

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Pete Ricketts presiding.

Present: Senators Ricketts [presiding], McCormick, Hagerty, Cruz, Scott, Coons, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, and Van Hollen.

Senator RICKETTS. The hearing will come to order. We welcome our nominees, their families, and our guests in attendance, and we are glad to have everyone here watching, as well.

I want to remind those present that this committee expects decorum. We have a zero tolerance policy for interruptions. So if you choose to disrupt this hearing you will be arrested immediately and barred from the committee for 1 year. You cannot communicate with people on the dais or any of our nominees here.

Before the Ranking Member and I make our opening remarks we have a few members who would like to make some introductions. We have Jared Novelly, the nominee for the Ambassador to New Zealand, and Senator Schmitt.

Is Senator Schmitt here? I do not see him yet.

Frank Garcia, the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs,

Congressman Crawford? Great. Congressman, we are going to go ahead and start with you then.

STATEMENT OF HON. ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM ARKANSAS

Representative CRAWFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to introduce to the committee Mr. Frank Garcia, President Trump's nominee for the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs.

I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Garcia over the last 5 years as he served in various senior staff positions on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He currently serves as one of my trusted senior advisors and has been integral in the House Intelligence Committee's efforts.

Mr. Garcia has committed himself to a life of service to his nation and a 28 year veteran of the United States Navy, where he came into service shortly after the fall of Iran. His service included time on a U.S. Navy ship escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. He served in Desert Shield and Storm, operations in the

Gulf of Sidra. Mr. Garcia served as a Tomahawk land attack missile planner during Operation Deliberate Force, aiding in ending the Bosnian genocide and establishing the Dayton Accords.

He later went on to serve as Chief of Staff for the National Reconnaissance Office, and for over a decade Mr. Garcia has built an extensive expertise on African regional dynamics through extensive travel, congressional oversight, and high level engagements. In this capacity he helped develop policy approaches addressing the most consequential issues facing African nations and U.S. national security, translating complex regional dynamics and intelligence insights into actionable oversight priorities.

Last, I would be remiss not to mention that Mr. Garcia's daughter is currently downrange, supporting Operation Epic Fury. She serves as the commanding officer of a Virginia National Guard engineering company. We would be grateful for your prayers for her safety and the safety of all our brave men and women supporting this critical operation and their service to our nation.

If confirmed, the HPSCI family will be sad to see him go, but we could not be any prouder than I am and more confident that he will serve in this role with honor and integrity. Mr. Chairman, I am confident your committee will give him a proper review, and given his extensive and honorable public service, and I cannot recommend him highly enough.

With that it is my pleasure to introduce to the committee Mr. Frank Garcia.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Congressman. You are welcome to stay through the entire committee if you would like, but I would also not be offended if you said, "I've got other things I've got to do today, as well," so you are welcome to—

Representative CRAWFORD. Respectfully, Mr. Chairman, I have got other things I have got to do today, and I appreciate your latitude. Thank you so much.

Senator RICKETTS. I think Senator Hagerty is on his way for Mr. Edgar here. But I am going to go ahead and start with my remarks, and then when Senator Hagerty gets here we will let him do his introduction.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. PETE RICKETTS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEBRASKA**

Senator RICKETTS. First, I want to thank each of you for your willingness to serve our nation. I very much appreciate the demands placed on ambassadors and senior officials are significant, and the sacrifices made by their families are real. We are grateful for that commitment.

Each of you would assume a post that sits at a critical intersection of American foreign policy. Mr. Lipton, the Ambassador to the Philippines is one of the most consequential diplomatic assignments in the Indo-Pacific. The Philippines is our oldest treaty ally in the region. This year represents the 75th anniversary of our Mutual Defense Treaty, which has helped anchor stability in the region. In recent years, that relationship has undergone a historic transformation. Enhanced defense cooperation, expanded access to sites and joint maritime patrols, and a growing interoperability are

now a central pillar of our mutual deterrent in the West Philippine Sea.

However, Communist China continues its illegal, aggressive, and deceptive activities within the Philippines, especially within their Exclusive Economic Zone.

I see my colleague, Eric Schmitt, has arrived, so I am going to stop there for the moment, and Mr. Lipton, I am going to get back to talking about the Philippines because this is something I care a lot about. But because I know Mr. Schmitt has got a lot of stuff to do, I am going to allow him to do his introduction.

Eric, would you like to go ahead?

**STATEMENT OF HON. ERIC SCHMITT,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSOURI**

Senator SCHMITT. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member and other members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear here before you to speak on behalf of my friend and fellow Missourian, Mr. Jared Novelly.

Mr. Novelly, he is being considered for the Ambassadorship to New Zealand for the United States of America. He is a native of St. Louis. Mr. Novelly is a proud graduate of St. Louis University. He also holds a master's degree from the University of Technology Sydney.

Throughout his career, Mr. Novelly has succeeded in business both domestically and internationally. Through his experience, Mr. Novelly has developed strong personal and economic relationships across both the business and government sectors, including throughout the Pacific region. His ties have also given him a deep understanding of the economic and political landscape of Oceania.

Because of his experience in Australia, Mr. Novelly will navigate the diplomatic environment with a strong appreciation for the relationship between Australia and New Zealand and for how that relationship intersects with ongoing cooperation and our interests in that region.

New Zealand is located in a vital strategic region of the South Pacific that has become increasingly vital to U.S. national security interests. As Communist China seeks to assert itself as the dominant power in the Indo-Pacific, our engagements with allies and partners must remain seamless and strong to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As a Five Eyes intelligence partner, New Zealand shares a special relationship with the United States based on common values, mutual trust, and a shared understanding of our adversarial threats.

The position of U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand carries enormous responsibility, to safeguard, strengthen, and advance America's relationship with this important partner while shaping cooperation in ways that reinforce our broader regional posture.

I can think of no one better suited for this role than Mr. Novelly. As a businessman he brings a clear eyed focus on achieving results that will strengthen our relationship with New Zealand while advancing America's national security objectives.

As ambassador, Mr. Novelly will continue working to solidify a trade relationship with New Zealand that advances American in-

terests. American businesses and entrepreneurs will have a strong advocate in Wellington in Mr. Novelty.

On a more personal note, I have known Jared for 20 years. He is a very good friend. He is a good man. He is loyal, he is smart, and he loves our great country.

I am proud to have recommended Mr. Novelty for this post to President Trump and honored to introduce him before this august committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Well, thank you very much, Senator Schmitt, and you are welcome to stay for our hearing, but I also know that you have got other pressing things. So if you need to depart we will understand that, as well.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Hagerty, would you like to introduce Mr. Edgar?

**STATEMENT OF HON. BILL HAGERTY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator HAGERTY. I certainly would. Before I do that I would like to thank the Chair and the Ranking Member for holding this meeting and letting us move these Ambassadorial candidates along. This is an important role, as we all know, and I very much appreciate your leadership, both of you doing this.

Members of the committee, it is my honor today to introduce the Honorable Troy Edgar, who is President Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador. Troy is Navy veteran, he is an experienced business leader, and he is a seasoned public servant who currently serves as Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security. He brings executive experience, operational expertise, and national security leadership skills to this important ambassadorial nomination.

Troy began his career in the United States Navy. Then he built a distinguished record in the private sector, first at PricewaterhouseCoopers, and later at Boeing, where he served as Chief Financial Officer of a division focused on military aircraft logistics. Troy then founded Global Conductor, advising Fortune 500 firms in aerospace, defense, and technology on large scale transformation, integration, and modernization efforts. He later served as mayor of Los Alamitos, California, demonstrating practical and results oriented leadership.

During President Trump's first term, he was confirmed by the Senate as the Department of Homeland Security's Chief Financial Officer. In that role, he oversaw DHS financial policy and systems modernization for a nearly \$90 billion budget that supported border security, immigration enforcement, and homeland security missions. He now serves as Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, effectively, the Department's Chief Operating Officer, helping translate policy priorities into clear operational results.

What uniquely qualifies Troy for this post is his direct experience with the core issues shaping U.S.-El Salvador relationships, including border security, migration management, and transnational criminal organizations.

Diplomacy depends on execution, trust, and credibility. An ambassador must build durable relationships and must translate

shared interests into concrete results. As former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, I understand the trust and judgment this type of role requires. Troy has spent his career earning that trust.

El Salvador, under President Bukele's leadership, has become a critical partner in combating transnational crime and addressing illegal immigration. This is a pivotal opportunity now to deepen our cooperation to strengthen regional stability and to advance American security interests.

Troy Edgar is a proven executive, twice Senate confirmed, national security leader, and a committed public servant. I am confident he will faithfully represent the United States and strengthen our partnership with El Salvador. Mr. Chairman, for that reason I strongly encourage my colleagues to support Mr. Edgar's nomination. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

Now I will resume my remarks, picking up with the Philippines and Communist China's illegal course of aggressive and deceptive activities within the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone. Both the Ranking Member and I had an opportunity to witness that directly last year in a trip to the Philippines. And again, this is something where Beijing's dangerous maneuvers, water cannon incidents, and intimidation campaigns are part of a sustained pressure strategy to intimidate the Philippines to giving up their Exclusive Economic Zone.

The next ambassador must therefore do more than just maintain the status quo. This role requires strengthening deterrence, deepening defense coordination, and enhancing resilience. It also requires expanding our economic relationship beyond traditional trade flows. This includes prioritizing high tech sectors and supply chain security, boosting U.S. investment in semiconductors and infrastructure and advancing cooperation in critical minerals.

We look forward to hearing your remarks, Mr. Lipton.

Mr. Novelly, New Zealand is both a trusted friend and an increasingly important strategic actor in the Indo-Pacific. It is a Five Eyes partner and a strong voice for a free and open region. Wellington has taken meaningful steps to increase defense spending, modernize its military capabilities, and engage more deeply in regional security efforts.

However, the strategic environment is changing rapidly. Communist China has expanded its diplomatic, economic, and military footprint in the South Pacific. Recent Chinese maritime exercises near Australia and New Zealand underscore the reality that the South Pacific is no longer insulated from Beijing's aggressive reach.

If confirmed, the ambassador must work to strengthen defense coordination, expand cooperation in emerging technologies, and strength supply chain security. Additionally, given the post also includes representing the U.S. in Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue, they must work to steer Pacific island nations away from Beijing's coercive economic traps. And this, in particular, means being present to show them that we are present in the region, Mr. Novelly. So you have got a very important role with the Pacific island nations.

Ms. Roberts, Slovenia is a NATO ally that plays an important role in Europe's security, particularly in the Western Balkans. It

contributes to peacekeeping missions and supports European unity at a time when Russia's aggression has reshaped the security landscape.

But alliance credibility depends on burden sharing. Slovenia has historically fallen short of NATO's defense spending benchmarks. While Slovenia has just recently hit the 2 percent target agreed to back in 2014, it remains well below the alliance's newly agreed to 5 percent mark. If confirmed, our Ambassador must make clear our expectation that all NATO allies must step up, particularly as the threats to European security intensifies.

Deputy Secretary Edgar, our Ambassador to El Salvador would need to take up a post central to the U.S. homeland security. El Salvador remains a source and transit point for illegal immigration and transnational criminal activity. Gangs like MS-13 have trafficked violence, drugs, and human smuggling networks that reach into the United States. The country also sits along key narcotics routes, moving cocaine and other illicit drugs northward. Intelligence sharing, extraditions, and dismantling gang infrastructure are all areas of cooperation critical to disrupting those pipelines before they reach our border.

At the same time, Communist China continues to expand its tentacles into El Salvador. It has invested heavily in construction projects while increasing its exports, especially in the automotive sector. Our next Ambassador in San Salvador must ensure that Beijing's malign influence is held in check.

Finally, Mr. Garcia, our next Assistant Secretary for African Affairs will step into this role at a decisive moment. Conflict across the continent is deepening, and in some cases becoming structurally entrenched. As the civil war in Sudan enters its third year, the two warring factions remain locked in a deadly civil war. Mediation efforts have so far failed to get the Sudanese Armed Forces, the SAF, and Rapid Support Forces, RSF, to halt their violence. All the while, hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, and millions have been displaced in what has become the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

In Central Africa, President Trump deserves immense credit for brokering the Washington Accords to achieve peace between Rwanda and the DRC. However, as recent actions by the Administration reflect, more must be done to ensure both parties adhere to their commitments.

Additionally, terrorism on the continent, particularly in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, remain a critical global security threat. Christians continue to be persecuted and killed by Islamic Jihadists in Nigeria, while Al-Shabaab, one of Al Qaeda's strongest and most successful affiliates, has proven resilient despite the increased counterterror operations.

At the same time, Communist China is now Africa's largest trading partner and a major creditor. It has embedded itself through infrastructure financing, resource extraction, and arms sales and strategic access agreements. We cannot afford Communist China to be the only game in town.

I thank each of you for your willingness to serve and look forward to your testimonies. And with that I will now turn it over to the distinguished Ranking Member for his remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Ricketts. Thank you both for your partnership on this committee and your friendship beyond it. We were at an important dinner together last night about the future of our support for Ukraine, one of our most important alliances.

I largely agree with the comments you have just made about Slovenia, about the Philippines, about Africa, so I will focus on one or two points.

And I want to start by thanking all of you for your willingness to serve, for the impact it will have on you and your families. I am well aware of the dislocation involved in moving to a whole other country, and I suspect most of you have been sustained in your careers of service so far by your families. So to the families who are present or watching, thank you, and know that I respect and appreciate those who serve in our State Department and all who serve our nation at home and abroad. And we will be praying for your daughter and her safety.

