate without undue influence from the Government. If confirmed, I will continue to support the appropriate use of all congressionally mandated sanctions authority to combat corruption and undemocratic actions in El Salvador.

Question. In the report, it was noted that while there are no reports of politically motivated killings, there were reports of security forces engaged in extrajudicial killings of suspected gang members. What steps would you take with security forces officials to increase respect of the legal system and limit extrajudicial punishment by security forces?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to raise concerns with the central government over the increasing use of military in police operations, as well as concerns over the lack of due process during the State of Exception. I will also continue interagency efforts to train a competent and professional cohort of law enforcement that respects human rights, including through ethics and use of force training. I commit to engaging with central government and municipal authorities to impress upon them the importance of adherence to rule of law. Finally, if confirmed, I will continue to support the appropriate use of all congressionally mandated sanctions and visa restrictions tools to counter corruption and impunity in El Salvador.

Question. The report additionally states that prison conditions remain harsh and threatening due to gross overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, and gang activity as well as a lack of the right to a fair trial through judicial authorities being subject to political, economic, or other corrupting influences.

- How would you encourage the host government on prison authorities to improve prison conditions and reduce gang violence in detention centers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage willing and able security and penal sector partners and evaluate where the United States can provide direct support or assistance. I will continue to underscore the unsustainability of the State of Exception and champion adherence to due process and humane prison conditions.

Question. What steps would you take with the host government regarding the judicial system to reduce the level of corruption amongst trial judges?

Answer. Impunity, corruption, and lack of independence among judges are unacceptable. I will engage the Government of El Salvador to underscore the importance of adherence to rule of law from both a human rights and economic growth perspective. If confirmed, I will continue to support the use of congressionally mandated sanctions and visa restrictions authorities to combat corruption within the ranks of trial judges.

Question. Please describe how you would work with various interagency entities like the new Anti-Corruption coordinator to combat corruption in country.

Answer. Corruption remains a top threat to efficacy of democratic governance. The President has made clear that corruption is also a threat to U.S. national security. The U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption identifies a range of activities that the Administration will undertake around the world and highlights tools that can be utilized, specifically in El Salvador. If confirmed, I will tap into the expertise of all my interagency colleagues, including the Department of the Treasury, Department of Justice, and the State Department's new Coordinator on Global Anti-Corruption to identify corrupt actors and hold them accountable for their actions.

- Working with partners like USAID, I will continue to fight for the preservation of civic space, providing non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives needed opportunities and open dialogue to identify corruption and promote democracy. This must be an interagency effort, and I commit to treating it as such through interagency collaboration and communication.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, El Salvador was downgraded to the Tier 2 watch list for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Fewer than half of identified victims received government services, the Government implemented no procedures to identify potential victims or traffickers and did not initiate any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking crimes. The anti-trafficking council was inactive and did not draft a national anti-trafficking plan, publish a report on government efforts, or compile any data across governmental agencies.

- If confirmed, how could you work with government officials to increase the frequency of providing government services to trafficking victims and number of investigations against traffickers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of El Salvador to increase specialized services for trafficking victims; implement procedures to proactively identify and refer to service providers victims from at-risk groups - including individuals in commercial sex, children apprehended for illicit gang-related activities, forcibly displaced persons, and irregular migrants returning to El Salvador; strengthen the specialized anti-trafficking prosecution unit; develop a mechanism to enforce payment of court-ordered restitution to victims; allow authorities and the public to refer potential victims directly to government or NGO service providers, without first referring to police or prosecutors; provide reintegration and livelihood support services for victims and extend witness protection services beyond the duration of a trial, particularly for victims who testify against members of organized criminal groups; amend the 2014 anti-trafficking law to include a definition of human trafficking consistent with international law, draft, resource, and implement a new National Action Plan to combat trafficking; develop a case management system to improve data collection, sharing, security, and analysis related to trafficking cases; expand prevention measures, including through raising awareness of fraudulent recruitment for employment in El Salvador and abroad and by holding accountable employers or recruiters who commit fraudulent practices that facilitate trafficking.

Question. How would you engage with the anti-trafficking council to urge it into action in providing a national anti-trafficking plan and reports on governmental efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage all relevant authorities to continue to make progress against trafficking in persons in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention, including by drafting, allocating resources for, and implementing a new National Action Plan and reporting on government efforts.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, El Salvador's constitution provides for freedom of religion, many areas are controlled by gangs limiting access religious registration, freedom of movement, and are subject to being engaged by violent acts.

- What actions would you take with the host government to promote government officials carrying out their official duties, primarily in areas most affected by gang violence?

Answer. As Secretary Blinken has said, respect for religious freedom is one of our deepest held values, a fundamental right, and a vital foreign policy priority. If confirmed, I would communicate to the Government, and publicly, our deeply held belief in the importance of religious freedom. I would support efforts to improve the ability of the Salvadoran police to provide citizen security in a climate of respect for the due process of law. If confirmed, I would also work closely with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to develop a plan for constructive engagement with the Government of El Salvador.

Question. US officials in the embassy have attempted to promote religious freedoms and reach followers in gang-controlled territories. What actions would you take to further promote these efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I would communicate to the Government and publicly that promoting respect for religious freedom is a core part of our foreign policy. I would also support Embassy engagement with faith-based and secular communities throughout El Salvador to ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges these groups face and how best we can support their right to freedom of religion or belief. In the context of the State of Exception gang crackdown that began in March 2022, a worrying trend has emerged of government officials targeting faith-based institutions, including rehabilitation centers, to arrest former gang members. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to refrain from such activities which may constrain religious practice and may discourage other gang members from seeking rehabilitative services in order to exit gang life.

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the U.N., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU.

She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the El Salvador Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Government of El Salvador to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the International Organizations (IO) bureau, the Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) bureau, and other stakeholders to identify ways to support qualified Americans in international organizations. I understand PRM funding varies from year to year to sponsor new Junior Program Officer positions with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), typically in the range of 6 to 10 new posts, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), usually one new JPO position annually. If confirmed, I will work with our colleagues inside the U.S. Government and through external partners to explore ways to contribute to this important program.

Question. El Salvador has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. El Salvador under the Bukele administration has moved farther away from voting coincidence with the United States and many of our key fellow democracies in the Hemisphere and beyond. It perhaps reflects diverging views on issues such as democracy and separation of powers. If confirmed, an important part of my duties will be trying to redress this situation and engage the Government of El Salvador with a perspective that its interests, its crucial relationship with the United States of America, and the interests of the international community are best served by a return to the constructive dialogue and frequent congruence of views the two countries used to enjoy.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the El Salvadorans on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Salvadoran Government to impress upon them U.S. views regarding anticipated votes in the U.N. system. This includes ensuring they understand both the substantive reasons underlying U.S. positions and the value the United States places on cooperation with likeminded countries in U.N. fora. The United States is El Salvador's most important international partner, and the two countries should be better aligned in international organizations.

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

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission San Salvador?

Answer. My understanding is that morale is high in San Salvador. The interim leaders who have taken the helm since Chargé d'Affaires Manes' departure last year have done a fantastic job at fostering an environment of inclusiveness within the Mission. If confirmed, I will build on my predecessors' work to develop a healthy, happy, and effective community in Mission San Salvador.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission San Salvador?

Answer. There are several ways to improve morale at our overseas Missions. If confirmed, I will focus on putting people first and encouraging healthy work/life balance. I will work diligently with Deputy Chief of Mission Dueholm to ensure foundational needs, such as healthcare, childcare, and pay issues are met so our community can focus on fulfilling the mission at hand. I will ensure mentoring and professional development opportunities for all staff so they can develop their skills and achieve their individual professional development goals. I will also ensure my colleagues understand their importance in the work we do and why that work matters. People who know they are engaged in meaningful work and understand their leaders care about them as individuals can do amazing things together and enjoy a sense of fulfillment that fosters high morale.

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

Answer. A unified mission and vision can only be achieved when each member of the team knows what they are working toward and knows how their individual role supports the Mission's ultimate goal. If confirmed, I will ensure each member of Mission San Salvador knows our objectives and the actions we will take to reach them. I will foster an environment of openness and acceptance that promotes teamwork and collaboration.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style is collaborative and collegial. I work to ensure the overall goals of the Mission are well understood, and that I in turn understand the individual mission of each agency at post. I actively seek ideas from staff on how we can best accomplish our goals and engage staff in a continuous effort to monitor, evaluate, and learn from what we are doing. I ensure rules regarding ethics, equal employment opportunity, and workplace behavior are understood and enforced. I engage continuously with different offices and agencies to ensure that I am effectively supporting their work. I also seek to mentor and develop subordinates to ensure they can achieve their personal goals and to develop the next generation of senior leaders. I keep a close eye on morale and work to improve it. Finally, I encourage personnel to take time to care for themselves, their families, and their loved ones.

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

Answer. No. Belittling or bullying subordinates is abhorrent to me, and few things are more destructive to individuals or organizations. My colleagues are invaluable to our success in advancing the shared interests of the United States with foreign partners. I am dedicated to mentoring and developing the leadership and operational skills needed on our team to help each individual contribute their maximum potential to advancing our mission.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. As a former DCM, I can attest to the enormous responsibility a deputy carries in their role and the indispensable value of working in tandem with the Chief of Mission to execute U.S. policy. If confirmed, I will forge a joint leadership team with the DCM as my full partner in all our work. The DCM is vital to successful development of U.S. policy, strategy, outreach, management of U.S. taxpayer resources, and our workforce - the lifeblood of diplomacy and U.S. relationships with sovereign nations. A strong partnership between the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission is essential to advancing a common vision across the entire Country Team.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The DCMs are our first line of response to all section heads and agency leaders at our posts. If confirmed, I will entrust my deputy to advise our leaders across the mission, develop our newest employees' talents, and help our team rise to the challenges they face daily in their work for the American people. I would depend on the DCM's wise counsel in managing the Embassy team, U.S. resources, and executing policy objectives. Ultimate responsibility for the mission and all its work will fall to me, if confirmed, but I will rely on the DCM to ensure our team is empowered to present the best advice, analysis, and proposed courses of action possible.

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

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

Answer. Yes. As a Deputy Chief of Mission and Principal Officer, my most important work in developing the U.S. mission was investing in the capabilities and capacities of our team. I met regularly with our local staff, our newest officers and specialists, our mid-level professionals, and our senior leaders to share lessons I have accumulated over a career in challenging environments. From time to time, all of us need constructive feedback to meet our full potential. Providing this guidance is an essential duty of mission leaders. Recognizing and rewarding our outstanding employees' work is a powerful means of boosting morale in difficult circumstances, showing our team the value of the work we do and of the people who do it. If con-

firmed, I will ensure employees have the guidance they need to succeed in their work and recognition for their dedicated work.

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

Answer. Yes. In addition to providing accurate, timely, and constructive feedback to employees on their performance and encouraging other supervisors in the Mission to do likewise, the Department of State awards program is an important tool to recognize top performers and to highlight the sort of work we should all strive to emulate.