In the last few months, I have traveled broadly. The Senator mentioned our trip together to the Philippines and Taiwan, just in the last few weeks to Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Ukraine, Moldova. Everywhere I go, I have seen the unfortunate consequences on ways in which the Trump administration has pushed away our allies, whether through tariff disagreements, hectoring them about values and priorities, such that they are now questioning our reliability and the benefits of partnering with us. In particular, the unhinged threat to try and acquire Greenland from Denmark, a trusted NATO ally, has really undermined our relations in Europe, and ones which will need close attending to.

Ambassadors for the United States globally are key to maintaining and growing our relationships, to pushing back on competitors like Communist China in Africa and in the Philippines, or to holding closer NATO allies like Slovenia, working in the South Pacific with Pacific island nations, and our longstanding Five Eyes partner, New Zealand, or working with our hemispheric partner, El Salvador. So I am grateful for those who lead our posts around the world, and I am glad for the opportunity to hear from all of you today.

It is striking that having embarked on a war of choice in Iran and turn nearly the entire Middle East into the war zone, we do not have confirmed ambassadors serving in Saudi Arabia, in UAE, in Qatar, in Egypt, in Kuwait, in Libya, Iraq, Algeria. I could list many others. Virtually all of those are places where Americans are currently stranded and where we are relying deeply on our partners for support as they seek to evacuate.

Meanwhile, several of those ambassadors are failing at this core responsibility of keeping Americans safe abroad and are simply saying “your government cannot help you.” Better planning—better planning—for a war of choice could have avoided this chaotic evacuation from the region.

Equally shocking to me is how long it has taken for the Administration to put forward nominees. I think the Administration is trying to conduct diplomacy without diplomats, and to instead use

special envoys. I was quite struck that there were dozens of career ambassadors, for example, in the Philippines, but broadly across Africa, confirmed career ambassadors abruptly recalled, and virtually no one nominated in their place. We have more vacancies in Africa than anywhere else, and lacking confirmed ambassadors, as you all know, means that you do not get access at the same level to another government. A chargé d'affaires is just not respected and treated the same way, both internally and externally.

And I frankly think that this turmoil abroad and the distance from our allies and partners matches a lot of what is happening at home. I am particularly concerned about the trajectory of immigration enforcement within the United States, and I bluntly think it is shameful the Administration has chosen as our representative to El Salvador the same person who has overseen what I view as the most heinous episodes of the first stages of that, including illegally deporting 250 Venezuelans, most with no criminal records, to the CECOT Prison in El Salvador.

I will be pressing you, Mr. Edgar, on the specifics—what happened, what you knew about, what you think should be our accountability for it, and why you think you are the right person to strengthen our standing in that region of the world.

We have a lot to talk about today. I appreciate the opportunity to work with my friend and the Chairman of this hearing, and again, I appreciate all of your willingness to serve. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you so much. I appreciate the Ranking Member for helping us get this hearing going so we can get some more of these ambassadors done.

With that we will allow the nominees here to be able to give an introduction. I would ask all of you to keep your introductions to 5 minutes or less.

And Mr. Garcia, we are going to go ahead and start with you.

**STATEMENT OF FRANK GARCIA, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs. I appreciate the time you and your staff have given me, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with you.

If confirmed, I will advance America First priorities on the African continent and ensure our engagement is disciplined, strategic, and firmly rooted in the protection of core U.S. national interests, as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

On a personal note, I am thankful my sister Terri is here. I know our brother Michael and our parents are smiling down from heaven. They taught us three lifelong tenets: God, family, and country. As part of the Greatest Generation, they served as a Navy nurse and an Army technical sergeant. They didn't talk about service; they lived it.

I also want to thank my wife Bridget and our seven children and eight grandchildren for their love and support. There's a country song, "Thank God for Unanswered Prayers." Today I thank God for answered prayers: Bridget, you and our family are that answer for

me. And for anyone wondering how to thrive with seven children and eight grandchildren two words: zone defense.

I served in the U.S. Navy for 28 years, with many assignments in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. My first touch on the continent was as a junior officer visiting the port of Mombasa, Kenya, which sparked a fascination with Africa that has stayed with me. I currently serve on the House Intelligence Committee, or HPSCI, where for nearly 15 years I have focused on Africa, traveling frequently with members and staff. Thank you, Team HPSCI, past and present.

My time in Africa left an indelible mark: peace is precious, and it is not maintained by hope alone. That is why I embrace President Trump's National Security Strategy of Peace through Strength. Strength guided by principle and paired with credible diplomacy, deters aggression, which protects the innocent and creates space for human dignity to flourish. If confirmed, I will bring that same sense of duty to the work ahead.

For too long, U.S. policy in Africa has emphasized aid and dependency, with open ended commitments and a focus on spreading divisive ideologies. This Administration has reset this relationship toward trade and investment for mutual benefit. Many African partners have welcomed a pragmatic approach that prioritizes opportunity and cooperation over lectures. If confirmed, I will ensure our policy is guided by a realistic calculation of costs, risks, and benefits to U.S. interests.

The continent is at a strategic inflection point where lasting prosperity hinges on secure, representative governments and their selection of reliable partners. A healthy, well educated work force paired with abundant natural resources can create opportunities that benefit both African nations and the United States.

With opportunity comes risk, especially when governance fails to provide the security and judicial framework that prosperity requires. President Trump and Secretary Rubio recognize that peace is the foundation of growth, and have moved aggressively to support peace efforts in troubled areas across Africa.

Instability in regions such as the Sahel and North Africa poses a direct risk to U.S. interests and citizens. Our counterterrorism efforts will remain focused on preventing attacks against the homeland and U.S. interests. We will build reciprocal relationships with key partners to degrade transnational threats from ISIS and Al Qaeda affiliates, and work with allies to promote stability. African nations must play a greater role in protecting their own regions, with the United States supporting local leadership, and not substituting for it.

If confirmed, I will ensure every dollar the United States invests in Africa advances our national security and economic priorities. Our approach will be disciplined and results driven, applying Secretary Rubio's principle of privileging trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance.

Members of the committee, thank you for your consideration and for the time, energy, and focus you and your staff devote to Africa. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes

Printed Name: Frank W. Garcia Jr.

Date: 3/8/26

[The prepared statement of Mr. Garcia follows:]

Prepared Statement of Frank Garcia

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and Members of the Committee—I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump’s nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs. I appreciate the time you and your staff have given me and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you.

If confirmed, I will advance America First priorities on the African continent and ensure our engagement is disciplined, strategic, and firmly rooted in the protection of core U.S. national interests, as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

On a personal note, I’m thankful my sister Terri is here. I know our brother Michael and our parents are smiling down from heaven. They taught us three lifelong tenets: God, family, and country. As part of the Greatest Generation, they served as a Navy nurse and an Army technical sergeant. They didn’t talk about service, they lived it.

I also want to thank my wife, Bridget, and our seven children and eight grandchildren for their love and support. There’s a country song, “Thank God for Unanswered Prayers.” Today I simply thank God for answered prayers: Bridget and our family are that answer for me. And for anyone wondering how to thrive with seven children and eight grandchildren: zone defense.

I served in the U.S. Navy for 28 years, with many assignments in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. My first touch on the continent was as a junior officer visiting the port of Mombasa, Kenya, which sparked a fascination with Africa that has stayed with me. I currently serve on the House Intelligence Committee for nearly 15 years of focus Africa, traveling frequently with Members and staff. Thank you, Team HPSCI, past and present.

My time in Africa left an indelible mark: peace is precious, and it is not maintained by hope alone. That is why I embrace President Trump’s National Security Strategy of Peace through Strength. Strength, guided by principle and paired with credible diplomacy, deters aggression, protects the innocent, and creates space for human dignity to flourish. If confirmed, I will bring that same sense of duty to the work ahead.

For too long, U.S. policy in Africa has emphasized aid and dependency, with open-ended commitments and a focus on spreading divisive ideologies. President Trump and Secretary Rubio have reset this relationship toward trade and investment for mutual benefit. Many African partners have welcomed a pragmatic approach that prioritizes opportunity and cooperation over lectures. If confirmed, I will ensure our policy is guided by a realistic calculation of costs, risks, and benefits to U.S. interests.

By 2050, one quarter of the world’s population will be African. The continent is at a strategic inflection point where lasting prosperity hinges on a secure, representative government and the selection of reliable partners. A healthy, better educated workforce, paired with abundant natural resources, can create opportunities that benefit both African nations and the United States. The Lobito Corridor model advanced by the Trump Administration is one example, promising increased trade, jobs, and investment. If confirmed, we will build on this momentum by prioritizing U.S. investment in high-return sectors where partnership can help make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

With opportunity comes risk, especially when governance fails to provide the security and judicial framework that prosperity requires. President Trump and Secretary Rubio recognize that peace is the foundation of growth and have moved aggressively to support peace efforts in troubled areas across Africa. The Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity that brought together the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, ending more than 30 years of conflict, are historic. The United States will remain steadfast in supporting these accords and in holding the parties to their commitments.

Instability in regions such as the Sahel and North Africa, fueled by illicit trafficking and terrorist expansion, poses direct risks to U.S. interests and citizens. Our counterterrorism efforts will remain focused on preventing attacks against the homeland and U.S. interests. We will build reciprocal relationships with key partners to degrade transnational threats from ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates, engage regional governments, and work with allies to promote stability. African nations must play a greater role in protecting their own regions, with the United States supporting local leadership, not substituting for it.

If confirmed, I will ensure every dollar the United States invests in Africa advances our national security and economic priorities. All assistance, including life-saving health and humanitarian efforts, will be focused, strategic, and aligned with

U.S. interests. Our approach will be disciplined and results-driven, applying Secretary Rubio's principle of privileging trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance.

Members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration and for the time, energy, and focus you and your staff devote to Africa. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. Lipton, would you like to do your introduction, please.

STATEMENT OF LEE LIPTON, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Mr. LIPTON. Thank you.

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I am deeply honored to be President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines. I appreciate your time and consideration.

I would also like to recognize my wife and soulmate of more than 45 years, Erika, and our amazing sons, Max and Dylan. Their steadfast love and support have sustained me throughout my career in business and public service. If my parents were alive today, they would be beyond proud to see me sit before you.

Over the course of my 50 year professional career, I have led businesses in the culinary and fashion industries, built international partnerships, created jobs, mentored young professionals, and navigated complex regulatory environments. I look forward to utilizing these skills to the benefit of the American and Filipino people. I developed a lasting respect for the Philippines during my early visits manufacturing clothing there. I was deeply impressed by the Philippine people's energy, resilience, and strong sense of family and community.

Community and coalition have defined my personal life and my public service. While my career began in the private sector, over the past year I have had an incredible opportunity in Washington to participate in this Administration's humanitarian and diplomatic processes. As a member of the Holocaust Board, and guided by my faith, I have worked to preserve memories, define human dignity, and confront hatred.

At the State Department, as Interim Permanent Representative and Chief of Staff of the U.N. mission to the Organization of American States, I have worked to advance American interests through principled engagement and interagency collaboration. I also had the opportunity to build relationships with diplomats from across the Western Hemisphere, reinforcing my belief that strong alliances are sustained through consistent engagement and institutional trust.

If confirmed, I will carry forward that spirit of engagement and trust to Embassy Manila, relying on the expertise of our embassy staff, our colleagues at the Department of War, ASEAN representative, and allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific. My goal would be to deepen U.S.-Philippine security cooperation, strengthen supply chains, advance the Luzon Economic Corridor and our energy initiatives as well as promote fair and reciprocal trade.

In closing, I would like to assure you that I approach this nomination with humility and resolve to uphold our ironclad alliance with the Philippines, particularly the Mutual Defense Treaty, as well as advance the safety, strength, and prosperity of the United States at a time of great consequence in the Western Pacific.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

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5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes


Printed Name: LEE LIPTON
Date: MARCH 5, 2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lipton follows:]

Prepared Statement of Lee Lipton

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored to be President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines. I appreciate your time and consideration.

I would also like to recognize my wife and soulmate of more than 45 years, Erika, and our amazing sons, Max and Dylan. Their steadfast love and support have sustained me throughout my career in business and public service. If my parents were alive today, they would be beyond proud to see me sit before you.

Over the course of my 50-year professional career, I have led businesses in the culinary and fashion industries, built international partnerships, created jobs, mentored young professionals, and navigated complex regulatory environments. I look forward to utilizing these skills to the benefit of the American and Filipino people. I developed a lasting respect for the country during my early visits to the Philippines as an entrepreneur, manufacturing clothing decades ago. I was deeply impressed by the Filipino people's energy, resilience, and strong sense of family and community.

Community and people-to-people ties have always mattered to me. The Philippines has a word that captures that spirit—*bayanihan* [buy-yaan-nee-haan]—working together for the common good. With more than 27 billion dollars in bilateral trade in 2025, roughly 375,000 Americans residing in the Philippines, and approximately 5 million Filipinos and Filipino-Americans contributing to communities across the United States, our countries are linked in ways that extend far beyond security cooperation and veterans affairs.

Filipino-Americans are among the largest Asian American groups in the U.S. military, serving across various branches. According to recent estimates, there are around 15,000 active-duty Filipino-American service members in the U.S. Armed Forces. If confirmed, I would work to expand collaboration in the other areas where our interests align—healthcare, education, semiconductors, critical minerals, energy, infrastructure, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, tourism, and sports diplomacy, just to name a few—while ensuring that our economic relationship remains fair and reciprocal.

Bringing people together and building coalitions has defined my personal life and my public service. While my career began in the private sector, over the past year, I have had an incredible opportunity in Washington to participate in this administration's humanitarian and diplomatic processes. As a member of the Holocaust Board, I have worked to preserve memories, defend human dignity, and confront hatred. Guided by my faith, I have built partnerships that are grounded in shared principles.

At the State Department, serving at the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, I have worked alongside dedicated Foreign Service Officers and civil servants committed to advancing American interests through principled engagement. During my tenure as Interim Permanent Representative and Chief of Staff at the Mission, I saw firsthand the importance of disciplined coordination, interagency collaboration, and accountability in translating policy into results. I also had the opportunity to build working relationships with diplomats from across the Western Hemisphere, reinforcing my belief that strong alliances are sustained through consistent engagement and institutional trust.

In many respects, the Philippines connects regions. Its ties span centuries and reflect the breadth of American engagement and influence across both the Pacific and the Western Hemisphere. Present-day partnerships in commerce, defense, education, entertainment, and cuisine demonstrate how longstanding exchanges have matured into the multifaceted power and cooperation we enjoy today. And as this year's Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines will play an elevated role in promoting our shared interests among the United States and all of Southeast Asia.

If confirmed, I will carry forward that spirit of partnership to Embassy Manila, relying on the expertise of our embassy staff, our colleagues at the Department of War, our allies and partners, ASEAN counterparts, and other representatives from the region who work to support an open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific. My goal will be to deepen U.S.-Philippine security cooperation, strengthen supply chains, advance the Luzon Economic Corridor initiative, and promote fair and transparent trade through close and continuing engagements with this Committee, the U.S. Interagency, and our Philippine Allies.

In closing, I would like to assure you that I approach this nomination with humility and seriousness, and with an unwavering resolve to uphold our ironclad alliance with the Philippines, including our shared commitments under the Mutual Defense Treaty, as well as advance the safety, strength, and prosperity of the United States at a time of great consequence in the Indo-Pacific.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Chairman, may I respectfully ask, obviously the people before us, should they be confirmed are going to do seriously important work for our nation. But they cannot be successful without their families. When the individuals call out their families I am hoping maybe the families can identify themselves, because I know factually about Mr. Lipton that he married somebody way better than him.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. And that I know also his sons, I think one is here, is going to be even greater than their father. The apples are not falling very far from the tree in that case.

Mr. LIPTON. All right. Thank you, sir.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Booker, having been recently married yourself, you should know that we all marry up.

Senator BOOKER. I actually know Senator Shaheen's husband. He married up in the case of Senator Shaheen. But you and Mr. Coons definitely did marry up.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Lipton.

Ms. Roberts, please, your introduction.

STATEMENT OF ASELE ROBERTS, OF VIRGINIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Ms. ROBERTS. Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished members of this committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia. I am truly grateful to the President and Secretary Rubio for placing their confidence in me to fulfill the important duties and responsibilities of this position.

I also want to thank everybody who has supported me during my two decade career at the U.S. Department of State, which has led to this appointment. My parents, my sister, my in-laws in Buffalo, New York, and most of all my spouse and daughter.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the Office of the Chief of Protocol who have worked diligently with me to promote U.S. interests for the last two decades. Without these people, I would not have the opportunity to be before you today.

I was born in the Soviet Union, but I spent most of my adult life in the United States thanks to President Ronald Reagan and his efforts to end the cold war. At the age of 15, I first came to the United States as an exchange student, subsequently graduating from both high school and university in America. These experiences instilled in me a strong belief in the American Dream and the critical importance of the United States in the world, sentiments that have inspired my work at the U.S. Department and have prepared me for the duties for which I have been nominated as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia.

Through my work in the Office of the Chief of Protocol, I have learned the art of diplomacy by organizing hundreds of high level diplomatic meetings for six different presidential administrations. Having served for a full year as the Acting Chief, I also know how to run a complex and large unit within the State Department, and I am fully confident in my abilities to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of representing the United States abroad and to efficiently manage an embassy.

It would also be a great honor to fulfill these duties in the Republic of Slovenia, which is an important friend and ally to the United States. Slovenia and the United States share a close relationship rooted in our shared interests, democratic values, economic ties, and a longstanding defense cooperation as NATO allies. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that Slovenia meets NATO defense spending and capability commitments as well as continues to fulfill its critical role in the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic region.

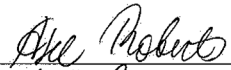
I will also prioritize the safety and well being of U.S. citizens, will advocate for American economic security, balanced trade, and fair treatment for U.S. businesses. Additionally, I will continue to push for greater economic cooperation in trade between our countries.

It would be an honor to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes


Printed Name: Ashley ROBERTS
Date: 3/5/2026

[The prepared statement of Ms. Roberts follows:]

Prepared Statement of Asel Roberts

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of this committee:

I am honored to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia. I am truly grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for placing their confidence in me to fulfill the important duties and responsibilities of this position.

I also want to thank everybody who has supported me during the last 20 years of my career at the U.S. Department of State, which has led me to this appointment. This includes first and foremost my family. I want to thank my parents for always believing in me, my in-laws for welcoming me into their extended family in Buffalo, NY, my spouse for supporting me every step of the way, and my daughter who has inspired me every day for the last 10 years. I also want to thank my colleagues in the Office of the Chief of Protocol who have worked diligently with me to promote U.S. interests through dozens of multilateral and bilateral meetings as well as at summits, state visits, and U.N. General Assembly Meetings. Without these people, I would not have the opportunity to be before you today.

I was born in the Soviet Union in what is today the Republic of Kazakhstan at a time of great global change. Yet, I was fortunate enough to spend most of my adult life in the United States, something I could never have done if it had not been for President Ronald Reagan and his efforts to end the cold war. As a high school student at the age of 15, I was able to take advantage of a U.S. government-funded student exchange program and study at high schools in Arizona and Vermont. This prepared me to gain admittance into and complete university in the United States. I could not have accomplished that journey in any country other than the United States, and it instilled in me a strong belief in the American dream and the critical importance of the U.S. in the world. I have applied this inspiration to my work throughout my career, which has been dedicated to supporting U.S. foreign policy and national interests abroad. Having worked for two decades in the U.S. State Department, my career has uniquely prepared me for the duties for which I have been nominated as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia.

Through my work in the Office of the Chief of Protocol, I have been involved in organizing hundreds of high-level diplomatic meetings for six different Presidential administrations and, as a result, have gained a strong understanding of how to communicate both high-level foreign policy priorities and bilateral concerns with our international counterparts. Additionally, I have worked closely throughout my career with Foreign Service officers and locally employed embassy staff in multiple countries to coordinate high-level visits. Having served for a full year as the Acting Chief of Protocol of the United States, I also have strong experience running a complex and large unit within the State Department, including familiarity with budget management, personnel matters, and leadership. Throughout these experiences, the goal of advancing U.S. interests has always been the motivating force behind my work. I am fully confident in my abilities to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of representing the United States abroad and to effectively manage an embassy. It would also be a great honor to fulfill these duties in the Republic of Slovenia, which is an important friend and ally to the United States.

Slovenia and the United States share a close relationship rooted in our shared interests, democratic values, economic ties, and our longstanding defense cooperation. Slovenia has made impressive contributions in regional and global efforts to bolster stability and peace. It has proven itself to be a friend of the United States and a reliable NATO ally.

I will work to ensure Slovenia's strong commitment to stability and security remains steadfast. This includes efforts to meet NATO defense spending and capability commitments. If confirmed, I will work to ensure Slovenia remains a critical part of the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic region.

Slovenia's strategic location at the crossroads between Central Europe and the Western Balkans also presents opportunities to deepen Transatlantic trade, one of the pillars of the global economy and American prosperity. Slovenia has a small but dynamic economy, with a skilled labor force and some of the best engineers in the world. Despite its small market size, Slovenia has established itself as a hotspot for cutting-edge industries. Its science and tech sectors show particular promise. There are also critical opportunities to build on our two countries' close cooperation on civilian nuclear energy.

If confirmed, I will prioritize the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens. I will also advocate for American economic security, balanced trade, and fair treatment for

U.S. businesses. Additionally, I will continue to push for greater economic cooperation between our countries.

I view this nomination as an opportunity to work diligently to deepen our relationship with Slovenia and to help make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

It would be an honor to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you, Ms. Roberts.
Deputy Secretary Edgar, your introduction, please.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TROY EDGAR, OF CALIFORNIA, TO
BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
EL SALVADOR**

Mr. EDGAR. Great.

Good morning. Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by the President's nomination to serve as United States Ambassador for the Republic of El Salvador.

I want to introduce and thank my wife Betty for being here today.

Thank you, love.

I am grateful to my family for their steadfast support and to the people I have had the privilege to serve alongside throughout my career.

Representing the United States abroad is among the highest responsibilities our nation can bestow, and I approach this nomination with humility, seriousness of purpose, and respect for the statutorily mandated role of this committee.

El Salvador is one of our most important partners in the Western Hemisphere. Our nations are bound by geography, shared security interests, and enduring ties, including a vibrant Salvadoran American community that strengthens our country every day. The bilateral relationship sits at the intersection of critical U.S. priorities including migration management, counternarcotics cooperation, economic growth, democratic governance, and regional stability. In many ways, how we work with El Salvador will help shape broader patterns of cooperation and stability across Central America.

If confirmed, my mandate will be clear: to faithfully represent the President and the United States, to advance American national security and economic interests, and to strengthen cooperation with the government and people of El Salvador in ways that produce tangible results for both nations.

Effective diplomacy requires resolve and respect in equal measure. If confirmed, I will engage directly and candidly with Salvadoran leadership, including President Bukele, to deepen cooperation against transnational criminal organizations, to expand economic opportunity, and reinforce the importance of strong institutions, rule of law, and accountable governance.

Throughout my career, including my time as the Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, I have focused on institutional integrity, operational discipline, and supporting the professionals that were entrusted with executing our nation's policies.

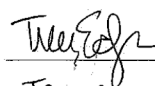
If confirmed, my full attention will be devoted to leading our mission in San Salvador with professionalism, clarity of purpose, and full accountability to this committee and to the American people.

I welcome your guidance and oversight, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELS and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes



Printed Name: TERRY EDGAR
Date: 3/5/26

[The prepared statement of Mr. Edgar follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Troy Edgar

Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by the President's nomination to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I want to introduce and thank my wife Betty for being here today. I am grateful to my family for their steadfast support and to the people I have had the privilege to serve alongside throughout my career. Representing the United States abroad is among the highest responsibilities our nation can bestow, and I approach this nomination with humility, seriousness of purpose, and respect for the statutorily mandated role of this Committee.

El Salvador is one of our most important partners in the Western Hemisphere. Our nations are bound by geography, shared security interests, and enduring ties, including a vibrant Salvadoran American community that strengthens our country every day. The bilateral relationship sits at the intersection of critical U.S. priorities including combating illegal immigration, counternarcotics and law enforcement cooperation, economic growth, democracy, and regional stability. In many ways, how we work with El Salvador will help shape broader patterns of cooperation and stability across Central America and throughout the Hemisphere.

If confirmed, my mandate will be clear: to faithfully represent the President and the United States, to advance American national security and economic interests, and to strengthen cooperation with the government and people of El Salvador in ways that produce tangible results for both nations.

Effective diplomacy requires resolve and respect in equal measures. If confirmed, I will engage directly with Salvadoran leadership, including President Bukele, to deepen cooperation against transnational criminal organizations and foreign terrorist organizations and expand mutual economic opportunity.

Throughout my career, including as Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, I have focused on institutional integrity, operational discipline, and supporting the professionals entrusted with executing our nation's policies.

If confirmed, my full attention will be devoted to leading our mission in San Salvador with professionalism, clarity of purpose, and full accountability to this Committee and to the American people.

I welcome your guidance and oversight, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Deputy Secretary.
And last but not least, Mr. Novelly.

STATEMENT OF JARED NOVELLY, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NEW ZEALAND, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA, THE COOK ISLANDS, AND NIUE

Mr. NOVELLY. Thank you Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of this committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as United States Ambassador to New Zealand, the Independent State of Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue.

What may be lost on many of us in the private sector is the level of dedication that can be witnessed by those in government. During the lead up to this hearing, I have been exposed to a number of wonderful, bright, and dedicated people in the State Department, and I can honestly tell you that I have been incredibly impressed by the almost selfless determination that I have witnessed. I wish to express my admiration for all of those who have helped me by

thanking them for their service, and to also thank my friend, Senator Schmitt.

So too must I express my admiration for all of the members of this committee for your service as well. If confirmed, I hope to, at least, match the dedication to the American people manifested by each of you members of this committee. Thank you for your service, and I look forward to serving our country with a similar zeal that I have witnessed.

If confirmed as ambassador, I will work tirelessly to advance President Trump's and Secretary Rubio's foreign policies. In advancing the President's agenda, we have few better partners than New Zealand. The government of New Zealand consistently supports our goals in the region and beyond.

If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to take our relationship to new heights. Specifically, I intend to focus on three priorities. Number one is partnering with New Zealand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Niue to promote a free and open Pacific. Number two is expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand. And number three is promoting opportunities for U.S. business entities.

Few countries understand the darkening security environment in the Pacific better than New Zealand. Last February, China conducted live fire exercises in the Tasman Sea. I was in the region at the time, and it was very concerning. The exercises led to flight diversions and represented an example of alarming, even destabilizing behavior in the Pacific.

If confirmed, I would prioritize expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand.