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

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with our professional Diplomatic Security colleagues, our Emergency Action Committee, and the Country Team to appropriately balance our safety and security obligations while meeting the full spectrum of our duties to meet with our counterparts and the people of El Salvador and develop meaningful ties across the country.

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

Answer. I will ensure our diplomats understand the importance of accessing all local populations and are given the time and tools to get out of their offices and conduct that engagement regularly. I will also set a personal example by engaging the broadest possible range of Salvadoran society. I will work with our Diplomatic Security experts to ensure we are fully aware of risks and are managing and mitigating those risks prudently. This will facilitate our diplomats' engagement with local populations.

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

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in El Salvador?

Answer. Public diplomacy is a unique challenge in El Salvador. The Bukele administration's recently enacted law criminalizing reporting on gang activities has had a noticeable chilling effect on the local independent media. Additionally, several journalists have reported their phones being hacked, confirmed by Citizen Lab researchers as Pegasus attacks. These specific events, along with the administration's vast network of disinformation experts, has created an austere environment for public diplomacy.

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

Answer. U.S. diplomats face myriad unique public diplomacy challenges in El Salvador. Two of the top challenges are combatting the spread of official disinformation through conventional reporting or on social media and addressing fears of reprisal for speaking negatively of the administration.

Mission San Salvador's Public Affairs Section advances U.S. foreign policy priorities by polling the local populace and developing pointed messaging campaigns. With strong ties between the two nations, including roughly 2.5 million Salvadorans living in the United States, Salvadorans hold a generally favorable view of the United States and are receptive to Mission San Salvador messaging.

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

Answer. Public messaging takes a coordinated effort from Washington and our foreign missions. Main State policy objectives must be tailored to host-nation contexts. If confirmed, I will provide Main State with a comprehensive ground-level view of the situation in El Salvador and provide recommendations for nuanced messaging that best reaches the local population.

If confirmed, I will work closely with interagency counterparts and Main State to use the proper tools and channels to promote a unified voice.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to taking the “Havana Syndrome” threat seriously. I have already attended classified and unclassified briefings on AHI, including a briefing from the Coordinator of the Department of State’s Health Incident Response Task Force (HIRTF). I have no higher priority than the health and security of the people with whom I serve. Secretary Blinken prioritizes the Department’s response to AHIs, setting clear goals for the HIRTF to strengthen the Department’s communication with its workforce and providing care for affected employees and family members.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to engaging Mission San Salvador personnel regularly, frequently, and openly both individually and collectively. Effective communication is key to successful leadership.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTION SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM H.
DUNCAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Please provide an assessment of whether the regulatory framework applicable to the use of Bitcoin as legal tender in El Salvador meets the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force with respect to virtual-asset transactions.

Answer. While a country’s adoption of private digital assets, including cryptocurrencies, as legal tender is a sovereign decision, we encourage governments exploring the adoption or promotion of these assets to abide by applicable legal and regulatory recommendations and international standards, such as those set out by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Such compliance and adherence to international standards is critical to maintaining public trust in the financial system and ensuring safety and stability, transparency, integrity, operational efficiency, and equitable access while mitigating illicit financing risks. All completed FATF mutual evaluations are publicly available on the FATF’s website; however, the FATF has not yet reviewed the regulatory framework regarding El Salvador’s adoption of bitcoin. I would also refer you to the Department of Treasury as head of delegation to the FATF and FATF-style regional bodies for specifics.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM H. DUNCAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that’s by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. PRC and Chinese Communist Party activities represent a challenge to U.S. interests in the region, particularly in terms of investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects.

As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with El Salvador; highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact El Salvador’s security, sovereignty, international standing, and U.S. interests; and ensure that our vision of a partnership that promotes human rights, regional security, and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP’s influence in El Salvador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with El Salvador; highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact El Salvador’s security, sovereignty, international standing, and U.S. interests; and ensure that our vision

of a partnership that promotes human rights, regional security, and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC. If confirmed, I will raise with Government of El Salvador and private sector interlocutors concerns over PRC infrastructure projects with inadequate labor and environmental standards, which undermine workers' rights under domestic law and, more generally, international labor standards. I will also stress to the Salvadoran Government and communicate to the Salvadoran people the problematic tactics used by the PRC in international engagements, as witnessed in other countries in the Hemisphere.

Question. For years, the United States has developed regional strategies that guide our policy towards Central America, including El Salvador. Although our relations remain with El Salvador, they aren't as strong as at the beginning of Bukele's Administration. Over the years, President Bukele has increasingly embraced Russia and the Chinese Communist Party. For example, in the last several United Nations votes condemning Putin's invasion of Ukraine, El Salvador has abstained rather than vote with the U.S. and its allies.

- What are the reasons for this breakdown in relations with El Salvador?

Answer. Continued instances of democratic backsliding and challenges to the rule of law by the Government of El Salvador over the past few years, including entering the Legislative Assembly with armed police and soldiers, the removal of the top five justices of the Supreme Court, and actions taken under the State of Exception, have strained our bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I commit to engaging the Government of El Salvador from a place of respect for their sovereignty, while maintaining a firm condemnation of antidemocratic actions, impunity, and attacks on civil liberties and human rights. I will continue to support the appropriate use of congressionally mandated sanction authorities to discourage corruption in El Salvador.

Despite these difficulties in our bilateral relationship, if confirmed, I will continue to cooperate with El Salvador where possible and appropriate on security issues, working for instance to strengthen and professionalize police services. At the same time, I would strive to identify opportunities for economic investment, combatting corruption and impunity, and growing the economy to benefit Salvadorans and address the root causes of migration.

Question. Can you provide the committee with a general view of El Salvador's existing relations with China? How about with Russia?

Answer. El Salvador deepened its ties with the PRC since officially recognizing Beijing in 2018, including through agreements to develop various infrastructure projects. Through the Confucius Institute, the PRC has taken aim at developing cultural ties with Latin America. While not as economically influential as the PRC, Russia's influence in the region has revealed itself through authoritarian tendencies, such as the currently shelved Foreign Agent's law. Additionally, El Salvador's failure to join resolutions on Ukraine in the OAS and U.N. show a potential sympathetic approach to Russian policy. Central America's geographic proximity to the United States offers an enticing location for nefarious Russian and PRC intelligence actors and activities.

Question. Mr. Duncan, if confirmed, part of your job will consist of reinforcing our current ties with the Bukele administration. What are your top three priorities, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, in addition to protecting U.S. citizens, I will prioritize our engagement with El Salvador on fighting corruption and impunity, strengthening democratic institutions that protect civil liberties, and promoting inclusive economic growth and opportunities for all Salvadorans to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Question. El Salvador has historically been both a major source and transit point of illegal immigration to the United States. During the Trump administration, the U.S. Government reduced assistance to Bukele's Government until they demonstrated that they were enforcing El Salvador's laws on immigration. The Biden administration is taking a different approach by requesting increased funding for foreign assistance to El Salvador under its "Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration."

- Is the Bukele Government enforcing its own national laws to prevent pass-through migration and prevent illegal immigration?

Answer. The Bukele administration has routinely supported U.S. efforts to reduce irregular migration in the region. While DHS reports record numbers of Salvadoran encounters in FY 2022, the Government of El Salvador continues to accept three repatriation flights per week, meeting current DHS needs. Additionally, the Govern-

ment of El Salvador remains a staunch supporter and participant in the Biden administration's robust H-2 visa program, providing Salvadorans a legal alternative to irregular migration.

As the host of the Grupo Conjunto Inteligencia Fronteriza (GCIF), a regional border intelligence and collaboration center, the Government of El Salvador plays a role in improving regional awareness of cross-border criminal elements, including human smuggling, to help inform law enforcement responses. Furthermore, through INL-supported law enforcement vetted units, including the HSI-supported Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU), El Salvador successfully investigates and disrupts transnational human smuggling and trafficking networks with assistance from the United States and other nations.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Government of El Salvador to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Question. How is the Biden administration's strategy not simply rewarding the bad behavior of a government that continues to not work with the U.S. in preventing illegal immigration?

Answer. The U.S. Strategy to Address the Root Causes of Migration prioritizes expanding broad-based economic growth, strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law, promoting human rights, improving citizen security, and reducing gender-based violence. Through diplomatic engagement, we seek to have El Salvador undertake reforms necessary to improve conditions such that Salvadorans can build the futures they want in their communities. Our foreign assistance programs support those efforts. If confirmed, I would continue to push for the Salvadoran Government to implement necessary reforms in support of these efforts.

U.S. Government foreign assistance funding is not handed over to partner governments to use as they see fit. The Department of State and USAID work with a variety of implementing partners beyond the governments, including civil society and international organizations, to implement assistance programs focused on anticorruption, transparency, responsive governance, and respect for human rights.

Question. Given the Bukele Government's decision to adopt bitcoin as a national currency and other questionable fiscal decisions, are you confident that his Government can manage U.S. foreign assistance it receives in an accountable way?

Answer. U.S. Government foreign assistance funding does not go to the Salvadoran Government to manage. The Department of State and USAID work with a variety of implementing partners beyond the Government, including civil society and international organizations, to implement assistance programs focused on anticorruption, transparency, responsive governance, and respect for human rights. When we do partner with the Government of El Salvador, a great part of such assistance is non-monetary and provided through technical assistance to government institutions to improve their capacity and effectiveness.

If confirmed, I will ensure we maintain strict oversight of our programs and report regularly on our efforts to Congress.

Question. I believe it is important that our regional approach continues to include respect for democratic institutions, the rule of law, and the defense of human rights. El Salvador's democracy faces a number of challenges from irregular migration, the recovery from the COVID pandemic, and corruption.

- If confirmed, how will you work to address these challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advocate for stronger democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and adherence to the rule of law emphasizing the need for comprehensive solutions to systemic problems. A strong and vibrant democracy lays the foundation for long-term stability and economic opportunity necessary to reduce irregular migration. I would use the full scope of diplomatic and foreign assistance tools to work with Salvadorans to strengthen democratic institutions, increase respect for the rule of law, defend human rights, with a focus on protecting civil society and freedom of expression.

Question. Do you agree with the decision made by the Biden administration to reprogram USAID's assistance for the Salvadorian Attorney General's office to civil society groups? Why?

Answer. Recent decisions by the Bukele administration have undermined the legitimacy and reliability of certain institutions, including the office of the Attorney General. If confirmed, I would support actions that shift assistance to civil society as a more efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars, and that send a signal that legitimacy is a crucial element of success in strengthening institutions.

Question. Some members of Congress have called for the removal of El Salvador from the CAFTA-DR agreement in order to compel greater respect for democracy and human rights.

- What are your views on the consequences of that action if it was to happen?

Answer. CAFTA-DR remains critical to creating a stable economic environment in Central America and opportunities for the people of the region. The agreement has benefited U.S. businesses and Salvadorans.

If confirmed, I will work to encourage greater respect for democracy and human rights in El Salvador and to promote the rule of law and an improved investment climate in line with CAFTA-DR.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HUGO F. RODRIGUEZ, JR. BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Nicaragua is noted for numerous human abuses. The Ortega regime has taken no steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed these violations. There was no action to address widespread government corruption, and President Ortega actively strengthened impunity among human rights abusers who demonstrated loyalty to him. Corruption and flagrant human rights abuse remains pervasive among government entities. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues?