I know the critical role our embassies and consulates play in ensuring a fair playing field for U.S. entities. Whether it be through tearing down trade barriers or opening new markets, all businesses will have a friend in the ambassador's office if I am confirmed.

In Samoa in recent years, the government in Apia has adopted a prudent approach to managing relations with the West and China, taking on foreign debt with caution. If confirmed, I would encourage the government in Samoa to continue this approach and ensure it is never pressured into a deal that would compromise its sovereignty.

In the Cook Islands, establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 2023 enabled us to take our longstanding relationship to the next level. If confirmed, I would expand our collaboration with local authorities to promote the responsible development of seabed mineral resources. The Cook Islands' EEZ contains possibly the largest cobalt deposit in the world, a key component in batteries and high strength alloys. A strong partnership with the Cook Islands means a strong supply chain of critical minerals. This is good for all parties.

In Niue, I would likewise focus on strengthening our bilateral relationship. We have, and under my watch will continue to, closely engage with Niue on economic, cultural, and other programs. I hope to continue to grow this relationship.

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

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

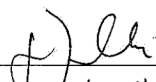
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Answer: Yes

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Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes


Printed Name: Jared Novelly
Date: Mar 5 2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Novelty follows:]

Prepared Statement of Jared Novelty

Thank you Chairman Ricketts, Ranking Member Coons, and distinguished Members of this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as United States Ambassador to New Zealand, the Independent State of Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue.

What may be lost on many of us in the private sector is the level of dedication that can be witnessed by those in government. During the lead up to this hearing, I have been exposed to a number of wonderful, bright, and dedicated people in the State Department, and I can honestly tell you that I have been incredibly impressed by the almost selfless determination that I have witnessed.

I wish to express my admiration for all of those who have helped me by thanking them for their service.

So too must I express my admiration for all of the Members of this Committee for your service as well. If confirmed, I hope to, at least, match the dedication to the American people manifested by each of you Members of this committee.

Thank you for your service and I look forward to serving our country with a similar zeal that I have witnessed.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work tirelessly to advance President Trump's and Secretary Rubio's foreign policies.

In advancing the President's agenda, we have few better partners than New Zealand. The government of New Zealand consistently supports our goals in the region and beyond.

If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to take our relationship to new heights. Specifically, I intend to focus on three priorities:

1. partnering with New Zealand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Niue to promote a free and open Pacific;
2. expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand; and
3. promoting opportunities for U.S. business entities.

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If confirmed, I would prioritize expanding our defense partnership with New Zealand.

I know the critical role our Embassies and Consulates play in ensuring a fair playing field for U.S. entities. Whether it be through tearing down trade barriers or opening new markets, all U.S. businesses will have a friend in the Ambassador's office if I am confirmed.

In Samoa in recent years, the government in Apia has adopted a prudent approach to managing relations with the West and China, taking on foreign debt with caution. If confirmed, I would encourage the government in Samoa to continue this approach and ensure it is never pressured into a deal that would compromise its sovereignty.

In the Cook Islands, establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 2023 enabled us to take our longstanding relationship to the next level. If confirmed, I would expand our collaboration with local authorities to promote the responsible development of seabed mineral resources. The Cook Islands' EEZ contains possibly the largest cobalt deposit in the world—a key component in batteries and high-strength alloys. A strong partnership with the Cook Islands means a strong supply chain of critical minerals. This is good for all parties.

In Niue, I would likewise focus on strengthening our bilateral relationship. We have, and under my watch will continue to, closely engage with Niue on economic, cultural, and other programs. I hope to continue to grow this relationship.

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

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Hey, thank you again to all of our nominees, and you all did a wonderful job of staying under the 5 minutes. I am so impressed. Good job.

Now we are going to enter into a round of 5 minute questions. I will begin, and I will turn it over to the Ranking Member next.

I am going to begin talking about China, Communist China. They are increasingly escalating their illegal course of aggressive

and deceptive practices throughout the West Philippine Sea. Chinese state directed maritime actors regularly ram, shadow, block, encircle, fire water cannons at, and use military grade lasers against Philippine civilian ships and military vessels. Chinese Coast Guard sailors have brutally attacked Filipino sailors with knives and weapons. In February 2026 the Philippine Navy reported record high swarms of Chinese maritime militia vessels and the use of aggressive tactics to prevent the Philippines from establishing a presence in its own Exclusive Economic Zone, or EEZ.

The Ranking Member and I witnessed this coercion firsthand when we flew over the West Philippine Sea in a P-8 during our CODEL to the Philippines last year. The Chinese military illegally challenged our flight in an effort to drive us and the Filipinos out of the EEZ. In response, the Philippines has adopted a strategy of assertive transparency to expose Communist China's bad actions to the world in real time. However, Manila faces significant pushback from Beijing's propaganda and disinformation machinery, which is often able to publish false accounts of maritime incidents before the Philippines can.

Mr. Lipton, if confirmed, how will you support the Philippines' assertive transparency strategy to expose Communist Chinese aggression in real time?

Mr. LIPTON. Senator, thank you very much for that question. First and foremost, I support the iron clad alliance with the Philippines. I am aware of the Philippine strategy, and I will work with Washington to determine the embassy's responses.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. What steps will you take to ensure the U.S.-Philippines alliance restores deterrence against Communist China's ICAD activities, generally?

Mr. LIPTON. In general, China is the bully in the room. My goal would be to confront China's unlawful expansion and aggressive behavior. I will continue to support U.S. competition with China. We must compete with China from a position of strength.

Senator RICKETTS. The Philippines have been targeted by a surge of state sponsored cyberattacks aimed at critical infrastructure and a sophisticated cognitive warfare campaign involving AI enabled deep fakes. These campaigns are designed to fracture the U.S.-Philippines alliance and undermine public trust in defense officials by spreading manufactured narratives of a proxy war. The Armed Forces of the Philippines, the AFP, recently identified these digital intrusions as a primary threat to national stability ahead of the 2028 elections. The recent U.S.-Philippines Bilateral Strategic Dialogue prioritized efforts to modernize the Philippines' cyber defenses.

Mr. Lipton, if confirmed as ambassador, how will you leverage the U.S. technical expertise to help Manila detect AI driven disinformation and purge malware from critical Philippines infrastructure, including grids, banks, and ports?

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

You know, like I said, we have an iron clad alliance with the Philippines, on cyber and information matters. I would work with the State Department, Department of War, and I would discuss the options with them.

Senator RICKETTS. The Philippines is facing an energy security crisis as its energy demand is expected to quadruple by 2050. Following the July 2024 activation of the 123 Agreement for civilian nuclear cooperation, the U.S. has recently funded a \$2.7 million feasibility study for small modular reactors, or SMRs, and established a control room simulator within the Luzon Economic Corridor. Additionally, there are growing opportunities for U.S. LNG and ethanol exports as Manila seeks to diversify its energy mix and meet higher biofuels mandates.

Mr. Lipton, how will you use the newly established Luzon Economic Corridor and the February 2026 Bilateral Strategic Dialogue commitments to prioritize U.S. nuclear technology, LNG infrastructure, and agricultural exports as the preferred choice for the Philippines' energy independence?

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

I understand electricity costs are high and oil is hard to come by. I believe nuclear energy, it has a lot of potential in the Philippines. If confirmed, I would look to American energy suppliers to partner with the Philippines.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes, this is going to be particularly important to make sure that, again, as we look to do economic development with the Philippines we are also helping them with their energy needs to be able to support those new industries we are bring there.

So thank you, Mr. Lipton.

With that I will turn it over to the Ranking Member.

Senator COONS. And I will defer to the Ranking Member of the full committee.

Senator RICKETTS. Very good.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Coons, and to all my colleagues on the committee who are going to allow me to go before you. I appreciate that.

And I want to congratulate all of our nominees and your families and supporters who are here this morning. Thank you for your willingness to serve the country.

Mr. Edgar, I want to begin with you, because in your opening statement you talked about being committed to accountability to this committee and to the American people. And yet during your tenure as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Homeland Security, the Department planned to build an ICE detention facility in Merrimack, New Hampshire. The plans were put forward without any engagement from the local community or input, or from the State, for that matter. I know you are a former mayor. Don't you think it is important, as you are talking about accountability to the American people, to ensure that there is some opportunity for local communities to engage when the Federal Government is coming into put a major facility in that community?

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

Yes, you are right. I was a previous mayor for 12 years in a small city, that lived next to a base that had a lot of stuff happening on the base that we kind of had happen to us. So I do agree that having the accountability and having interactions with local and county and State folks when you are getting ready to do stuff.

You know, I am not familiar specifically with that activity that was going on there, that you mentioned. But within the One Big Beautiful Bill there is an amount of money that is out there that they are using to do the ICE—

Senator SHAHEEN. \$38 billion.

Mr. EDGAR. Yes. So going through that process I think—and the one thing I would say, just buying buildings as part of DHS's normal operation, not just within immigration, but there are 23 other components, you know, there is a process that we do engage with the local folks when you are going through. There is zoning, permitting, and all that, and I know you know that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, that is right, and my concern is that that process was not engaged in. And I hope, if you are confirmed, that you will commit to doing a better job of both providing transparency and engagement with this committee, and as you said, with the American people.

I also want to call your attention to a report that the minority members of the committee produced on the Trump administration's third country deportations. Have you seen that?

Mr. EDGAR. I am not sure.

Senator SHAHEEN. We will ensure that you get a copy of it. In fact, it is probably helpful for a number of you to see this. Because the Administration paid more than \$32 million to five foreign governments to accept third country nationals. And they went to, El Salvador was one of the recipient countries for those nationals. And as you are aware, El Salvador has been notorious for its human rights abuses. And one of the things that has happened is that many of those nationals went to their notorious prison, CECOT, and there has been—we are not aware, on this Committee, of any due diligence that has been conducted by the American government as to whether those third party deportees have been tortured in that facility, what has happened to them.

We do know that a number of those detainees who have been sent to third countries have then been moved on to the countries of origin, so 80 percent later returned to their country of origin, at additional U.S. taxpayer expense. For example, we paid for one individual to fly to Eswatini—this is of interest to you, I am sure, Mr. Garcia—then back to Jamaica, at a cost of more than \$181,000.

So will you commit to this committee that if there are additional third party removals to the country of El Salvador, if you are confirmed, that you will follow up with those third country deportees and make sure that they are not being tortured or mistreated in the country of El Salvador?

Mr. EDGAR. Yes, Senator, I will.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Garcia, I know that Senator Coons, in his opening statement, talked about the concern that we have on this committee with the number of open ambassadorships around the world. If confirmed, you will be the Assistant Secretary for a bureau that has 34 vacant ambassadorships across the African continent. In every country where we have a U.S. vacancy, China has an ambassador. That situation was made worse when a number of our ambassadors, over 30 career diplomats, were recalled in December.

So can you talk about the challenges of being able to do your job when you do not have diplomats on the ground who can execute America's foreign policy, and since this President took office he has nominated only two ambassadors for Africa posts. So how do you plan to turn that around?

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Senator, for the question. Simply stated, having ambassadors forward is an important part of our diplomacy. However, we also have a number of career service professionals that have been in embassies, executing on decades of experience there. I understand, although I am not privy to the inner workings of this at this point in time, that reviews are undergoing to realign assignments at the ambassador. And if confirmed, I commit to this committee to take a look at how the prioritization is being done, and will advocate for the African continent and ambassadors in the continent.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I hope that you will advocate loudly and often for that, because we need our ambassadors in place, on the ground, around the world. Right now we have 14 countries in the Middle East where the Administration has told Americans that they need to leave. In those 14 countries we only have 6 confirmed ambassadors, and 2 of them are not career people with any kind of diplomatic experience.

So it is a real threat, and we see that now, what happens in countries where we do not have people in charge. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Edgar, as Deputy Homeland Secretary at the time and now as a nominee to be our Ambassador to El Salvador, did you have concerns about what was happening to the 250 Venezuelans that you helped deport to CECOT, given the widespread accusations of gross human rights violations by the Bukele government?

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you, Senator.

No, I did not have concerns. I think that when we were going through the process of deportations, President Trump has made very clear that we need to make sure that we are operating on really three of his campaign promises: number one, secure the border; number two, effective and efficient deportations; and three, for efficient government.

So when it came to CECOT, the pictures that you are showing in the background and that view, that is a prison that is run by El Salvador, not the United States.

Senator COONS. Does the United States have no obligation for the treatment of those who we deport to third countries?

Mr. EDGAR. I think when you go through, obviously we go through a safe and fair assessment, just like when we set up with the State Department. The State Department really kind of helps us put together what I will call safe third countries and the agreement that we have with El Salvador. From a DHS perspective, as the COO, I did not get directly involved with the details of setting up that agreement.

Senator COONS. You are familiar with the Convention Against Torture.

Mr. EDGAR. I am.

Senator COONS. And widespread allegations that President Bukele, while he has accomplished dramatic reductions in violent crime, has done so through the detention of nearly 100,000 of his own citizens, undue influence on the Supreme Court, an illegal second term, repression of human rights by journalists, human rights advocates. Frankly, a violation of the rule of law at virtually every level. Are you aware of those allegations against President Bukele?

Mr. EDGAR. I am aware of the allegations that I read, but I would just say that they are allegations, right. I think if confirmed as the Ambassador for El Salvador I will keep an open mind in being able to make sure that I am aware, I use the data, I will work with the committee in the form of oversight so that we can go through and make sure that they are there.

The one thing I would say to kind of counter that is that I think El Salvador has done a tremendous job in their environment to be able to bring safety to 98 percent of their citizens. They were in a situation, unprecedented gang violence, and a really nasty place. And right now you see it in their elections. You see it in the people and the turnout and the approval ratings, that the people of El Salvador are supportive of what that current administration is doing. And the United States and President Trump backs the administration of El Salvador.

Senator COONS. But let's be clear, Mr. Edgar. At the Department of Homeland Security, as I said to your Secretary in a hearing just this week, you have, and I have, we all have obligations to protect American citizens, to keep them safe. But to do so in a way that is efficient and legal and humane and constitutional. We have to respect the rule of law. We can make our country safer by simply snatching off the streets, using masked, nameless agents, people who we suspect of being bad folks, and executing them. There was a period of time in the Philippines where that was the practice of the former government. There is a period now, in El Salvador, where that is the practice of the government.

I agree we need to keep the American people safe. I profoundly disagree with doing so in a way that violates the fundamental rights of Americans. And it sends a message to the rest of the world about what we stand for when we forcibly deport hundreds of people, many with no criminal record, to a country that has a demonstrated human rights record that is abysmal.

I am the co-chair of the Human Rights Caucus, along with Senator Tillis. I am gravely concerned by the significant human rights in El Salvador, and frankly, by your answer, that what matters is meeting the President's campaign promises, and it is popular so who cares about the consequences for the people who were sent there.

I also want to know about your role in developing the ICE plan for detaining people in our country, in warehouses, that Senator Shaheen just referenced. What was your role in developing and carrying out this plan?

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you, Senator. My role at DHS is as the Chief Operating Officer. A big part of my role is the fiscal management of what happens at DHS. So at any given time three budgets are in place, closing out 2025, doing 2026, and looking at 2027.

Within One Big Beautiful Bill, as you know, there was money in there for these types of warehouse operations. My role in that process was to facilitate with the three main components of DHS—ICE, CBP, and the Coast Guard, which got a pretty big allocation in the One Big Beautiful Bill—work with legislature, with the appropriations and with OMB to make sure spend plans and all the administrative parts are in place.

So when it came to the tactical execution of what locations are they going to, where are we going to be, how are we going to use that, Secretary Noem and myself really relied on the leadership of ICE who would have that responsibility.

Senator COONS. So in the process of purchasing warehouses throughout the United States, including in my neighboring State, Pennsylvania, and potentially in her State, New Hampshire, in States like Mississippi, where the Senator has pushed back hard on it, should we have concern that the standards in those warehouses will be comparable to CECOT in El Salvador?

Mr. EDGAR. No. No, sir. You should not have any concern. We have a unified standard that we apply to all facilities for ICE facilities. You know, we have two main vendors at ICE, GEO and CoreCivic, and those types of standards are national, many times better than the standards that we actually have in county and local jails. So that is the standard that we have given out, that they put these out to bid, and that is the standard they would be held to.

Senator COONS. Do you think the Members of Congress ought to be able to come and inspect the conditions in facilities, particularly in our own States or districts?

Mr. EDGAR. I think that there is a process that you guys are required to go through, and I think that has been a point of contention with DHS—

Senator COONS. Yes.

Mr. EDGAR [continuing]. And whether you guys just show up at the door or whether you give us a little bit of a heads-up. But I think Secretary Noem and the Administration has been willing to work with you guys.

Senator COONS. Let me just reference one last thing. I know I am over my time. You mentioned in your testimony that you have been particularly focused on institutional integrity at the Department of Homeland Security. The inspector general for DHS recently sent a letter to Congress detailing how DHS has, and this is a quote, “systematically obstructed its work to conduct independent oversight for several months.” Many of the IG’s requests and a lot of this allegation of systemic obstruction occurred while you were serving as number two in charge of operations. What is your response to these allegations, sir?

Mr. EDGAR. My response to that is I had a great relationship with the inspector general. He came in under Trump 1. Going through that process, I think from, I guess, my personal perspective, is the bigger picture. At any given time there is probably 700 to 800 open IG assessments going on at any time at DHS. So there is no doubt that the one that has been highlighted is the ones that has gotten attention. But I would not overamplify or magnify the issue of one or two of the things that was caught up in an article as being the way that it is.

There is oversight within Homeland Security, so I am sure that there will be committee meetings on evaluating that. And I think I would just be careful to not make a determination by what you see in the press.

Senator COONS. What do you think the IG meant by “systematically obstructed,” if this is someone you have worked well with and have a constructive relationship with?

Mr. EDGAR. Well, I think there are a lot of different things that were going on at DHS as we kind of came in. You know, it is a large organization, first of all, 23 components, \$105 billion budget. The second thing is that at the very beginning there was a bunch of stuff going on with DOGE, as you remember. And my job in that was a little bit kind of counter, is I realized, I being the CFO, how important it was to make sure that we maintained the work that had to be done by the authorities given by Congress in the money. So we had to be careful that we were not cutting so much that we were kind of getting out and having a problem.

So the systematic part of the IG is he was going through a process of really trying to navigate system access for stuff, and a lot of confusion that was happening in the very beginning. But I think in the long run, Secretary Noem and her front office have done a good job to start to work and get that back on track.

Senator COONS. Thank you for your answers. I am going to let my colleagues question. But I have to say, I am really troubled by your responses to my questions about CECOT and about your view about the government of El Salvador.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETS. Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, everyone.

Let me first of all say it is good to see my friend, Lee Lipton. Congratulations on your nomination. You are going to make a terrific Ambassador. Thank you for serving.

Mr. Garcia, let me turn to you. It is good to see you again. Congratulations on your nomination, as well.

When you and I met previously we discussed the growing strategic importance of Africa to U.S. national security. As I have said repeatedly on this committee, Africa sits on the front lines of strategic competition with China in the 21st century. China represents the most significant long term strategic challenge facing the United States, and the United States should confront China, region by region, especially in Africa.

But to compete effectively we first have to recognize where our own approach has previously fallen short. U.S. policy has treated Africa as if it were borderless, a single, undifferentiated space. That approach does not reflect reality. Africa is a continent of sovereign states, each with its own interests, priorities, and strategic value. We should be engaging African partners the same way we engage partners anywhere else in the world, country by country, interest by interest, partnership by partnership. That is how we counter Chinese influence and advance American interests on the continent.

Can you explain, Mr. Garcia, in concrete terms why Africa matters to U.S. national security and to our economic interests today?

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

Africa is a continent that is rich, not just with amazing human capital but also is endowed with incredible natural resources, as well as a people that when they work with us together we form a really strong team together.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to travel to Africa for the better part of 15 years, and in my time there the locations that I have been to, where there have been joint industrial enterprises together with African nations, it is an incredibly different Africa than perhaps a neighboring state.

In my opening statement I summarized Africa is at a great inflection point for the benefit of Africa and the United States' interests, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with African nations on industrial and rare earth minerals, on energy, and the fundamentals of building a greater America with African partners.

Senator CRUZ. If you are confirmed, how will you ensure that our Africa policy aligns with the broader U.S. efforts to compete with China globally?

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

The President's National Security Strategy has been very clear in terms of this is a continent in transition from aid to trade. And I think that is a fundamental starting point with the relationship, and if confirmed, I would ensure that our industries, the health enterprises in the United States, innovation that we can bring to the continent is unleashed with our partners that choose to do business with us.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Let me turn to another topic. I am deeply alarmed that the United Kingdom is prepared to transfer the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, a decision that would jeopardize U.S. national security by exposing military operations to China and potentially restricting military access to Diego Garcia.

Diego Garcia sits at the center of the Indian Ocean and has been one of America's most important power projection platforms for decades, enabling operations across the Middle East, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific. Uninterrupted access to forward basing is foundational to protecting Americans, maintaining a capable deterrence, and defeating our adversaries in times of conflict. Limiting U.S. operational freedom, or creating opportunities for Chinese influence over a critical facility, would hand our adversaries a strategic advantage.

This deal is dangerous to U.S. interests. President Trump is absolutely right to be furious with the U.K.'s decision. The U.K. is taking a serious gamble with a special relationship by putting one of our most vital shared military assets at risk.

Do you agree that unfettered U.S. access to Diego Garcia is a vital national security interest of the United States?

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator CRUZ. Describe the consequences for U.S. national interests if the U.K. moves forward with the Chagos Islands agreement with Maritius.

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I have not done a deep dive on this issue. I speak from past experience, having spent time in Diego Garcia, having spent a significant amount of time operating in the North

Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf. The support that came forward from Diego Garcia was invaluable. We could not have done and subverted and projected U.S. strength and U.S. power without Diego Garcia.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the committee to look at the issues with regard to our agreements, long term agreements, with the U.K. to share basing opportunities there.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Murphy.

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

Mr. Edgar, I am just stunned by the Department of Homeland Security's blatant violation of the law with respect to Member access to facilities. Our basic constitutional obligation is to oversee congressional spending, and the way in which the statute has been 100 percent clear, that Members need to be able to see these facilities, have been denied that access I think is a crisis.

When I went down to Texas just a few months ago, probably only 30 days after you left, I was denied access to several facilities in Texas. And the explanation I was given was that all of those facilities were now funded by Big Beautiful Bill dollars, by reconciliation dollars, that everything at Dilley was funded by reconciliation dollars, that everything at Pearsall was funded by reconciliation dollars. But there was not a single facility in Texas that was funded with appropriations dollars, and thus, I was not able to access any of those facilities. That is not true. Correct? You, as the person who oversaw money for the Department of Homeland Security, did not magically, overnight, transfer every single operation in the State of Texas from appropriated dollars to reconciliation dollars.

Mr. EDGAR. Senator, thanks for the question.

Give me an approximate date, because when I was there at that point, those facilities were covered under appropriated dollars.

Senator MURPHY. Yes, so this would have been—you left on what date?

Mr. EDGAR. December 19.

Senator MURPHY. Yes. So this would have been not more than a month later. It is not credible, correct, that in a month all of those operations were moved.

Mr. EDGAR. Well, most of the spending plans and all the activity that was approved was in October, with OMB. So I knew the Secretary and her staff, who were working with ICE, they were in a pretty aggressive period and a very tight deadline to be able to get activity going. I don't know if they may have reconstituted those facilities. You know, the ones that you are talking about specifically are again the big vendors. So whether they bought the facilities out from underneath the vendors or whether this was something that was a new purchase, it sounds like it is an existing facility that you went to. I am not super familiar, but—

Senator MURPHY. Yes. The problem is I do not think that that explanation that was given to me in January was different than the explanation that was being given in December. I think Members were being denied access to virtually every facility that they wanted to see at DHS, because of a claim that it was reconciliation dollars that were being used, which is a lie. I mean, the people that were talking to me were lying to me. And it is just shocking that

there was not dissent from you or from anyone else at DHS leadership to make sure that Members of Congress had access to those facilities.

Let me ask you about the post that you are about to arrive at, and I am following up on some questions from Senator Coons. The State Department seems to be undergoing a campaign of white-wash, broadly, across the world, regarding countries' human rights abuses, in particular, those countries in which the United States has new and important financial deals, between those countries and the Trump administration.

Here is what the State Department Human Rights Report for El Salvador, for the calendar year 2024, says. Quote, "There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses in El Salvador in 2024." That is not true. Correct?

Mr. EDGAR. Obviously I do not know. I mean, that was before my time. I think it is interesting that is President Biden's time period. So that is his State Department. But I am not super familiar with the detail on that.

Senator MURPHY. Well, President Biden's report for 2023 reported significant ongoing human rights abuses.

I do not know that it is credible that you do not know. This is the country you are going to. You have spent the last several months studying this country. I do not think it is actually credible that you do not know whether there were significant human rights abuses inside the country in 2024. You know, right? So are you prepared to say that the report is correct, that there were no significant human rights abuses in El Salvador in 2024?

Mr. EDGAR. I think, sir, you are saying two different things. You are asking me whether I just think, in general, after studying a report that was done 2 years ago whether I think it is right or wrong.

Senator MURPHY. No, it is not a report. From your study of what is happening inside El Salvador, do you believe that there were no significant human rights abuses in El Salvador in 2024?

Mr. EDGAR. From what I have been able to see through my evaluation, I have not seen any.

Senator MURPHY. I mean, that is disqualifying, Mr. Edgar. I mean, I will send you volumes of reports from human rights groups. There are 100 political exiles who have had to leave the country. Thirty-eight human rights defenders are in jail in that nation. If you are going to be part of a whitewash campaign to deny the reality on the ground, you should not be confirmed as ambassador.

You need to tell the truth. And the truth, I mean, it is just irrefutable. There are massive human rights abuses happening, and if you are sitting here telling us that you have no evidence, you do not believe there were any significant persecution of political opponents of the regime in 2024, I just cannot see how we can confirm you to this post.

Mr. EDGAR. Senator, if I can respond to that. I think my entire background has been focused on being able to look at things through a data perspective and being able to evaluate. My commitment is, if confirmed, that I will evaluate this, empirically, being able to go there myself and being able to see. I have committed to working with this committee. If we do have items that we want to

have evaluated, I think it is really important, especially most important when we are at a Senate confirmation meeting that we build a relationship, build a relationship of trust.

Senator MURPHY. But you just said that you do not believe that there were human rights abuses inside El Salvador in 2024. How do we build a relationship of trust when you are literally denying reality in order to be able to facilitate the Administration's campaign of whitewash?

Mr. EDGAR. Senator, I would just respectfully say, what do I have to refute what was written in there? I am not there, right.

Senator MURPHY. I will send you stacks of reports from people on the ground that confirm the reality of political repression. I would assume you would have been interested in reviewing those in preparation for this hearing.