Answer. President Ortega and Vice President Murillo and their collaborators continue to commit human rights abuses against the people of Nicaragua. The United States remains open to frank discussions on steps to return to democracy and respect for human rights in Nicaragua, but the Ortega-Murillo regime has not shown interest in a genuine dialogue. If confirmed, I would work with relevant stakeholders to use the economic and diplomatic tools at our disposal, including bilateral and multilateral engagement, sanctions, and visa restrictions, as appropriate, to support Nicaraguans' calls for democracy and justice and to promote accountability for those who carry out or are complicit in abuses. I would also work with international partners, to include in the OAS and the U.N. Human Rights Council, to support resolutions and statements on the situation in Nicaragua, addressing attacks on democracy and human rights and supporting those who protect and defend those principles. I would facilitate the work of the group of human rights experts on Nicaragua, established by the March 2022 U.N. Human Rights Council resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua.

Question. What steps would you take amongst civil society groups and international organizations to help bolster civil society of Nicaragua from the Ortega regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the Nicaraguan people in their efforts to recover their democracy, support a free and independent press, and promote the rule of law and respect for human rights. I would ensure that U.S. assistance programs effectively support Nicaraguan partners, including civil society groups, human rights defenders, faith-based organizations, journalists, and social movements working within and outside of Nicaragua. If confirmed, I would also work with the U.N. Human Rights Council, the European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Organization of American States, and other international partners to continue to speak out clearly in defense of democracy and human rights in Nicaragua.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to raising these serious issues directly with the Ortega regime?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining communication with the regime on a range of issues of importance to the United States and to seek out new opportunities for dialogue. So far, the Ortega-Murillo regime has not shown interest in a genuine dialogue on human rights, democracy, or other U.S. priorities. Nevertheless, I commit to continuing to raise these issues directly with the regime.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Nicaragua remained Tier 3 for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making any significant efforts to do so. The Government continues to downplay the severity of the trafficking problem and contradicts civil society reports of an increase in cases throughout the pandemic. If confirmed,

how could you work with civil society and government entities to improve reporting, victim services, and overall anti-trafficking work?

Answer. If confirmed, I would urge the Nicaraguan Government to work towards completing the prioritized recommendations as laid out in the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, including to increase efforts to identify trafficking victims. I would also support NGO partners seeking to provide trafficking victims with care and reintegration services, as well as those civil society groups that call on the Nicaraguan Government to respect the rule of law and human rights and to return to democracy.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, while Nicaragua's constitution prohibits discrimination on basis of religion, the president threatens, harasses, and routinely violates religious freedoms against any religious organizations not demonstrating loyalty to his regime. Attempts by embassy officials to reach out to the Government have been unsuccessful. If confirmed, what actions could you take to encourage the host government to bring government officials to engage with US officials to promote religious freedoms?

Answer. The Nicaraguan Government continues to undermine religious freedom, and we remain concerned about individuals and groups closely associated with the Government, as well as government officials themselves, continuing to harass, insult, and make death threats against Catholic clergy. If confirmed, I would call on the Nicaraguan Government to promote and guarantee the safety of religious leaders and worshippers along with the security of all places of worship in Nicaragua. I would also work closely with the office of the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to strongly press the Nicaraguan Government to engage in constructive dialogue on promoting respect for religious freedom.

Question. US officials have been able to engage with a variety of religious leaders in the country, how would you further these efforts to facilitate discussion on religious tolerance and freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with a variety of religious leaders in Nicaragua to better understand their concerns and the threats against them. Given the threats by the Ortega-Murillo regime and its supporters against the Catholic Church, if confirmed, I would take steps to ensure that any discussion with religious leaders on religious tolerance and freedom were carried out in a way that does not put them at greater risk of government harassment and repression.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to demarching the Nicaraguan Government to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the International Organizations (IO) bureau, the Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) bureau, and other stakeholders to identify ways to support qualified Americans in international organizations. I understand PRM funding varies from year to year to sponsor new Junior Program Officer (JPO) positions with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), typically in the range of 6 to 10 new posts, and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), usually 1 new JPO position annually. If confirmed, I will work with our colleagues inside the U.S. Government and through external partners to explore ways to contribute to this important program.

Question. Nicaragua has one of the lowest rates of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council. What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. While we maintain a range of bilateral communication with the Ortega-Murillo regime, it has repeatedly taken actions inconsistent with our hemisphere's commitment to democracy and has chosen to isolate itself. The Ortega-Murillo re-

gime has gone to great length to align itself with authoritarian leaders in countries such as Russia and the PRC to stifle the democratic aspirations of its people, which accounts for its low rate of voting coincidence with the United States.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Nicaraguans on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau to identify opportunities to demarche the Nicaraguan Government when appropriate and to identify interlocutors with credibility within the regime we can enlist to persuade the Government to vote with the United States in the U.N. system.

Question. Many U.S. missions have been under enormous stress over the last few years, in large part due to COVID. What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Managua?

Answer. Mission Managua operates under a variety of constraints due to tension in our bilateral relationship over democracy and human rights issues. Due to ongoing repression, many Nicaraguans who would normally welcome engagement with the Embassy are afraid to meet with U.S. officials. Travel in and out of Nicaragua has been expensive and especially cumbersome due to unusual requirements established for airlines by the Nicaraguan Government. The Nicaraguan government's decision to not reveal real statistics regarding the pandemic's trends and impacts made managing COVID especially challenging for Mission Managua. Nonetheless, Mission morale remains high and thanks to the deep commitment of our staff to promoting peaceful, democratic change, to protecting American citizens, and to defending other essential U.S. interests. Post management has worked with the Community Liaison Office to create opportunities for our Mission personnel and their families to manage stress and build a strong community.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with each member of the Embassy Managua team - to understand the skills they bring to our mission and ensure they understand how their role supports our strategic objectives. In previous postings, I have had considerable success building trust and strong connections with my team members, and teaching supervisors how to do the same with their direct reports. Through active listening and constant communication, we have been able to empower employees to achieve great outcomes, while also establishing a solid sense of how people are doing - an early-warning system for potential morale challenges. Working with my Deputy Chief of Mission, I intend to prioritize morale throughout the Mission: a happy team is a creative, energized, and productive team. I will also work with Bureau and Department leadership to convey their support for Embassy Managua's hard work in difficult circumstances.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to ensure every team member at Embassy Managua understands how his or her work connects to our mission: promoting accountability for the regime and its enablers who have undermined democracy and violated the human rights of Nicaraguans. I will communicate our operational priorities and our strategic vision continuously, in individual meetings with team members, in Country Team meetings and town halls, and in my policy speeches. Further, if confirmed I will ensure the Embassy Managua team understands the broader goals of the Biden-Harris Administration and the Department, and how their work contributes to that effort.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. My management style closely aligns with the Servant Leadership model, and I am a trained executive coach and long-time mentor. I start by building trust through regular one-on-one meetings with individual team members, aimed at opening communications, reducing barriers, and getting to know employees' strengths and aspirations. With these connections and understanding, I can offer support as my employees tackle challenges, and I can target professional development opportunities where they will have the greatest impact. Trust also creates space for empowerment and an atmosphere of candor, generally allowing me to recognize and address performance or personnel issues early, when they are easier to solve with simple course corrections. I teach my supervisors and team leaders this model and hold them accountable for building the same trust-based atmosphere with their direct reports.

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

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private. If confirmed, I would treat all colleagues with respect and civility, as I have done throughout my professional career.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. Over the last several years, I have had the honor of being involved in the selection of the DCMs and Principal Officers chosen to serve across the Western Hemisphere. These men and women bring a wealth of experience and talents to these leadership jobs. If confirmed, my leadership relationship with my Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) would be close, collegial, and collaborative, based on trust and continuous communication. As a one-time DCM myself, I valued the Ambassador's trust and the benefit of his experience in my own professional development. With respect to my DCM, I hope to work closely to understand her strengths and then divide up responsibilities with an eye to preparing her to lead her own Mission as an Ambassador in the not-too-distant future.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. Embassy Managua will be blessed to have a DCM with deep previous experience in operations and talent management, as well as significant time as Acting DCM in two previous postings. If confirmed, I currently envision my DCM taking the lead in the day-to-day management of the Mission, but I also hope to keep her involved in policy-making decisions. She is a gifted diplomat, and in my absence, I want her to be prepared and empowered to run the Mission (and run her own Embassy in the future).

Question. In order to create and continue employee excellence at the Department, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports (EERs) for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, though often lacking. Do you believe that it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performances in order to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeeded in their roles?

Answer. Yes. I believe it is critical to provide employees with accurate, constructive, and timely feedback on their performance, including but beyond the EER process. This empowers employees to take action in areas in which they need to develop and to continue practices at which they excel. Professional development, along with recognizing and rewarding employee successes, also contributes to morale and retention efforts.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers. If confirmed, I would adopt this approach with those I supervise and set this expectation for all managers throughout the Embassy.

Question. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in Nicaragua. In your opinion, do U.S. diplomats get outside of our embassy walls enough to accomplish fully their missions?

Answer. U.S. diplomats in Nicaragua actively engage with actors across Nicaraguan society and with international partners to advance U.S. priorities in Nicaragua. They face unique challenges given the Ortega-Murillo regime's rapid closure of civic space, repression of any dissenting voices, and surveillance and harassment of key civil society activists and political and business leaders. The Embassy must balance the benefits of in-person meetings with contacts and the risks such meetings pose to the contacts themselves. But our officers have found ways to overcome these challenges to maintain key relationships and keep their fingers on the pulse of the country.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would support Embassy staff in their efforts to access all local populations in ways that do not pose a threat to the Nicaraguans with whom they are in contact. I would encourage my staff to communicate with Nicaraguan

contacts who still reside in the country as well as those in exile, and to find creative ways to build contact bases.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Nicaragua?

Answer. The public diplomacy environment in Nicaragua presents a significant challenge to our Mission, given the regime continues to close the few remaining democratic spaces. Nicaragua's Foreign Agents Law limits regular foreign assistance funding to local civil society organizations. The Nicaraguan regime closed more than 1,000 NGOs in 2022 alone, which includes some of our implementing partners on the ground. Despite these challenges, U.S. Embassy Managua manages robust public diplomacy efforts to maintain engagement with the Nicaraguan public, build strong relationships with civil society, and support the Nicaraguan people through active English language programs, support for independent journalists, and professional exchange programs.

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

Answer. U.S. diplomats in Nicaragua face challenges in combatting Ortega-Murillo regime disinformation. The Ortega-Murillo regime attempts to consolidate its control over Nicaraguan media and civil society by imprisoning journalists, forcing them into exile, and shutting down most of the independent media outlets. In 2020, the Nicaraguan regime passed a Foreign Agents Act, sometimes referred to as "Putin's Law," which actively prevents local civil society from receiving foreign assistance, a standard and critical role of Public Affairs Sections in the field. Finally, harassment of U.S. exchange program participants continues. Participants risk bullying at the airport and even confiscation of their passports.