Mr. EDGAR. I would be more than happy to review them.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Edgar, you were the number two at DHS, so your immediate boss was Secretary Noem, right?

Mr. EDGAR. Yes, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And as I understand your testimony, you left DHS around mid-December, December 19. So you were there when the Department launched Operation Metro Surge in Minneapolis, right? You were at the Department.

Mr. EDGAR. I was probably there when that was starting up.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So I am going to ask you a few questions about human rights and constitutional rights here at home. You would agree that the American ambassador to El Salvador or anywhere else should have a basic understanding of the U.S. Constitution. Would you agree with that?

Mr. EDGAR. I would.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. And you would agree that the Constitution gives people in the United States the right to peacefully protest, right?

Mr. EDGAR. Correct.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. And they have the right to say things against Trump administration policy, right?

Mr. EDGAR. Sure.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. So I want to ask you about Minneapolis, because two American protesters were shot and killed by Federal agents. Renée Good was shot and killed. Alex Pretti was shot and killed. Your boss, your former boss, Secretary Noem, called them "domestic terrorists." And yesterday, in front of the House, and the day before here in the Senate, she refused to retract her statement, calling them domestic terrorists.

So I have a very simple question for you today. Would you agree with me that Renée Good and Alex Pretti are not domestic terrorists?

Mr. EDGAR. Senator, this is an issue that does not involve me.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, no, it does.

Mr. EDGAR. They were shot after I left.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Because you are going to be the American ambassador to El Salvador if you are confirmed. So I have an inter-

est in your views of the Constitution and your views about what happened in Minneapolis, which all of America got to see because it is on video. And people were shocked, including Republicans, some of them, were shocked that the Secretary of Homeland Security refused to retract a statement calling two American citizens, peacefully protesting, domestic terrorists. And I am shocked that you refuse to say today that they are not domestic terrorists. You are refusing to confirm that they are not domestic terrorists.

Mr. EDGAR. Look, any time somebody is shot and killed by law enforcement it is a serious issue. There should be a process to evaluate it and an investigation, and it not be predetermined.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Exactly, Mr. Edgar. It should not be predetermined. So that is why I asked you whether you would agree—

Mr. EDGAR. Well—

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. That we should just call them domestic terrorists.

Let me move on. I find it astounding—I find it astounding—that you cannot say here, at a public hearing to be Ambassador of the United States to another country, that these two American citizens that have been shot and killed by Federal agents, that they weren't domestic terrorists. I find that astounding.

Now, you have also told National Public Radio—I know you say you focused on the finances, but you also told National Public Radio that a Columbia University student and legal permanent resident of the United States was justifiably locked up because of his, quote, “pro-Palestinian activity,” unquote. A Reagan appointed Federal judge, who reviewed that case and other cases of some of these student protesters, said that the Trump administration had launched a, quote, “full throated assault on the First Amendment.”

So I have another simple question, Mr. Edgar. Do you agree that the First Amendment protects and extends free speech rights to people who are legal permanent residents of the United States of America?

Mr. EDGAR. I think it does.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. So it was wrong for the Trump administration to lock up a student for exercising his First Amendment rights.

Let me move on. Do you agree that the right to due process extends to people residing in the United States?

Mr. EDGAR. I am going to qualify both this, due process, and freedom of speech, as I think that you have got to separate citizens, U.S. citizens, and their constitutional rights. When you have folks that are out there that are like an LPR, a permanent resident—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Let me just say this. This is why I asked you if an American ambassador should have an understanding of the Constitution. It is clear law, both First Amendment and due process rights extend to people residing in the United States.

Mr. EDGAR. No, you know something?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. It is absolutely—do you agree with the Supreme Court's 9–0 decision that Kilmar Abrego Garcia was wrongfully sent back to El Salvador? Do you agree with the 9–0 decision?

Mr. EDGAR. I am not going to comment. I cannot comment if there is a stop that we are not supposed to be making comments, because it is still in litigation.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, no, no, no. This part of the case is closed. That was a Supreme Court decision. Do you agree that it was illegal to send Kilmar Abrego Garcia back to El Salvador?

Mr. EDGAR. I think that it has been admitted already by ICE there was an administrative error. So I think that is—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So you agree with the Supreme Court decision. I am just looking for some, you know, constitutional provision that you agree with.

And I just want to say, Mr. Chairman, in closing, you know, my colleagues have asked you about human rights in El Salvador. You are talking about the President of El Salvador. He calls himself the world's coolest dictator. There are ample reports—and I would like unanimous consent to enter them into the record, Mr. Chairman—

Senator RICKETTS. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above, titled “You Have Arrived in Hell” Torture and Other Abuses Against Venezuelans in El Salvador’s Mega Prison, is available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/11/12/you-have-arrived-in-hell/torture-and-other-abuses-against-venezuelans-in-el>]

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. About gross human rights violations in El Salvador, including in CECOT, where you sent Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

And I also want to include the Cato Institute document entitled, “Fifty-Plus Venezuelans Imprisoned in El Salvador Came to the United States Legally, Never Violated Immigration Law.”

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the “Additional Material Submitted for the Record” section at the end of this document.]

Senator VAN HOLLEN. The Cato Institute is not some sort of lefty organization. They believe in freedom. And unfortunately, you have been part of an Administration that is taking away Americans’ rights to freedom here at home, due process rights, as well as First Amendment rights, and it is hard to trust you, therefore, that you will stand up for important American principles, as our American ambassador to El Salvador, if confirmed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Garcia, I am hoping we will have an opportunity to sit down, and please understand that my anger right now is not directed toward you personally. It is directed to the Administration that has utterly undermined what I believe is urgencies on the African continent, that we are simply not addressing. They de-prioritized the continent, defunded critical bipartisan programs that we, in this committee, have worked incredibly hard on. And through their remarks and rhetoric have set our relationships with multiple African countries back, and sent these African countries into the arms of Russians and the Chinese.

Let me start by pointing out the outrage that it was reported that the Bureau of African Affairs senior bureau official, Nick

Checker, sent an email to bureau staff, stating, and I am going to quote here, “To put it bluntly, Africa is peripheral—rather than a core—theater for U.S. interests.” That is utterly outrageous, that a continent that by 2050, will make up 1 out of every 4 human beings on the planet. And because of the aging populations in Asia, America, and Europe, will make up 1 out of every 3 working people, that that is not a central strategic interest of the United States of America.

On top of that, with critical mineral interests, with key global health care concerns, with the fact that we are only 4 percent of the global population and our economy runs on the consumer practices of the globe, it is ridiculous that that is the perspective of representatives of this Administration.

The Trump administration’s 2025 National Security Strategy devoted barely half a page to addressing the continent, and only did so in transactional economic terms, rather than its strategic importance. This is something that should alarm everybody on this committee. It is outrageous.

In December 2025, President Trump recalled 13 ambassadors from African countries. The U.S. maintains embassies across 46 African countries, yet 35 of those posts do not have confirmed ambassadors, 36 if you count the Ambassador to the Africa Union. That is a deep insult to these countries that we have not prioritized our relationships, and that diplomatic vacuum is being filled by the Chinese.

This chronic understaffing of these embassies, and the bureau you are about to lead, undercuts those embassies’ operations, undercuts key strategic interests, undercuts our national security. The Trump administration undermines U.S. diplomatic influence and terminates key foreign assistance programs, again, that were bipartisan approved, is giving strategic competitors like China and Russia the ability to massively expand their political, military, economic, humanitarian, and development engagement across the continent.

And I want to bring your attention to what has been said already, is the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis. What is happening in Sudan is a shame of humanity. I visited the Chad-Sudan border. I saw the malnourished children. We are seeing literally tens of thousands of deaths happening, and what does the United States, what does the Trump administration do? It cuts our resources. The Trump administration has terminated food, nutrition, emergency health responses, and our own State Department people have said thousands more are dying there as a result.

The State Department has determined that the RSF is committing genocide and that the SAF is committing crimes against humanity in Sudan. And what is our response? It has been complicity in allowing these horrors to go on and not stepping up to do something about it.

The Trump administration eliminated offices and experts focused on conflict and atrocity prevention there, canceled most, if not all, of the conflict and atrocity prevention programs in the Sudan. And the President has also not nominated another special envoy for Sudan, despite the legal requirement to do so.

This is a horror. This is a shame.

Last week, the Administration lifted Russia related sanctions on three top Malian military office officials, despite reports that they continue to funnel money to Moscow in exchange for security support. It is a lie that they are concerned about security issues, in the way that they are cooperating. And this, to me, violates what is just common sense. If we want to strengthen commercial, long term relationships with Africa, the State Department needs to use more tools than just lobbing bombs in and doing nothing about what is happening on the group.

Take Somalia—6.5 [sic] Somalis are currently facing high levels of hunger, with more than 1.8 million children facing acute malnutrition. Despite this crisis, the U.S. Government has deprioritized humanitarian assistance for Somalia. Since President Trump has taken office, he has ordered 168 strikes against armed groups in Somalia, but yet he has cut aid to help with the crisis that is there.

So I say to you, sir, I am livid with this Administration's policies. Thousands of people are dying. We are losing our strategic advantage on the continent. Critical minerals are being trafficked by our enemies out of that country, to the detriment of this nation. Our adversaries in Russia and China are making a mockery of the vacuum we are creating there. And on top of it all—on top of it all—the greatest humanitarian crises, which we use to define ourselves by leading against humanitarian crises, the greatest one on the Earth, we are allowing more children to die because of our retreat.

And indulging the kindness of the Chair, Mr. Edgar, your period at DHS—

Senator RICKETTS. Senator, I would just remind you, you used up 7 minutes of your 5 minutes, without asking a question.

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that, sir, but I watched other people go more than 4 minutes over.

Senator RICKETTS. Not today.

Senator HAGERTY. Mr. Chairman, I have got a tight schedule here.

Senator BOOKER. And Mr. Chairman, I will say that Mr. Coons went 4 minutes over. I will say that colleagues of mine did. And we just wasted 30 seconds talking about that. I have one comment to finish, if I may.

Senator RICKETTS. OK. Please finish.

Senator BOOKER. I appreciate that.

What is happening at the Department of Homeland Security is a mockery, and it happened on your watch. When even their own inspector general has talked about the systematic obstructing of any kind of oversight, there are so many horrors going on when people simply turn the other way and do not stare it in the eye. For you to say that there is no humanitarian violations going on in El Salvador I think disqualifies you to be there, when our country sent human beings to a torture center that is well documented, and you said nothing. That you cannot even say when our own State Department has reported violations, that there are violations.

I will tell you, the greatest horrors in this world have been enabled by functionaries and bureaucrats that allowed things to go on without speaking up in a noble fashion that reflects the values of this country. Your performance here has been utterly inadequate,

and there is just no way you should be the Ambassador of that nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to touch very briefly on our investment in the U.S.-Philippine Alliance. It is something that I have been deeply invested in and worked alongside my colleague, Senator Kaine, to pass the Philippines Enhanced Resilience Act. We did that as part of the fiscal year 2026 NDAA. This new law authorizes \$500 million in Foreign Military Financing grants and \$1 billion in FMF loans to the Philippines over the next 5 years. The goal of this is to increase the capabilities and interoperability of the Philippines and the U.S.-Philippine Alliance.

So, Mr. Lipton, my question is very simple. Will you commit to making PERA—that is this law—making PERA implementation a top priority of your tenure, if you are confirmed?

Mr. LIPTON. Senator, thank you very much for that question. I studied the PERA law, and I have actually enjoyed learning about it. I think it has been amazing that, to my knowledge, that both you and Senator Kaine came up with a bill that allotted \$500 million potentially for the next few years, and giving to the people of the Philippines to spend, but spending with the U.S. Government.

My job, if, in fact, confirmed, it would actually be one of my pets, because I want to learn much more about military situations, and I would absolutely want to learn how to help negotiate and teach the Filipino military how to spend that money.

Senator HAGERTY. I think you should plan on working with my staff to make sure that you are as effective as possible in doing that. I look forward to working with you, and I look forward to your confirmation. This is going to be a top priority, so thank you.

Mr. Edgar, I would like to turn to you, because I think you are going to make an excellent Ambassador to El Salvador. If you think about the work that this Administration has done to work with President Bukele to address illegal migration, to strengthen our national security cooperation with that country, I think about President Bukele's leadership, that has allowed El Salvador to dramatically reduce violent crime in that country, including the establishment of a maximum security facility that detains very high risk criminal offenders.

Our two governments have found a way to coordinate on the return of Salvadorean nationals that are involved in criminal activity, and we have done that in a way that has reinforced public safety right here in the United States.

Mr. Edgar, you have extensive experience in migration and in homeland security. You served not only as the Chief Financial Officer of DHS but you now serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. So I would be very interested, from your perspective, to just talk with us about how important El Salvador's cooperation has been to implementing our own homeland security, and how you are going to work to institutionalize and strengthen that relationship.

Mr. EDGAR. Yes, thank you, Senator.

So El Salvador, big picture, kind of three objectives that we have had working with that country. Number one, national security. So all the counternarcotics work that has been done has been a joint activity with El Salvador. You just read recently in the news they busted a cocaine ship off the coast, about 350 miles off the coast. So not only within their Navy, not only within their Coast Guard, but within their police we have been partnering with them and going through this process of going and interdicting drugs and being a part of that process.

Outside of that and in the national security, Haiti has been a really big area of contention. And you know, the thing that we learned with El Salvador is regional migration and regional stability is everything. So from the Administration's perspective we really strategically look at El Salvador as being a model that can be emulated when you are surrounded by Nicaragua, Honduras, and making sure that we are able to get countries and like minded—you know, you see what is going on with Costa Rica, you know, CECOT being a bad thing, and there are human rights.

And you know, I will just say it and take advantage of the opportunity to speak to the other side of the aisle here. I am a data focused person. I will look at all the facts. I am not here to pre-judge and say there is nothing going on.

But that is national security. The second area is migration. With migration, one of the biggest areas we used to have a lot of problems, President Trump came in and historically shut the border. And it has been one of the biggest accomplishments that we have been able to do at DHS. By doing that it really kind of started to stop the flow that was coming up from El Salvador. But we still got really kind of two open items that we still deal with El Salvador on a daily basis. Number one, re-migration or sending folks back, making sure that El Salvador continues to take back its citizens after they are detained. The second is transit leases that are happening in their airport. There is a lot of activity that goes on within their airport. People come in and then they apply to go from there into the United States.

So those are the two main areas. I would say the last thing that I would just like to hit on really quickly is the economy. You know, we talked a little bit about China and what is going on with China there. In 2019 El Salvador, before Bukele came into power, there was kind of an incursion of what was going on with China, and they have been able to get a national stadium, a library, water treatment plants.

We need to make sure that America stays its leading trading partner. I am not saying push them out completely, but right now we have a \$2.2 billion trade surplus with El Salvador. And the key to their economy, the key to kind of helping that take place, is security. So the balance between the democracy of El Salvador and them getting the folks and getting to a safe environment provides investor security and confidence. And if confirmed, one of my big roles will be to kind of help U.S. companies go and have a great opportunity within El Salvador.

Senator HAGERTY. I think that last point is a critical one. Senator Kaine and I traveled through the Western Hemisphere on a very fruitful trip, and it was clear to us that the United States

needs to be more present, our commercial interests need to be more present in the region. And China has certainly taken advantage of that void. We need to step up.

Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Edgar. You said you are a data focused person, but when Senator Coons asked you about whether you are concerned about the allegations of torture of these 250 Venezuelans at CECOT you said you were not concerned. That was your answer. You said you had three other issues you were concerned about. But on allegations of torture that have been upheld even by parts of the Administration, you said you were not concerned. You said you are a data focused person that does not want to pre-judge issues. But when Senator Van Hollen said, "Hey, it was wrong to call Ms. Good and Mr. Pretti domestic terrorists, wasn't it?" you would not agree that that was wrong to do it.

So I wonder whether you are data focused and do not want to pre-judge, or whether you are just focused on the data you want to see, cherry picking things you want to see and not others.

You mentioned in your testimony that access by Members of Congress to DHS facilities was a process that has been worked out successfully. It has not. You said people should not be able to show up unannounced, and I do agree with you on that.

There is a DHS facility in Virginia that I made repeated efforts to visit in the fall, and just to schedule in advance, and they kept changing the date. And then they kept telling me all these restrictions. I was not allowed to talk to anyone there. I mean, oversight, from the committees that are voting for your budget, means we ought to be able to visit and ask questions. And when a department deprives oversight, even under pre-scheduled, advanced notice, I want to come down and visit, the natural conclusion you reach is you are ashamed of what is going on, or you do not want Members of Congress or the public to see it.

Even if it was true, what Senator Murphy said, these facilities are only funded by reconciliation dollars, that is no reason to deny a Member of Congress. It was Congress that voted on the reconciliation bill. That is no reason to deny a Member of Congress the ability to come in and take a look at a facility.

So I have very significant questions about the testimony that you have given here today, and I just want to put on the record that the claim that the DHS has a process by which Members can actually see these facilities I think is demonstrably false. Eventually, I refused to go because I was not going to go and have shackles on my ability actually to do the work that I think members of this committee ought to be able to do.

Your responsibility at DHS was heavily in the finance space. The reporting is that El Salvador received about \$4.76 million for about 250 third country nationals, mostly Venezuelans. So on the money side, Transparency International ranks El Salvador very low in the corruption indices, meaning they are bad, not good. The World Report at Freedom House gives El Salvador 0 out of 4 for whether there are, quote, "safeguards against official corruption."

Did you monitor how the government of El Salvador spent the \$4.76 million we gave them in exchange for them taking the 250 Venezuelan prisoners?

Mr. EDGAR. No, sir. That money, if you look specifically, was a deal done by the State Department.

Senator KAINE. Right. So we do not know whether it went into Bukele's pocket or where it went.

Mr. EDGAR. Well, there are stipulations. If you look at the two agreements, the diplomatic notes that kind of set the precursor of that and then the follow up detailed, it said that the money was for law enforcement, and it said that when that money is spent that there would be a requirement for them to show details of that. So it seemed to me—

Senator KAINE. Do you know whether they have done so?

Mr. EDGAR. I don't, sir.

Senator KAINE. All right. We will follow up on that separately.

There was an article last year in the *Washington Post* that I do not think has been refuted, and here is the title of the article, and I would like to introduce it for the record, Mr. Chair, the *Washington Post* dated October 19, 2025, "Rubio Promised to Betray U.S. Informants to Get Trump's El Salvador Prison Deal."

And the article that was widely reported in other media, as well. Could I introduce that for the record, Mr. Chair? Could I introduce that for the record?

Senator RICKETTS. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this document.]

Senator KAINE. The article was covered in other periodicals, as well, suggests that in exchange for accepting the prisoners, Bukele wanted not only the \$4.76 million but he also wanted the United States to take nine MS-13 members, who were imprisoned in the United States, and were informants helping the U.S. build a case against MS-13, and President Bukele wanted those prisoners removed from the United States, and then taken back to El Salvador. And there were objections within the Justice Department, saying, "This will undercut the case that we are building against MS-13." Were you aware of that aspect of the deal between the United States and El Salvador?

Mr. EDGAR. Senator, I was not aware.

Senator KAINE. I have no further questions.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you.

The Ranking Member here would like to ask some of the other candidates who have not received questions yet, some questions. He feels like they are being left out a little bit.

Senator COONS. And they are going, "Darn."

[Laughter.]

Senator RICKETTS. So the Ranking Member is going to pick up some of the questioning, but he has promised me he is going to keep it relatively brief, right?

Senator COONS. I will do my best. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just first a piece of advice, having done this 15 years. For the folks who are going to go be ambassadors but who are not previous State Department employees, you will have a DCM. Listen. This is

not directed at you personally. It is just years of experience. The State Department and the whole process of diplomacy, if you have been successful in business or in policy or in sports or in other ways, there are rules of the road. And folks who are military veterans understand. There are certain procedures and rules. Listen to your DCM.

There were some really encouraging statements in here, I think it was from Mr. Novelly, about just how impressed you have been with the State Department folks who have helped prepare you for this.

To the extent you rely on the career professionals who run the embassy, who support our mission, they are there regardless of who the Administration is and regardless of the partisanship here, you are going to be well supported by really good people. I just encourage you to listen to them. Some political ambassadors of both parties have gotten into trouble when they do not listen to the DCM and to how you conduct the leadership of an embassy.

So if I could briefly, Mr. Lipton, I have been to the Philippines a number of times, most recently with Senator Ricketts. It is a very active region. We spent half a day flying over the South China Sea, and I agree with so much of the issues he raised.

The Luzon Corridor was a key priority of the previous Administration, and remains a key priority. What do you think is the single most important thing we can be doing as a nation to push back on malign Chinese influence in the region?

Mr. LIPTON. Senator, thank you very much for that question. China is the bully in the room. My goal would be to confront unlawful Chinese expansion and aggressive behavior. I will continue to support and compete with China. I will also work very closely with the Luzon Economic Corridor. My goal is to bring investments there and to use those investments as a way to combat China.

Senator COONS. Just two points of advice, and then I will move on. There is, as you noted in your prepared remarks, a very large Filipino diaspora community in the United States. We are blessed by a very strong and deep relationship. Some of the current difficulties around immigration will be borne particularly heavily by the Filipino American community, and a lot of your work as ambassador will be making sure that we are not mistakenly or inappropriately arresting or deporting people who are here legally, who are Filipino Americans. And I just commend that to you, because it will be felt particularly sharply there.

And second, if you have not already been to the World War II memorial in Manila, I commend that to you. It is a remarkable place. It is the only U.S. battlefield monument outside the United States where foreign nationals are buried alongside American nationals. And it commemorates the remarkable sacrifice the Filipinos made during our war against Japanese imperialism.

And there is a lot to commend the Philippines. You will be serving in a remarkable and dynamic nation.

Ms. Roberts, if I might, you are originally from Kazakhstan, is that correct, within the Soviet Union?

Ms. ROBERTS. Yes, Senator.

Senator COONS. I am thrilled that you have brought your decades of experience as a State Department employee to representing us

in Slovenia. What do you think you will be able to do in Slovenia to get them as a NATO ally that is standing up to Russia's aggression, to Putin's brutal war against Ukraine? How do you get them more invested in PURL? They have already contributed \$46 million. They are a part of our NATO security. What do you think is the most important place for expanded opportunities in our partnership with Slovenia?

Ms. ROBERTS. Thank you, Senator, for this question.

Our most important opportunity is engagement. Slovenia increased its defense spending to 2 percent earlier this year. They have also signaled their strong willingness to increase that number to 3 percent of GDP by 2030. Most prominently, Slovenia maintains troops in NATO's KFOR peacekeeping operations, also in the EU's Althea Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slovenia also hosts U.S. Army's and U.S. Air Force's units that are stationed in Italy for training on Slovenian training ranges and air bases.

Our relationship continues to deepen. We do have some existing programs like our military to military exchanges, IMET. So if confirmed, I will continue to use my position to ensure that Slovenia meets its NATO defense spending obligations.

Senator COONS. Who is the National Guard State partner with Slovenia?

Ms. ROBERTS. Colorado. And that has been so for 30+ years.

Senator COONS. I will commend to the, I guess, not New Zealand but to El Salvador and the Philippines, one of the most important security partnerships we have across the continent of Africa and around the world are State partnerships between National Guard and countries that, let's just say where the military needs more clarity about civilian control of the military. And the mission and the training and the support is sustained over a very long time through SPP.

Mr. Novelty, you mentioned in your testimony that the Cook Islands is of particular interest to you—it is to me, as well—and that you will be engaged in the sustainable development opportunities of their massive seabed resources. Just talk for a minute about how engaging beyond our Five Eyes ally, New Zealand, but with the three island nations that you will be charged with, just talk to me about how you will prioritize that and what are your core issues.

Mr. NOVELLY. So I am very proud to be the inaugural U.S. Ambassador to both Niue and the Cook Islands. In my briefings, one of the, let's say, biggest shocks I received is to find that most of the world's cobalt comes from the DRC in Africa, and that it is refined in China.

Senator COONS. Yes.

Mr. NOVELLY. And the fact that there is not supply chain management for that. And the fact that the Cooks have opened up their EEZ, expanding from their traditional industry base of tourism to exploitation of their minerals, I see that as an extreme opportunity for the U.S. to be able to play its part.

Senator COONS. They have an astonishing amount of seabed resources, not just cobalt but lots of critical minerals. I actually was at a bipartisan, bicameral dinner last night with Administration officials about how we move ahead on critical minerals. It is one of the key challenges we face. And I think there is bipartisan support.

There are real concerns about sustainable seabed mining and its potential impacted on the environment, and I look forward to staying in touch with you about that.

Mr. NOVELLY. Thank you, Senator, for that statement, and if I could address that.

Senator COONS. Please.

Mr. NOVELLY. I am so impressed by the cultures in the Pacific islands, and having spent quite a bit of time in the Pacific islands, the oceans are sacred to Pacific Islanders. So the fact that the Cook Islands believes that they can exploit this in a responsible method I think is the proper lens to look at it with as opposed to any lens that we might have.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Mr. Garcia, would you be willing to make some time to meet with me and with Senator Booker?

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, Senator.

Senator COONS. I appreciate your decades of military service to our Nation, your interest in the continent, and your partnership with AFRICOM. I recently met the new AFRICOM Commander, General Anderson, in Munich, and was very impressed and actually encouraged. I was the Chair of the Africa Subcommittee here for several Congresses, have been to 34 countries on the continent. I went to college in Nairobi, and have been actively involved in the confirmation of virtually every ambassador we have had over my period.

There are enormous issues on the continent—security issues, humanitarian issues, development issues. Given I have already imposed on the gratitude and support of my friend and colleague here I will cut this short.

But to Mr. Lipton and to Mr. Garcia, one of the resources, as a nation, we have long had is disaster response and humanitarian assistance. The Philippines is the number one disaster impacted country on Earth, and abruptly shutting down our disaster and humanitarian response was not well received there. I do think we are working toward rebuilding and sustaining some of it, and I think that is something we should not set aside. It is a highly valued capability of the United States that used to be resident at USAID, and the abrupt shutting down of that capability, I think, was a tragic mistake.

But I look forward to talking with you, Mr. Garcia, about how we meet and prioritize the crisis in Sudan, the ongoing issues in DRC/Rwanda, security in the Horn, security in the Sahel, and unlock the potential of the Lobito Corridor project that I have worked on now for several years.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Senator.

Senator COONS. Thank you all. I appreciate the opportunity to ask an additional round of questions. And I hope you are relieved to hear—

Senator RICKETTS. You went so long, that actually is like two extra rounds of questions.

Senator COONS. I hope you are relieved to hear that I am now done. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS. And Senator Kaine has requested one more question, as well.