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

Answer. Through constant discussion and collaboration, we speak with a unified voice across all levels of the Department—from Washington to the field. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate in support of human rights, democracy, and those who courageously work to protect and defend these principles. The Embassy makes great efforts to protect the identity and wellbeing of the victims of human rights abuses, as well as to preserve the ability to continue its work to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Department also coordinates closely with Embassy Managua to ensure unified messages that advance U.S. public diplomacy goals in Nicaragua.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel. If confirmed, do you commit to taking this threat seriously?

Answer. Yes. I take nothing more seriously than the well-being and security of the people who work with me. The interagency community continues its examination of a range of hypotheses. Secretary Blinken has prioritized the Department's response to AHIs, setting clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department's communication with its workforce and providing care for affected employees and family members.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people working at U.S. Embassy Managua and commit to regularly talking as openly as possible to Mission personnel.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HUGO F.
RODRIGUEZ, JR. BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In November, the Ortega regime lifted visa requirements for Cuban nationals, in what appears to be an effort to weaponize illegal migration into the United States. In your opinion, do such measures present a national security risk for the United States?

Answer. The United States is deeply concerned about increased irregular Cuban migration via Nicaragua following the Ortega-Murillo regime's elimination of visa

requirements for Cuban citizens. We have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of Cuban irregular migrants crossing the border from Nicaragua to Honduras with the intention of continuing to and irregularly entering the United States. This land route is a dangerous path for migrants seeking a better life. Irregular migration and forced exile put migrants in dire humanitarian situations and affect our entire hemisphere. The United States and the broader region all share an interest in sustainable solutions that humanely reduce irregular migration and forced exile in, from, and through the region.

Question. Is it in the interest of the United States for Nicaragua to continue to receive benefits under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement? Please explain.

Answer. The CAFTA-DR remains critical to creating a stable economic environment in Central America and opportunities for the people of the region. The Nicaraguan people have endured significant hardships under Ortega and Murillo, including deteriorating economic and social conditions since the regime began its crackdown in April 2018. In light of the dramatic deterioration of respect for democratic principles in Nicaragua, the United States has taken a number of actions, including withholding support for Nicaraguan government participation in trade capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives and not allocating Nicaragua a sugar tariff-rate quota for 2023. If confirmed, I would support efforts to review the implications of Nicaragua's continued participation in CAFTA-DR.

Question. If confirmed, would you support a detailed investigation of the assets and holdings of the Nicaraguan Armed Forces in the United States and consider appropriate actions to hold it accountable for gross violations of human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support a detailed investigation of the assets and holdings of the Nicaraguan Armed Forces in the United States, consistent with applicable law. The United States has already taken steps to promote accountability for the Nicaraguan Armed Forces' role in the Ortega-Murillo regime's repression, imposing sanctions on key members of the Nicaraguan military. On January 10, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated six individuals pursuant to Executive Order 13851, three of whom are associated with the Nicaraguan Army and the Military Social Welfare Institute (IPSM), the Nicaraguan Army's public investment fund. OFAC's press release accompanying these sanctions recognized that the Nicaraguan Army not only refused to order the dismantling of paramilitary or "parapolice" forces during and after political uprisings, but the military also provided weapons to the parapolice who carried out numerous acts of violence against the Nicaraguan people.

Question. If confirmed, would you support using the tools available under Section 5 of the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NHRAA) and Executive Order 13851 to target Ortega's Ministry of Governance (Ministerio de Gobernacion) and the National Penitentiary System as institutions directly involved in violations of internationally-recognized human rights in Nicaragua?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support using the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal to promote accountability for the Ortega-Murillo regime's repression and human rights abuses. I would work with the embassy team, staff in Washington, and interagency colleagues to consider the appropriateness of applying the tools in the law formerly known as the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 and Executive Order 13851 to the abuses of the Ministry of Governance and the National Penitentiary System.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CANDACE A. BOND BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Trinidad and Tobago are noted for human rights issues of unlawful killings, refoulement of refugees, corruption, and human trafficking. The Government took steps to identify, investigate, and prosecute these abuses but the persistence of open-ended investigations and the slow pace of the justice system left impunity to be an issue.

- What is your assessment of the persistence of these violations?

Answer. My understanding is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GoTT) has yet to convict a single individual under its 2011 anti-trafficking law. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remain significant concerns,

inhibiting law enforcement action. Courts are deeply backlogged, often taking five to 10 years to resolve cases, including trafficking cases, despite adopting justice system reforms in 2019 to address the problem. The judiciary's broad discretion and inconsistency in granting bail, as well as reports of fraud and corruption within the bail process, engender concomitant recidivism, victim re-traumatization, and a perception of impunity.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address these issues and help the Government become more efficient in investigations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to undertake concrete steps to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of investigations to ensure accountability for human trafficking and other related human rights issues. With regard to human trafficking, these include efforts to: investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, including complicit officials and staff; ensure victims are not penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; strengthen rules and regulations to ensure immigration enforcement does not hinder human trafficking detection, criminal law enforcement, or victim protections; ensure trafficking is investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law; provide adequate funding for robust trafficking investigations and victim services; train law enforcement and prosecutors in proactively identifying, obtaining, preserving, and corroborating evidence of trafficking; and improve cooperation between the Counter Trafficking Unit, prosecutors, the judiciary, and NGOs to increase the number of cases that proceed to trial. If confirmed, I will also explore programmatic responses to assist the GoTT in improving efficiency in investigations such as through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

Question. In regards to refugees, many international agencies expressed alarm at the response to Venezuelan refugees. How could you work with the Trinidad Government to improve the standards of treatment for refugees?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to prosecute human traffickers, and provide regularization and documentation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in the country so they may access their basic rights and services and reduce their vulnerability to human trafficking. I will underscore the importance of humane treatment of migrants and refugees, in line with international protection standards.

I will work with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to promote greater security cooperation and training opportunities for their Coast Guard and other border security agencies.

Finally, if confirmed, I will encourage the GoTT to regularly screen this population for human trafficking indicators and refer identified victims for adequate services.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Trinidad and Tobago remained on the Tier 2 watch list for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. The Government has not convicted a trafficker under its 2011 anti-trafficking law, corruption and official complicity remain concerning in inhibiting law enforcement action, and victim identification services have been weak.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to stymie corruption and support law enforcement to take action against traffickers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers - including complicit officials and staff - and ensure trafficking is investigated and prosecuted using the anti-trafficking law and not as other or lesser crimes.

Question. What steps would you take to encourage the host government to improve victim identification procedures and services?

Answer. As noted in the 2022 TIP Report, victim identification and services in Trinidad and Tobago remains weak. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to: increase proactive victim identification, screening, and protection among vulnerable communities, including migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees, especially Venezuelans; ensure victims are not penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; strengthen rules and regulations to ensure immigration enforcement does not hinder human trafficking detection, criminal law enforcement, or victim protections; implement a formalized protocol and a functioning and active coordinating committee for victim care; improve the quality of victim care - especially for children - and increase bilingual services; approve, fund, and implement the anti-trafficking NAP for 2021-2023; and provide adequate funding for robust trafficking investigations and victim services, including accommodations; and increase trauma-informed training on trafficking for NGO, shelter, social services, and law

enforcement staff to improve their ability to identify and care for potential trafficking victims.

Question. The Government did not formally adopt a National Action Plan for 2021-2023, if confirmed, how could you urge the Government to adopt a NAP?

Answer. National Action Plans are an important component of the fight against human trafficking. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government to approve, fund, and implement the anti-trafficking NAP for 2021-2023.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Trinidad's constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religious belief or practice. US officials have engaged the Government on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and funded programs in support of interfaith communication and cooperation.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago is a stable multi-cultural and multi-religious democracy. The U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago works to advance religious freedom and tolerance for religious diversity through engagement with multi-faith communities, individual faith leaders, and religious groups. This work helps strengthen interfaith understanding of religious freedom and ensures that citizens continue to coexist peacefully as they have since Trinidad and Tobago's independence. If confirmed, I will stand by the Trinbagonian peoples' right to freedom of religion or belief and ensure the Embassy continues to work to address issues related to the discrimination of religious minorities and other disenfranchised communities.

Question. If confirmed, how could you build upon these engagements and programs to continue to improve the standing of religious freedom and tolerance in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my Embassy team, the Ambassador-At-Large for International Religious Freedom (IRF), and other stakeholders to ensure robust engagement with all faith communities and credible inter-faith groups to advance religious freedom and tolerance. Proper monitoring and evaluation of existing programs will guide needed adjustments or changes to existing programming.

International Organizations

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

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Trinidad Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the State Department's Bureau for International Organizations to identify qualified candidates for the program by engaging civil society organizations and government officers on issues of great importance in Trinidad and Tobago, including but not limited to human rights, climate change, and drugs and crime.

Question. Trinidad and Tobago has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago had a 24% voting coincidence with the United States, reflecting the views of many Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states, which tend to vote as a block. If confirmed, I will engage the highest level of the GoTT to explain U.S. multilateral positions and strive to improve voting coincidence, better reflecting our shared values.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Trinidad Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the Government on shared values and interests to try to seek alignment in the U.N. system. I will lobby the GoTT regularly in advance of critical votes and work to ensure coordination in the U.N. and other multilateral fora.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. I understand that COVID-19 has caused considerable stress for U.S. Embassy personnel -- both Americans and locally employed staff, and their families. In many instances, the pandemic has exacerbated preexisting challenges such as staffing shortages. COVID-19 continues to pose significant concerns for U.S. Embassy staff and their families as less than 52 percent of Trinidad and Tobago's population is fully vaccinated and the country is dealing with new variants that increase susceptibility to the pandemic. Notwithstanding these challenges, I understand that Embassy staff continue to work diligently to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. If confirmed, I will make taking care of our employees my first priority, while ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs.

Question. How do you intend to improve morale at Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. If confirmed, I will improve morale at U.S. Embassy Port of Spain by implementing a collaborative leadership approach in which I actively listen to the views and analyses of my staff on foreign policy and workplace issues, provide training to all employees on cross-cultural communication and leadership, and engage the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to advance progress on issues that most affect employee morale, such as timely receipt of value added tax reimbursements and the establishment of a diplomatic post office.

One of my priorities will be to finalize the process to start construction on a new embassy compound (NEC). U.S. Mission Port of Spain has one of the oldest embassies in the region as it was built and opened in the 1960s. A NEC would significantly improve staff morale. If confirmed, I will work diligently to ensure that vacant positions in the Embassy are filled, and our staffing reflects our bilateral priorities. I will also continue to advocate with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to accredit same-sex spouses of U.S. diplomats and administrative and technical staff to ensure the Embassy is able to attract the best and brightest U.S. Government employees who are currently excluded from serving in Trinidad and Tobago with their families.

Question. How do you intend to create a unified mission and vision at Mission Port of Spain?

Answer. The morale, well-being, and safety of all mission employees will be one of my top priorities as Ambassador, if confirmed. I intend to create a unified mission and vision for U.S. Embassy Port of Spain by clearly and consistently articulating the priority U.S. foreign policy goals that our post will work diligently to accomplish, empower my staff to lead and take ownership of accomplishing those goals, frequently review our progress in advancing U.S. foreign policy goals in Trinidad and Tobago, and when necessary, amend and modify our strategies and tactics to ensure we implement innovative, coherent, and sensible approaches commensurate with Embassy resources to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as consultative with open communication. I believe good leadership is rooted in collaboration and I am committed to the ongoing development of my staff. If confirmed, I will seek to identify what motivates each employee so as to identify their strengths and weaknesses and help them to become better professionals.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate a subordinate, in public or in private. I believe such conduct is antithetical to creating a positive and productive workplace.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will implement and sustain a collaborative leadership relationship with the deputy chief of mission (DCM). I will ensure that I work closely with my DCM to explain and share my vision with staff to advance U.S. foreign policy goals, maintain strong workplace morale, and provide the necessary resources and support so that our employees efficiently and effectively perform their jobs. The key to the close, collaborative leadership relationship that I will sustain with my DCM, if confirmed, will be constant and consistent communication. I will hold regular and frequent meetings to make sure the DCM understands my vision and goals, and we articulate and execute our leadership and management of the embassy based on the values of a united, collaborative, one-mission/one-team effort.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust my deputy chief of mission (DCM) to be responsible for managing the daily operations of the embassy, while I serve as the U.S. Government's lead interlocutor with the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago to advance U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy goals. I will clearly articulate my leadership and management vision and goals for the embassy to the DCM and she/he will make sure to execute them in close collaboration with the managers of sections and U.S. interagency offices working in Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout my professional career, I have maintained an open-door policy with my staff. I will continue to do so with the DCM and Embassy employees. Finally, if confirmed, I will consistently remind the DCM that taking care of our employees should always be our first priority, while ensuring they have the necessary resources and support to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs.

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

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

Answer. Yes. I believe it is important to provide all employees with accurate and constructive feedback. It is essential to their professional development, and I am committed to making that a hallmark of my service in Trinidad and Tobago, if confirmed.

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

Answer. Yes. I believe clear, accurate, and direct feedback is essential to the management of all employees. I want to ensure everyone on our team is contributing to our success. That is only possible if everyone receives the feedback they require.

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

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

Answer. I understand U.S. diplomats meet contacts outside the embassy and assess local conditions despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic. If confirmed, I will encourage Embassy staff to continue to get beyond the walls as often as we can, within the bounds of safety.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to get out as much as possible, to share U.S. views and listen to concerns, and to highlight the great programs that the U.S. Government is conducting in Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I will encourage embassy staff to interact with local populations from all walks of life.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. The law of Trinidad and Tobago provides for a high degree of freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combine to promote freedom of expression, including for members of the media. Advertising supports the news outlets in Trinidad and Tobago, and, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT), all claim to be politically independent. TTT Lim-

ited is a state-owned enterprise launched in August 2018 by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley. Trinbagonians enjoy a high degree of literacy and the public regularly engages in robust political debate. The Embassy maintains a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with content on each tailored to specific audiences that follow each platform.

The Embassy provides grants to NGOs in support of the Mission's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) goals, including to support education, at-risk youth, marginalized populations, and persons with disabilities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section encourages Trinbagonian students to pursue higher education in the United States through EducationUSA and an American Center that offers resources for standardized testing, college selection, and pursuing scholarships.

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

Answer. The local press is free but tends to favor sensational journalism. Journalists are sometimes sloppy in pursuit of being the first to write a story. This makes it more challenging for the U.S. Embassy to control its narrative in the press as journalists occasionally misquote or misrepresent the United States' position. However, the United States and the bilateral relationship enjoy a high degree of attention among Trinbagonians and the media, and many U.S. policies receive positive press coverage. In addition, combatting the misinformation campaign currently undertaken by the PRC remains an issue of paramount importance.

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

Answer. I understand the State Department's bureaus and overseas missions work hand-in-hand on public diplomacy. In doing so, they create messaging about key policy priorities that resonate with the local audience and design educational and cultural programs that further U.S. goals of economic growth, respect for human rights, strengthening civil society, protecting the environment, and embracing diversity.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people who will work with me.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to talking as openly as you can to Mission Port of Spain personnel?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to speaking as openly as possible to mission personnel and working with health and security officials as recommended to establish and maintain appropriate protocols and ensure a healthy working environment for both Americans and local staff.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CANDACE A. BOND BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that's by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party activities represent a threat to U.S. interests in the region, particularly in terms of investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects.

As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, the United States must invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Trinidad and Tobago, highlight the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Trinidad and Tobago's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive

partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP's influence in Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago exports seven times more to the United States than China. In addition to our significant trade relationship, Trinidad and Tobago cooperates bilaterally with the United States on counter-narcotics trafficking, by way of intelligence sharing of origin, transit, and destination information. These are the strong foundations on which our bilateral relationship is built. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage bilateral cooperation on trade and drug trafficking and will continue to promote shared democratic values.

Question. Crime is one of the major problems facing Trinidad and Tobago. Last year, the homicide rate in Trinidad and Tobago was the 4th highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the homicide rate actually increased by 12% last year. If we truly want to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago deal with the scourge of violent crime, we need a U.S. Ambassador that fully committed to commonsense solutions.

- Do you now, or have you ever, supported the Defund the Police movement?

Answer. No. I share your concern regarding rising violence and insecurity in Trinidad and Tobago. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen the partnership between the United States and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). Strengthening law enforcement and the justice system, through activities like incorporating forensic evidence and case management, remains crucial to Trinidad and Tobago's ability to interdict narcotics and manage evidence to prosecute crimes, which supports U.S. national interests.

Question. Do you believe Trinidad and Tobago's crime rates can be solved with less police and less law enforcement assistance from the United States?

Answer. No. Through CBSI, the United States provides critical support to Trinidad and Tobago to fight corruption and strengthen police services screening. Technical assistance from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), in addition to critical support from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Department of Defense, help disrupt the flow of narcotics to the United States and have resulted in the seizure of large amounts of illicit narcotics, especially cocaine. Combined with INL's community policing efforts, and the recent deployment of U.S. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) personnel to T&T, our assistance is making a decisive difference in helping combat crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to support Trinidadian efforts to counter violent crime?

Answer. In addition to the aforementioned CBSI programming, I understand that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implements essential programming to assist at-risk youth and reforming the juvenile justice in Trinidad and Tobago as part of CBSI. If confirmed, I will continue to support CBSI assistance, and work to expand this programming.

Question. Due to its location just off the coast of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago are one of the few countries that did not break relations with the despotic regime of Nicolas Maduro. Some of this is practical - there are issues that Trinidad and Tobago simply have to work with Maduro on, like a shared maritime border - but the Rowley Government has called for lifting sanctions and joint development of oil and gas with the regime.

- Is it still the policy of the U.S. Government not to recognize Nicolas Maduro as the President of Venezuela?

Answer. The United States continues to recognize Juan Guaid? as Interim President and the 2015 National Assembly as the last national democratic institution in Venezuela.

Question. Is it still the policy of the United States to hold Maduro accountable for his crimes against the people of Venezuela?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support holding accountable actors that engage in corruption, violate U.S. laws, or abuse human rights in connection with Venezuela. Free and fair elections are paramount to stability in the region.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to encourage Trinidad and Tobago to align with the U.S. stance towards Nicolas Maduro?

Answer. The United States will continue to work with the international community to promote substantive, credible advancements to restore democratic processes and institutions in Venezuela. If confirmed, I will work with Trinidad and Tobago to continue seeking opportunities to engage in spaces that focus on improving the lives of Venezuelans.

Question. Trinidad and Tobago is currently struggling to revitalize its economy as it emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. You ended your written testimony by “pledging to dedicate your skills and energy to strengthen our diplomatic and economic ties to Trinidad and Tobago, advance U.S. interests in the world and to promote American democratic values.” Many Trinidadians reside in New York and Florida and have links to families back home. If confirmed, what’s your message to these Trinidadian-Americans?

Answer. The Department of State has no greater priority than the protection of the lives and interests of U.S. citizens abroad. My message to Trinbagonian-Americans is that I value the deep and extensive cultural and familial ties between the United States and the twin islands. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage participation for Trinidad and Tobago’s civil society, government, and military leaders in Department of State-sponsored professional development exchanges to share best practices and build closer ties with U.S. counterparts and institutions. I will also advocate on behalf of American businesses, including those with linkages to the diaspora, to compete for opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question. How will you strengthen our existing relations with Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to increase public-private partnerships and investment in Trinidad and Tobago. A strong economic relationship is a hallmark of strong relations, and I will encourage U.S. investment. If confirmed, I will also seek to strengthen institutions and policies that help us achieve common goals of economic and political partnerships.

Question. What is Trinidad and Tobago’s post-recovery plan?

Answer. Trinidad and Tobago experienced record numbers of new infections and deaths in 2021 and declining economic activity due to public health restrictions and global conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trinidad and Tobago’s Ministry of Planning and Development created the “Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago Post-COVID-19 Pandemic,” which defines priority actions to address and mitigate the pandemic’s economic impact, restart the economy, and lay a foundation for sustained economic recovery. While the Government continues to implement these recommendations, current record global energy prices indicate Trinidad and Tobago should experience economic growth in 2022 for the first time since 2015.

Question. How has the United States assisted in this recovery?

Answer. The United States donated nearly 685,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to Trinidad and Tobago. The United States also donated field hospitals, ventilators, and other medical supplies. The United States remains Trinidad and Tobago’s top trading partner and number one destination for its energy exports, which generates most of the country’s export revenue. U.S. private sector technology, services, and machinery power Trinidad and Tobago’s industrial base.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HEIDE B. FULTON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department’s 2022 Human Rights report, Uruguay was noted for having harsh and potentially life-threatening conditions in its prison and detention facilities across the country. Despite that, the Government has taken steps to identify and punish officials who commit human rights abuses, and there were no reports of impunity.

- What is your assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts by the Government?

Answer. Uruguay enjoys an overall positive human rights record and has a strong international reputation as a leader on international law and democracy. The country has an independent press, an effective judiciary, low levels of corruption, and a functioning democratic political system. Uruguay established the National Institution for Human Rights (INDDHH) in 2008 to defend, protect, and promote human rights.

The Human Rights Report identifies prison conditions as an area of concern, with approximately one-third of Uruguay's prison facilities considered substandard, and the overall prison population high and growing. The Government of Uruguay recognizes the improvements needed in prisons and detention facilities and is taking steps to build new prisons and renovate existing facilities. Uruguay has a special rapporteur on the prison system, who advises parliament on compliance with prison legislation and international standards, monitors prison conditions, and provides in-depth, independent analysis of the prison situation. Embassy Montevideo works closely with that rapporteur and entities throughout the Government to support their efforts to improve prison conditions. In July, a group of officials traveled to the United States to learn from U.S. prison reform experiences. Uruguay's strong institutions, efficient and independent justice system, and low levels of corruption help prevent impunity for human rights violations within prisons.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with the host government to address the conditions in prison facilities?

Answer. The State Department has engaged with the Government and parliament on prison reform, including a program over the past two years to connect Uruguayan officials with experts in the United States for virtual exchanges on justice issues, including prison reform. If confirmed, I look forward to bringing my experience as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to further our work on this important issue. If confirmed, I will also support the ongoing efforts to support the Government of Uruguay's efforts to improve prison conditions and outcomes and will raise this issue in my interactions with Uruguayan Government officials.

Question. How could you work with the Government to continue to build on and improve the country's human rights record?

Answer. If confirmed, I will look for ways to address the issues raised in the Human Rights Report, including prison conditions as well as gender-based violence and discrimination against vulnerable groups such as afro-descendants, persons with disabilities, women, and the LGBTQI+ population. Uruguay has a historically strong, democratic governance structure and a positive record of upholding political rights and civil liberties, and our work on these issues are respectful exchanges between two countries striving to perfect the promise of democracy and rule of law for their entire populations. Embassy Montevideo also engages frequently with civil society organizations on a broad range of issues, especially human rights. If confirmed, I will work to support those civil society organizations working on human rights, including through exchanges with the United States. Given Uruguay's strong human rights record, if confirmed I will also encourage Uruguay to serve as a model in the hemisphere and to share its experiences with other countries in the region.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Uruguay remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. However, the Government has failed to provide adequate victim services or consistent access to shelters, law enforcement did not proactively and systematically identify victims, and the country's National Action Plan expired without replacement.

- If confirmed, how could you encourage the host government to improve upon victim services and access to shelters?

Answer. Uruguay remains a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Uruguay has been designated as a Tier 2 country in the Trafficking in Persons Report since 2015. Civil society organizations have expressed concern about the suitability of the facilities where the Government of Uruguay lodges trafficking victims and reported challenges finding shelter for some trafficking victims. If confirmed, I and my team will engage with Uruguayan officials to encourage the Government to make provision for adequate shelter and services, including daytime programming, whether directly or through partnerships with civil society organizations.

Question. What steps would you take to help enhance law enforcement's ability to identify victims?

Answer. If confirmed, I will actively engage the Government of Uruguay on victims' identification, prosecution of perpetrators, and comprehensive victims' assistance. In my interactions with government officials, if confirmed, I will highlight the recommendations from the Trafficking in Persons report, including increased efforts to identify victims of forced labor and sex trafficking; proactive screening to detect trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations; providing specialized services

and shelter for all victims; and increasing training for law enforcement officials, labor inspectors, coast guard officers, prosecutors, judges, and social workers to understand human trafficking.

Question. How could you urge the Government to replace its expired NAP?

Answer. The Government has not renewed or replaced its national action plan to combat trafficking since its expiration at the end of 2020. If confirmed, I will continue Embassy Montevideo's engagement with Uruguayan officials to encourage the Government to approve and implement a new national action plan to combat trafficking in persons. The Embassy has promoted engagement between U.S. and Uruguayan authorities that helped improve communication and understanding between our governments on this issue, and if confirmed I will work to increase these kinds of exchanges. If confirmed, I will also look for opportunities to bring non-governmental experts from the United States to Uruguay to increase awareness of TIP and share best practices among government and civil society experts.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Uruguay's constitution provides for freedom of religion and affirms the state does not endorse any specific religion. The commitment to secularism has created some controversy between religious and political leaders. US officials have engaged the Government on its interpretation of secularism, and worked on creating a Uruguayan Government counterpart for religious issues.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Uruguay's strong human rights record and international reputation as a leader on human rights also extends to religious freedom. Uruguay's constitution provides for religious freedom and discrimination based on religion is prohibited. The International Religious Freedom report for Uruguay raises some issues around the interpretation of secularism, however, as some religious groups said government authorities sometimes interpreted secularism as the absence of religion, rather than as the coexistence of multiple religions and the independence of religion from the state. Religious organizations also encourage the establishment of more channels of communication with the Government to discuss issues related to religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with political and religious leaders to increase cooperation amongst the groups?

Answer. Embassy Montevideo has taken important steps to bring together a range of religious leaders, as well as academics, lawyers, and human rights experts, to discuss interfaith collaboration and to hear concerns about faith-related issues. These conversations help bring attention to the importance of religious coexistence and interfaith dialogue in Uruguay, and if confirmed I will continue these dialogues.

Question. What steps could you take to help the country establish a governmental counterpart to take responsibility of religious issues?

Answer. Embassy Montevideo officials have raised with government officials the issues highlighted in the International Religious Freedom report, including the Government's interpretation of secularism, and establishing a government counterpart for religious issues, and encouraged government representatives to engage in dialogue with religious groups. If confirmed, I will continue to raise these issues in my conversations with government officials to reinforce their importance.

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

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Uruguayan Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, I commit to demarching the Uruguayan Government to encourage support for Ms. Bogdan's candidacy, if confirmed. Secretary Blinken publicly endorsed Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy in March 2021. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs to support Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy and encourage Uruguay to vote for her for ITU Secretary-General, as well as the candidacies of other U.S. candidates endorsed by the Department to fill critical positions at the U.N. and its specialized bodies. Embassy Montevideo has engaged Government of Uruguay counterparts in support of Ms.

Bogdan-Martin, including both demarches and facilitating conversations with the candidate, and if confirmed I will continue that engagement as the vote approaches.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. I am committed to increasing the representation of independent, qualified U.S. citizens in international organizations. If confirmed, I will work actively with the IO bureau and other stakeholders to assist in identifying, recruiting, and installing more U.S. officials in positions at the U.N., including Junior Professional Officer (JPO) positions.

Question. Uruguay has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Uruguay is a respected member of many international organizations and cooperates with the United States on issues such as strengthening international peacekeeping and promoting human rights. Uruguay strongly believes in multilateralism and dialogue to achieve international peace and security and is among the world's top troop contributing countries to U.N. peacekeeping operations per capita and is the top in Latin America.

Uruguay has a lower voting coincidence with the United States in the U.N. General Assembly than the global average, similar to the voting coincidence of other countries in Latin America. In 2020, however, Uruguay's voting coincidence rose significantly and was above the region's average. Uruguay has voted repeatedly to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and voted to suspend Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council. If confirmed, I will work to build on this positive trend and further align our positions in the U.N. and other multilateral bodies.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Uruguayan Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. If confirmed, I will strive for early, consistent, and high-level engagement with Government of Uruguay officials on critical votes in U.N. bodies, to convey the U.S. position and encourage alignment with Uruguay.

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

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Montevideo?

Answer. Like all our missions around the world, Embassy Montevideo faced challenges in 2020 and 2021 in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through its policy of "responsible liberty," the Government of Uruguay did not impose the strict lockdowns seen in other countries and was largely successful in navigating the pandemic. I understand that Embassy morale has been resilient through these challenges and remains strong.

I understand that Embassy Montevideo has been undergoing a major renovation since 2018 that has had an impact on morale. Embassy employees were not relocated to a new work site and are working in the Chancery during the continued construction, leading to loud noise, odors, dust, and other construction-related issues for staff.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will solicit feedback from Embassy Montevideo personnel directly on factors that are having an impact on morale and take steps to address them. I also plan, if confirmed, to hold town hall forums and one-on-one meetings to listen to and engage with our employees, including our Locally Employed Staff. If confirmed, I look forward to building on the work of my predecessors to celebrate and reward the accomplishments of our Embassy Montevideo team and to support and strengthen the important work of our Community Liaison Office.

Related to the rehabilitation project, if confirmed I will work with the Overseas Building Operations and Diplomatic Security to explore ways to minimize the impact on Embassy morale of the ongoing construction work, including alternative work sites to allow work to proceed free of the construction-related noise, odors, and dust.

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

Answer. My leadership and management style are informed by my formation as an Army officer. I believe in setting a clear direction in our priorities, establishing

left and right limits, and then providing the resources my team needs to achieve our goals. I support this approach through my style of frequent, open communication to ensure understanding about the intent of our objectives and to work through challenges as they arise. In my experience, clear direction, support, and open communication forge strong teams.

I will also reinforce the integrated country strategy (CS) objectives for Embassy Montevideo, which incorporate the input of the sections and agencies present in Uruguay, to align and unify our objectives across the entire mission.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I take management seriously and carry out my management style outlined above: set a clear direction, establish parameters, and provide necessary resources, complemented by frequent, open communication. If confirmed, I will treat all Embassy Montevideo team members with respect and will help reinforce respectful workplace culture.

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

Answer. No, I do not believe it is acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either publicly or privately.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. The relationship between the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission is the most important in the Mission, one that sets the tenor for the work and ultimate success of the mission. If confirmed, I would work closely with my DCM to ensure that together we are articulating a clear vision and that we are effectively monitoring and addressing challenges that our team faces, either internally or externally.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate my DCM will function as the chief operating officer of the Mission, charged with leading the implementation of the vision that we have articulated in coordination with Washington through the ICS and beyond. One of the most important responsibilities of the DCM is the professional development and mentorship of Embassy personnel, and if confirmed I will reaffirm the importance of that work and actively engage in that process. If confirmed, I will ask my DCM to lead a robust development program to ensure our more junior team members have the tools and skills needed to succeed and I would work closely with my DCM to support professional development at all levels. If confirmed, I will also ask the DCM to join me in strongly supporting the efforts of the Community Liaison Office to maintain the well-being and morale of the embassy community, including family members.

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

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

Answer. Yes, I believe that it is imperative to provide all employees with accurate, constructive feedback in order to encourage improvement and achieve peak performance. I view performance feedback as a mechanism to enhance the functioning of the broader Mission, in addition to supporting the personal growth, professional development, and retention of our personnel. I also believe it is important to recognize and celebrate the positive performance of team members who succeed.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback at all levels, and would begin by modeling this behavior.

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

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

Answer. As a Public Diplomacy-coned Foreign Service Officer with experience in a range of public diplomacy positions around the world throughout my career, I understand firsthand that U.S. diplomats abroad are uniquely positioned to engage directly with representatives across government and civil society to track and understand trends and developments abroad. It is vital to engage directly with a range of populations and hear a diverse range of voices, which requires a dedicated commitment to engagement. If confirmed, I would seek to support a robust outreach and travel schedule for myself and encourage it from the full Embassy Montevideo team, while taking into account all relevant health and security considerations. I understand that Embassy Montevideo has been generally able to travel safely throughout Uruguay, and if confirmed I will make it a priority to find ways for our team to safely engage in outreach across the country and with a range of interlocutors to support our objectives.

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

Answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the fundamental engagement and outreach aspect of our work, requiring us to adapt and modernize. In addition to traditional in-person meetings and travel, which have been ongoing in Uruguay since mid-2020, if confirmed, I will leverage the new telecommunications technologies developed and adopted during the pandemic to connect with new and wider audiences.

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

- What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Uruguay?

Answer. Exchange programs such as Fulbright build connections between our countries, especially future Uruguayan leaders who pursue postgraduate study in the United States. In addition, professional exchange programs play an important role in addressing issues related to Uruguay's economic development, including promoting the value of entrepreneurship among historically risk-averse Uruguayans.

Uruguayans have an affinity for the United States and are receptive in general to U.S. points of view. In an October 2021 State Department-led survey, Uruguayans expressed broadly positive views of the United States and admiration for its economic power and strong educational system. In explaining their positive views, Uruguayans pointed to the United States' status as a world power, the benefit to Uruguay from bilateral economic ties, family and friends living in the United States, past U.S. help to Uruguay, the new U.S. administration or U.S. democracy, and the high U.S. standard of living.

Uruguay has one of the oldest Fulbright Commissions in the region, and the Uruguayan Government provides in-kind and monetary support annually to support Fulbright and other exchange opportunities. There are 39 American Spaces embedded in public spaces throughout the country, which are supported by the Uruguayan Government. Programming in these spaces reaches more than 15,000 individuals a year.

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

Answer. While public opinion of the United States is positive in Uruguay, there is a strong tradition of anti-Americanism among some leftist political groups. These groups are often enthusiastic to serve as amplifiers of rival messaging, including that of non-democratic states such as Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In addition, the PRC continues efforts to increase its soft power in Uruguay. The PRC Embassy in Uruguay is active, with significant social media outreach by the ambassador and a robust media campaign including paid advertising. As in other countries in the region, the PRC has concluded numerous sister cities agreements and opened a Confucius Institute.

Although fully free to operate under Uruguayan law, Uruguay's civil society sector is less developed than other sectors of society. Civil society organizations are frequently small and are often volunteer-led. While this has created challenges for partnering with a diverse range of well-established NGOs, it has also provided an opportunity for partnership and capacity building in our public diplomacy efforts. Uruguay's status as a high-income country also means there are limited resources to provide direct assistance and support to Uruguay, a restriction that other countries do not face and have taken advantage of to bolster their soft power.

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

Answer. As a Public Diplomacy-coned officer, I understand the importance of coordinating a unified message. It is vital that the in-country mission tailors the goals and messaging from Washington in a way that reflects and references our many shared values with Uruguay. The Embassy Montevideo Public Affairs team uses their expertise in the media environment in Uruguay to convey U.S. policy objectives in a way that maximizes the messaging impact with the Uruguayan public, ensuring that our messaging is respectful of the historically strong bilateral relationship. On the other hand, based on the topic and target audience, some messages are more effective coming from Washington voices. If confirmed, I will work closely with colleagues in Washington to craft effective messages and serve as an effective messenger to further U.S. objectives.

Question. “Anomalous health incidents,” commonly referred to as “Havana Syndrome,” have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. Yes, I take nothing more seriously than the health and security of the people who work with me, and I commit to taking the threat of Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI) seriously. The interagency community continues its examination of a range of hypotheses. Secretary Blinken prioritizes the Department’s response to AHI, setting clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department’s communication with its workforce, and providing care for affected employees and family members.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as possible to Embassy Montevideo personnel about AHI, among other issues.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTION SUBMITTED TO HEIDE B.
FULTON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In your view, what steps can the United States take to deepen law enforcement cooperation with Uruguay?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to applying the expertise I have developed leading security cooperation in the region as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Uruguay has prioritized citizen security and has taken steps to counter transnational criminal organizations that are trying to make inroads across its borders. If confirmed, preventing transnational organized crime from using Uruguay as a bridge to transport drugs to Europe, and the resulting violence in Uruguay, will be one of my highest priorities. In response to Uruguay’s recent requests for capacity building, INL incorporated Uruguay in regional programs that address our shared security priorities, such as UN Office on Drugs and Crime’s Container Control Program, which established Uruguay’s first inter-agency Port Control Unit in Montevideo to address the increase in cocaine seizures there in recent years. Additionally, we are including Uruguay in regional anti-money laundering and cybercrime programs, to strengthen Uruguay’s capabilities to address these increasing threats. At the same time, the Department of Defense has increased military-military collaboration with Uruguay’s armed forces, including donations of badly needed patrol boats to the Navy through the Excess Defense Articles program to support increased patrols and interdiction efforts. With INL support, DEA is cross-training Uruguayan officials with counterparts in neighboring countries. DEA’s Buenos Aires-based team spends a good deal of time in Uruguay collaborating on counternarcotics investigations. If confirmed, I will make the case for the DEA to increase its resources dedicated to Uruguay.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO HEIDE B. FULTON BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. It should be clear to everyone in this administration that the Chinese Communist Party is the most comprehensive military, economic and political threat

our nation faces today. Right now, in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is working to undermine our interests and our allies, whether that's by supplying the fentanyl smuggled across our open border or assisting dictators that continue to drive people to emigrate to the U.S.

- Is the Chinese Communist Party a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. Certain PRC activities represent a challenge to U.S. interests in the region, particularly investments in critical infrastructure and sensitive sectors such as transportation facilities and telecommunication projects. As Secretary Blinken noted, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Uruguay, highlight the risks associated with aspects of PRC engagement that could impact Uruguay's security and sovereignty and U.S. interests, and work to ensure that our vision of a positive bilateral partnership in support of regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to stop the expansion of the CCP's influence in Uruguay?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead the effort to advance our positive agenda for Uruguay, seeking out ways to remove impediments to cooperation and to find new tools for deepening our support. If confirmed, I will also work to ensure that we understand the People's Republic of China's (PRC) initiatives and can effectively respond to any threats to our interests. If confirmed, I will also raise concerns about the potential long-term negative impact of risky PRC critical infrastructure projects and investment.

In contrast to PRC economic entities, which have a limited presence in Uruguay, U.S. companies represent some of the biggest sources of foreign direct investment in Uruguay and have been for decades. American farm machinery and biotechnology drive Uruguay's agricultural industry, and if confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. companies are well placed to take advantage of traditional and emerging opportunities. If confirmed, I will also support high-quality investment in infrastructure that meets international standards.

Question. Uruguay is a strong partner and supporter of democratic values and human rights in our hemisphere. Uruguay has also denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a "grave and unjustifiable violation of international law." It has also supported the OAS condemning the Maduro regime for its human rights violations. If confirmed, will you continue to advocate for strong relations between the United States and Uruguay in support of democracy and respect for the rule of law?

Answer. I believe that Uruguay's strategic importance in the region is clear, and that supporting Uruguay is and should be a priority for the United States. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our relationship. The United States and Uruguay have a strong and long-standing relationship with over more than 150 years of uninterrupted diplomatic ties. The strength of our historic relationship is based on shared commitments to democracy, human rights, economic prosperity, the rule of law, and security. Uruguay continues to serve as a global model of democracy and has spoken out against autocratic leaders that threaten freedom and democratic stability.

We have an important opportunity now to further strengthen our extensive cooperation with Uruguay. I understand that we will launch the first U.S.-Uruguay Annual Bilateral Inter-Ministerial Dialogue later this year. Our governments will work together to identify time-bound deliverables in areas of the bilateral relationship such as the economy, climate, science and technology, democracy and human rights, security, and education. If confirmed, I will use this new platform to support Uruguay as a vital partner of the United States.

Question. In April, I wrote an op-ed making the case for why it is important to continue to have closer relations with Uruguay in areas such as trade, security, space, and counter-narcotics. I think it is very important that we strengthen our bilateral relations with a partner like Uruguay. If confirmed, what will be your main priorities as Ambassador to Uruguay?

Answer. Trade, security and counter-narcotics, and space all represent areas of potential additional bilateral cooperation. If confirmed, I look forward to applying the expertise I have developed leading security cooperation in the region as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Uruguay has prioritized citizen security and has taken steps to combat transnational criminal organizations that are trying to make inroads across its borders. We are actively incorporating

Uruguay into U.S.-funded cross-training with neighboring countries in order to strengthen our collective efforts to counter criminal networks. In response to Uruguayan requests for capacity building, INL launched programs tailored to Uruguay, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Container Control Program, which enabled the establishment of Uruguay's first inter-agency task force at the Port of Montevideo to address the increase in cocaine seizures there in recent years. We are including Uruguay in regional anti-money laundering and cybercrime programs, the Department of Defense has increased its collaboration with their military counterparts, and DEA is cross-training Uruguayan officials with counterparts in neighboring countries. I understand that Uruguay is in the early stages of building a national space program and a satellite launch capability, and if confirmed, I will support Department of Defense and State Department efforts to promote international rules-based space cooperation and security.

Question. It is my understanding that Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) is under negotiation with Uruguay. What can you tell me about the status of that agreement?

Answer. The United States has a robust and dynamic agenda in Uruguay, including continuing to expand our strong trade relationship. I understand the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the Uruguayan Government are currently negotiating updates to modernize the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The updates promote sustainable and inclusive trade policies that benefit the widest number of people, and we are eager to see the negotiations successfully conclude. The updates support competitiveness and economic recovery, specifically focusing on the areas of trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, anti-corruption, and digital trade. In his April 12 meeting with Uruguay's Foreign Minister Bustillo in Washington, Secretary Blinken called on the Government of Uruguay to use the final agreement on the protocols to celebrate the U.S.-Uruguay trade relationship.

Question. What do you think that agreement should include addressing both America's and Uruguay's priorities for our bilateral trade?

Answer. I understand that at the most recent TIFA meeting, topics for discussion included a decision to renegotiate the trade facilitation protocol, as well as tax discussions, statements on environmental issues such as illegal fishing and fishing subsidies, forced labor, services, customs cooperation, and intellectual property, especially geographical indications, and biotechnology. I believe that updating the TIFA to include additional topics could bring benefits to both the United States and Uruguay by increasing opportunities for U.S. investors and small businesses, potentially bolstering our already significant investment stock in Uruguay. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USTR and the Department of Commerce to help successfully conclude the TIFA negotiations and further strengthen our trade ties with Uruguay.

Question. Do you think this agreement will be sufficient to dissuade Uruguay from negotiating a free trade agreement with China?

Answer. Uruguay will pursue relationships and partnerships in the best interests of Uruguay, just as the United States does. The administration of President Luis Lacalle Pou has sought to sign and expand free trade agreements with many countries across the world, including in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. We want to be at the table as a partner and friend of Uruguay, expanding on our shared principles and values for the mutual benefit of both the United States and Uruguay. Uruguay's strong institutions help drive trade and investment, and we will encourage Uruguay to avoid taking any steps through trade negotiations that would weaken the institutional strength that has served it well. I believe that concluding TIFA negotiations would be a positive next step in our trade relationship, as they promote sustainable and inclusive trade policies that benefit a wide swath of people. The updates to the TIFA support competitiveness and economic recovery, specifically focusing on the areas of trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, anti-corruption, and digital trade.

Question. What is your proposal to counter China's investments in Uruguay and make the United States the preferred partner of choice for Uruguay?

Answer. In addition to conveying our concerns about the risks of problematic PRC investment in sensitive sectors, if confirmed, I would build on the existing advantages the United States has in the Uruguayan market. While the PRC is Uruguay's top trading partner and a major destination for goods exports, it is not a major investor in Uruguay. Uruguay is keenly interested in the U.S. market and attracting U.S. investment. The United States is Uruguay's third largest trading partner in goods, after China, Brazil, and level with Argentina. There is even more significant

bilateral trade in services, particularly in the IT sector, where Uruguayan IT exports to the U.S. are estimated at over \$1 billion. Accounting for trade in services would dramatically impact the calculus on economic contributions to the Uruguayan economy and could position the United States as Uruguay's largest trading partner or a close second. Supporting Uruguay's sustainable economic growth is strategic objective for the United States, and if confirmed, I will continue to make that a priority.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ROBERT J. FAUCHER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Suriname was noted for cruel and degrading treatment of individuals by police, widespread acts of corruption, and the existence of some of the worst forms of child labor.

- What is your assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts by the Government?

Answer. The Republic of Suriname has taken steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the Government. For example, authorities prosecuted three police officers for suspected complicity in child sex trafficking. However, resource and capacity issues continue to pose challenges to the effectiveness of these efforts. The Government has investigated cases of corruption and implemented the laws on corruption unevenly. While the country lacks inspectors solely dedicated to child labor, the Government has trained all inspectors to identify child labor and instructed them how to handle suspected cases. Half of inspectors received training on child trafficking in previous reporting periods.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address the conditions in prison facilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of Suriname to address the conditions in prison facilities, which fall well short of international standards. Resources permitting, I would work to assist their government in gaining training and professionalization assistance for its prison officials so that Suriname upgrades the conditions of its prison facilities.

Question. How could you work with the Government to continue to build on and improve the country's human rights record?

Answer. The Santokhi administration has made repeated public commitments to upholding human rights and has taken concrete steps to reduce its reporting backlog with the InterAmerican Court on Human Rights. The Government assigned a former Attorney General to update its required reporting (Suriname's last updates were made in 2017) and move investigations forward on some longstanding cases such as the Moiwana Massacre. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Suriname to build on and improve Suriname's human rights record, particularly by focusing attention on decades-long human rights cases such as the December 8 murders and the killings in Tamanredjo. I will also maintain Embassy Paramaribo's close collaboration with human rights organizations and other civil society organizations concerned with Suriname's human rights record.

Question. If confirmed, how can you direct your mission to better support civil society actors to improve the human rights situation on the ground?

Answer. If confirmed, I would reinforce post's long-standing commitment to supporting civil society actors on human rights issues, as well as ensure that all embassy staff, regardless of position, consider human rights a mission priority. I would require all personnel to complete the State Department's atrocities prevention training and other human rights training, as appropriate. I would encourage U.S. and local staff to communicate their concerns about human rights issues occurring in Suriname, and I would ensure that our grant programming supports human rights defenders and other relevant civil society actors.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Suriname remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so. However, the Government did not convict any traffickers during the year of the report, did not

provide adequate services for victims, and did not sufficiently fund anti-trafficking efforts.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to improve victims' services and overall anti-trafficking efforts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Suriname to continue to make progress against human trafficking in the areas of prosecution, protection, and prevention by: increasing efforts to convict traffickers, following due process, and sentencing convicted traffickers to significant prison terms; increasing efforts to investigate and prosecute alleged traffickers, including officials complicit in trafficking crimes; providing vulnerable individuals with trauma-informed assistance, reintegration support, and interpretation in their language prior to, during, and after screening for trafficking; providing adequate and dedicated funding for the National Action Plan and government departments carrying out anti-trafficking activities; prosecuting child sex and labor trafficking cases under the trafficking statute and provide specialized child protection services with trained providers; fully implementing the victim identification and referral protocol and training officials in its use to identify trafficking victims, especially among at-risk groups; training judges at all levels of the judiciary in human trafficking and the trafficking law and sensitizing judges and prosecutors to the issue of secondary trauma; supporting NGOs and foreign embassies on victim identification and service provision; incorporating survivor input into anti-trafficking policies, developing and executing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, and publishing the results; and referring to care victims identified through the hotline and reporting on the hotline's effectiveness.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Suriname's constitution provides for freedom of religion and the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on religion. U.S. officials have continued to highlight U.S. Government policy on the importance of protecting religious freedom and tolerance.

- What is your assessment of these efforts?

Answer. Suriname is proud of its rich multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious heritage. In 2022, President Santokhi held events at the Presidential Palace marking days sacred to each of the major religions, including a first-ever Iftar dinner held at the Palace. The Government of Suriname remains strongly committed to ensuring religious freedom. If confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. mission in Paramaribo reinforces the importance of tolerance and religious freedom with the Government of Suriname, religious leaders, and appropriate civil society organizations.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with political and religious leaders to continue to build upon religious freedoms?

Answer. If confirmed, I would utilize the U.S.- Suriname Bilateral Dialogue and personal engagement with government and religious leaders to continue to build upon religious freedoms. I would ensure that all stakeholders were aware of the importance that the United States places on religious freedom and our continued collaboration to build upon Suriname's firm foundation in this arena.

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

- If confirmed, do you commit to demarching the Suriname Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage their support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I commit to demarching the Suriname Government and any other counterparts necessary to encourage support of Ms. Bogdan-Martin. As Director of the Office of Specialized and Technical Agencies in the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations (2013–2015), I led efforts to support Doreen Bogdan-Martin's leadership of the ITU's Strategic Planning and Membership Department. Ms. Bogdan-Martin is a global leader in the information and communication technologies sector and would be an outstanding Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union.

Question. If confirmed, how can you work with the International Organizations (IO) bureau and other stakeholders to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans in positions like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program at the U.N.?

Answer. If confirmed, I would coordinate with the IO bureau to assist it in casting as wide a net as possible to identify and recruit appropriate qualified American candidates for positions at the U.N. like the Junior Program Officer (JPO) program. I would also encourage the American staff at Embassy Paramaribo and qualified Americans in Suriname to consider such opportunities.

Question. Suriname has a low rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. In 2020 Suriname voted with the United States 22 percent of the time. In 2021, the Suriname-U.S. voting coincidence improved on some key votes such as on Nicaragua-related matters. Suriname was an early, strong voice condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, Suriname tends to follow or coordinate its votes with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states in this regard and often abstains on critical votes. If confirmed, I will work assiduously to improve Suriname's voting coincidence with the United States in the U.N. General Assembly.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Suriname Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would increase their voting coincidence with the U.S.?

Answer. Suriname is a CARICOM member and coordinates its votes with its fellow member states. Suriname currently holds the chair of CARICOM, and if confirmed, I would work closely with the Bureau of International Organizations, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, and my fellow U.S. Ambassadors to CARICOM and CARICOM countries to provide persuasive arguments to move individual members, such as Suriname, to be reasoned, persuasive voices within the CARICOM internal discussions.

State Department Manangement and Public Diplomacy

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

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Paramaribo?

Answer. I understand that the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Mission Paramaribo. Global U.S. staffing shortages have placed additional stress on this already small post. Nevertheless, the Mission staff, both direct hire and local staff, have lived up to the highest standards of the Department by continuing to perform at the very highest level, advocating for U.S. interests and bilateral cooperation related to political and economic issues, managing development programs, and providing routine and emergency American citizen services in both Suriname and French Guiana. I applaud what they have done and continue to do. If confirmed, it will be my honor to lead such an outstanding group of public servants.

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

Answer. The morale, well-being, and safety of all mission employees will be one of my top priorities as Ambassador, if confirmed. I will work with Embassy leadership to ensure there are proper resources in place for all employees to contribute to the Mission's success. I will also make every effort to ensure that all employees are aware that I care about them, that I want to hear from them, and that it is my duty to work with them to address their concerns.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will utilize the annual Suriname-U.S. Bilateral Dialogue, as well as the Embassy's Integrated Country Strategy and other guiding strategic documents to ensure that our staff know and understand our mission. I will utilize regular meetings of the Embassy's country team to empower the staff to carry out the vision of these foundational strategic documents.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?

Answer. I would describe my management style as empowering staff while holding them accountable for performance and results. I seek to foster open, frank communications among staff members, while providing strategic leadership regarding mission goals and objectives.

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

Answer. No, I do not believe it is ever acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Deputy Chief of Mission and establishing a relationship that will prove to be mutually beneficial and provide the Embassy the leadership structure required for success. An effective Embassy requires a strong, complementary relationship between the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission. I recognize that it will be my responsibility to work with the DCM in a way that takes advantage of their talents and experience, while continuing to support their professional development so that they are prepared to assume roles of greater responsibility later in their career. I envision my relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission as including strong elements of mentoring for continued professional development, delegation of responsibility for oversight of executive operations, and reliance as an "alter ego."

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your deputy chief of mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I anticipate the Deputy Chief of Mission to play a key role on three Mission priorities: the effective implementation of the Integrated Country Strategy by the Country Team; advocating for U.S. interests and enhanced bilateral cooperation; and serving as my principal counsel on matters relating to our staff and their welfare. My DCM will also have responsibility for mentoring any first or second tour officers and specialists at Embassy Paramaribo.

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

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

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance in order to encourage improvement, professional development, and reward those who most succeeded in their roles. To that end, accurate and direct employee evaluation reports for Foreign Service Officers are imperative, and if confirmed, I will ensure the timely and accurate completion of all employee evaluation processes at Embassy Paramaribo.

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

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

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

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

Answer. Yes, now that pandemic domestic restrictions have largely lifted, I understand that our diplomats in Suriname do engage outside the Embassy to great effect to accomplish their mission. Admittedly, critical U.S. personnel staffing gaps limit the capacity to do so, and the inaccessibility of some areas of the country except by small aircraft or boat also pose challenges.

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

Answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the fundamental engagement and outreach aspect of our work, encouraging us to adapt and modernize. In addition to traditional in-person meetings and travel, which have been ongoing in Suriname since mid-2020, if confirmed, I will leverage the new telecommunications technologies developed and adopted during the pandemic to connect with new and wider audiences.

Question. Public diplomacy is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy efforts. What is the public diplomacy environment like in the Suriname?

Answer. Facebook remains the largest platform for social media in Suriname and therefore remains a high priority area for public diplomacy efforts while also engaging with the much smaller audiences on other services as warranted. Surinamers are largely receptive to the United States and our messaging. Pre-pandemic, Embassy Paramaribo's film festivals and events were well attended and well received. I understand that the Embassy continued its work in those arenas in alternate manners during the pandemic and has plans in place to return to these popular programs in-person this fall as the country returns to pre-COVID-19 levels of activity.

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

Answer. Language difficulties, particularly outside of Paramaribo, pose a challenge as knowledge of Dutch and English is not universal. Several other local and regional languages proliferate in the interior and require interpretation for public diplomacy efforts.

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

Answer. When it comes to tailoring public diplomacy messages in Suriname, the key is to find the intersections between the global messaging and the importance of that issue for the Surinamese public and then express that importance in a manner that emphasizes the relevance clearly and directly.

Question. "Anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome," have been debilitating and sidelining U.S. diplomats around the world for years. They have caused serious, negative consequences for U.S. diplomacy, yet many believe that the Department is not doing enough to care for, protect, and communicate to its personnel.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to take seriously the threat of "anomalous health incidents," commonly referred to as "Havana Syndrome." In preparation for assuming the position of Chief of Mission Suriname, I have received several briefings concerning this threat and the importance of providing care for, protecting, and communicating with personnel under my authority about "anomalous health incidents."

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to talking as openly as practicable to Mission Paramaribo personnel and their families concerning the threat of "anomalous health incidents" and all other matters.