Senator KAINE. And this is a question sort of urging consideration of Mr. Novelly. Fascinating background. You and I both have Missouri roots. I went to Mizzou, Rockhurst High School, across the State from St. Louis U. We have never had an NBA owner of a basketball team in Australia before us. And it does point out we still do not have an ambassadorial nominee for Australia, which I think is a real weakness. But I think you bring a lot to the table.

I just wanted to urge and then ask you this. We spend a lot of time, in this committee and in the Armed Service Committee, talking about the Arctic as an area of competition, so we will talk about the Arctic all the time. We seldom talk about the Antarctic. And my recent trip to Australia shows that there is a lot of reason to be concerned about that. And the Australians—I did not go to New Zealand on the trip, but the Australians said the folks in New Zealand are very worried about this too.

So I would just ask for your assurance that that would be an area that you would focus on with the government of New Zealand but also report back to us. Because again, in Armed Services and in this committee the mentions of the Arctic to the Antarctic have to be 100 to 1. But I do think this is increasingly an area where we ought to be paying attention, and your giving us information about what is going on and what the concerns of the New Zealand government is would be very helpful to us. I would ask for your assurance on that.

Mr. LIPTON. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Senator, and thank you again to all of our nominees here today. We appreciate you providing us with the benefit of your testimony and your responses.

Before closing I would like to ask unanimous consent to add any letters of support the Committee has received to the record. Without objection.

[The information referred to above was not received at press time.]

Senator RICKETTS. I will also note, for the information of members that the record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow, March 6, including for members to submit questions for the record.

Thanks to the committee for this hearing. I appreciate it. And we are now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO FRANK GARCIA BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. American personnel and their family members are facing evolving threats abroad in the wake of the U.S. strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation. These threats are not limited to the Middle East region, unfortunately. Do you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of Americans overseas, including individuals under Chief of Mission authority, and advocating for the resources you need to prioritize American citizen safety?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed.

Question. Do you commit to following the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to the staff you would oversee?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed.

Question. Do you commit to ensuring that any political appointees who report to you follow those same policies?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed.

Question. If confirmed, do you plan to get to post as soon as possible, and are you aware that any arrival after 60 days is subject to a notification and accompanying justification to this Committee?

Answer. Yes.

Question. The Trump Administration has led the Quad forum to address the conflict in Sudan. How will you coordinate with interagency officials, including Special Advisor Boulos, to maintain attention to the war in Sudan and ultimately bring this conflict to an end?

Answer. President Trump has made clear that bringing peace to Sudan is an Administration priority. If confirmed, I would work closely with Secretary Rubio, Senior Advisor Massad Boulos, and interagency counterparts to help end the horrible conflict in Sudan.

Question. Do you believe that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) should be designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization or subject to additional sanctions?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, if designating the Rapid Support Forces a Foreign Terrorist Organization helped in ending the conflict, the United States would consider it. I believe the United States should strategically use all the tools at its disposal, including sanctions, to facilitate peace.

Question. How should the U.S. address external actors who are providing weapons and other forms of support for the RSF?

Answer. I firmly believe external financial and military support to the warring parties only serves to prolong the conflict. The United States should continue to seek an end to all external support to the belligerents. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that such support stops.

Question. The U.S. has lost significant ground to China in public perception across Africa. Afrobarometer polling data shows that China is now leading the U.S. by 10 percentage points in perceived favorability. How do you plan to ensure the U.S. regains positive public perception and trust across Africa, especially as tools like VOA are no longer available?

Answer. If confirmed, my approach would focus on demonstrating visible, citizen-level impact from U.S. partnerships and exchanges. Initiatives like MCC and DFC drive private-sector growth across the continent while helping American workers, businesses, and communities thrive and strengthening supply chains critical to U.S. interests. I will ensure we highlight the benefits of these programs as well as citizen exchanges like the Young African Leaders Initiative.

Question. The Treasury Department recently de-listed three Malian officials originally sanctioned for being key facilitators for Wagner Group, now Africa Corps. As the Trump administration seeks to engage with Sahel military juntas, do you believe the U.S. should continue to counter Russia in these areas?

Answer. Yes. Russia's actions and intentions in Africa warrant caution. Russia engages in malign actions and propaganda campaigns in Africa to stoke division and destabilize populations in order to undermine the rule of law, control strategic natural resources, and attain strategic security assets which, at times, can threaten U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will work to address these threats to our national interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO FRANK GARCIA BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. If confirmed, how will you ensure the U.S. Government seeks to protect civilians, ensure humanitarian access and adherence to international humanitarian law, end the violent conflict, and promote an inclusive peace process in Sudan?

Answer. President Trump has spoken about his commitment to ending the horrific conflict in Sudan. I understand the Administration is working with the "Quad"

countries of Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and others to facilitate a humanitarian truce and end the external financial and military support fueling the violence.

If confirmed, I will urge the parties to accept a humanitarian truce without preconditions and work with our allies and others to end the war that has created the tragic crisis in Sudan.

Question. Life-saving programs funded through bilateral humanitarian assistance funds in Sudan will be completed this year. What is your plan for ensuring that life-saving assistance continues to Sudan this year, in addition to the \$200 million pledge to OCHA pooled funds?

Answer. Sudan's war has produced the world's worst humanitarian crisis. In working with the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as part of the groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2025, the United States remains the lead donor of humanitarian assistance in Sudan. The unconditional humanitarian truce without preconditions is a necessary step for effective utilization of our pledge to the OCHA to provide humanitarian relief without the assistance supporting the warring factions.

I understand Sudan was the first country to receive funding through the OCHA mechanism, and this demonstrates the Administration's commitment to saving lives in Sudan. The Department has expressed its commitment to a smooth transition to scale up the OCHA initiative and to avoid disruptions to lifesaving services, and I would work to ensure this commitment is fully operationalized. In addition, I would continue to urge other donors to join the United States in using the pooled funding vehicle to ensure funding meets the most urgent needs.

Question. Looking beyond this year, what is your plan for sustaining life-saving humanitarian assistance to Sudan over the coming years to address potential funding gaps, program transitions, and evolving needs?

Answer. I recognize that the United States cannot do this alone as the cost of humanitarian response is high in Sudan. With the collapse of Sudan's infrastructure and the health system, and reports of famine, and widespread systematic sexual violence, I understand the Department is urging other donors to join the United States' use of the pooled funding vehicle to ensure funding meets the most urgent needs. If confirmed, I would continue such efforts at burden-sharing.

Question. Do you support U.S.-bilateral humanitarian assistance to Sudan?

Answer. I support efforts to see how the U.S. Government can best support the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Sudan.

Question. How will you ensure the Bureau of African Affairs supports the robust implementation of conflict and atrocity prevention programs and policies in Sudan without these resources?

Answer. If confirmed, I will call on Sudan's parties to cease hostilities, including attacks on civilians, and allow unhindered humanitarian access to all parts of the country. External financial and military support to the warring parties must stop, and I would support accountability measures against those who foment conflict and perpetrate atrocities.

Question. Without GCJ, how will the Bureau of African Affairs support investigations into atrocities and work with local actors documenting those atrocities to help ensure impunity does not persist and to prevent future atrocities and other destabilizing crises?

Answer. If confirmed, preventing atrocities will be part of U.S. engagement to end crises and promote stability. For example, I understand the United States has implemented over 40 sanctions against those fueling the war in Sudan, including for committing atrocities. If confirmed, I would continue to pursue punitive measures against perpetrators. I would also make sure that the Africa Bureau collects information from local actors, and works closely with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, with the Office of the Legal Adviser, and with others, to document atrocities throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and take measures to hold perpetrators and those who support them accountable.

Question. In your role, how will you support efforts to pursue accountability for the grave atrocities committed in El Fasher and throughout Sudan during the conflict?

Answer. Since the war in Sudan began, I understand the United States has rolled out over 40 sanctions against the belligerents and other spoilers to impede the parties' ability to stoke conflict and to impose costs on perpetrators of atrocities. I also

understand that the United States has worked through the U.N. Security Council to impose U.N. sanctions against those who committed atrocities in El Fasher. If confirmed, I will strategically use all the tools at our disposal to pursue accountability for atrocities and facilitate peace. This includes making use of domestic authorities such as Executive Order 14098, and pursuing accountability through the U.N. Security Council, where feasible.

Question. What is your strategy for getting the RSF and SAF, and other allied militias, to stop attacking humanitarian workers?

Answer. I am appalled by the horrific attacks on humanitarian workers and humanitarian aid.

If confirmed, I would work to create safe humanitarian space for workers and recipients of aid as well as would pursue punitive measures against those who attack humanitarian workers. If confirmed, I would also urge the parties to implement their humanitarian obligations and agree to a humanitarian truce without preconditions.

Question. Will you prioritize efforts to ensure the RSF and SAF provide functional humanitarian corridors for the delivery of assistance and to prevent growing famine in Sudan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to ensure the belligerents create humanitarian corridors that allow for unhindered and safe humanitarian access that prevents famine in Sudan.

Question. If so, how will you prioritize and implement this effort?

Answer. President Trump has said he is committed to ending the horrific conflict in Sudan. I understand the Department of State is working with partners to facilitate a humanitarian truce and bring an end to external military support to the parties, which is fueling the violence.

I understand a strong text for a truce has been put forward, and the Department has pressed the two parties to accept this humanitarian truce as presented without any preconditions. If confirmed, I will press all sides to honor their commitments, cease hostilities, and allow full, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Question. How will you ensure that global health programming remains a priority within the Bureau of African Affairs?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to implementing and supporting the America First Global Health Strategy. I will work with the State Department's leads on health diplomacy to ensure U.S. partnerships and programs strengthen bilateral relationships, reinforce country accountability, and support U.S. strategic interests, which include quickly detecting and containing cross-border disease threats, promoting reforms to strengthen transparency and accountability and save lives, and promoting and exporting American innovations.

Question. How do you plan to coordinate with the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy to ensure that outbreak response efforts in Africa are adequately resourced and prepared to respond to broad global health threats?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to implementing and supporting the America First Global Health Strategy. I will work with the State Department's leads on health diplomacy to ensure U.S. partnerships and programs strengthen bilateral relationships to reinforce country accountability and support U.S. strategic interests, including quickly detecting, containing and resolving cross-border disease threats.

Question. What is your vision for PEPFAR's role within the Bureau of African Affairs and your broader diplomatic efforts?

Answer. PEPFAR is managed by the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs and other Regional Bureaus. If confirmed, I will ensure that PEPFAR programs strengthen bilateral relationships, reinforce country accountability, and support U.S. strategic interests in line with the America First Global Health Strategy.

The Administration's multi-year health MOUs provide an opportunity to clarify commitments on both sides—including financial contributions and reform benchmarks. If confirmed, I will reinforce those expectations through high-level diplomacy, and ensure our Ambassadors do the same.

Question. How do you plan to work with the Global AIDS Coordinator to ensure the program continues to be implemented at scale and aligned with congressional intent across the continent?

Answer. PEPFAR is managed by the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy (GHSD)—where the current Global AIDS Coordinator currently sits—in co-

ordination with the Bureau of African Affairs. If confirmed, my responsibility would be to work with GHSD to ensure that our Chiefs of Mission exercise strong oversight, PEPFAR aligns with broader bilateral objectives, host governments meet their commitments, and performance and accountability standards are reinforced at the country level.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Global AIDS Coordinator to ensure that PEPFAR programs strengthen bilateral relationships, reinforce country accountability, and support U.S. strategic interests.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure the timely release of fiscal year 2025 PEPFAR program data and the regular, ongoing collection of such data moving forward, as part of your responsibility to protect the U.S. from cross-border health threats?

Answer. PEPFAR is managed by the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy (GHSD) in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs. My understanding is that the America First Global Health Strategy emphasizes partnerships with governments that demonstrate a commitment to transparent data sharing and evidence-based decisionmaking, and that this is a central feature of the bilateral health MOUs currently being developed.

If confirmed, I would work closely with GHSD and our Embassies to effectively and accountably carry out the American First Global Health Strategy in Africa, including timely release of data.

Question. How will the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy coordinate to implement and monitor these MOUs?

Answer. The Administration's multi-year health MOUs provide an opportunity to clarify commitments on both sides—including financial contributions and reform benchmarks. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy to reinforce those expectations through Ambassadorial engagement and high-level diplomacy.

Question. How will you hold partner governments accountable to their commitments while ensuring the U.S. meets its own obligations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy and Chiefs of Mission to reinforce performance expectations with host governments, leveraging program performance metrics and strong interagency coordination.

Question. How do you intend to use global health programming as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, particularly in countries where China and Russia are expanding their influence through their own health and development investments?

Answer. As the People's Republic of China expands its health and development footprint through initiatives such as the Health Silk Road under the Belt and Road Initiative, I believe we can provide a trusted and accountable alternative model of engagement. It is important that the United States continue to demonstrate the value of transparent, high-quality health partnerships that strengthen national health systems and local capacity, aligning health engagement and assistance with broader strategic priorities to strengthen trusted partnerships and global resilience.

If confirmed, I will work closely with African governments and regional institutions to support sustainable public health infrastructure, workforce development, and supply chain resilience. This approach reinforces U.S. leadership while ensuring that health cooperation advances both African development priorities and long-term strategic partnerships rooted in open competition, accountability, and sustainable financing.

Question. Maternal and Child Health: Maternal and child health and nutrition programs are among the highest-return investments the U.S. makes in Africa. How will you prioritize these programs within the Africa Bureau's portfolio?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio notes in the America First Global Health Strategy, we must keep what is good about our health foreign assistance programs while fixing what is broken. If confirmed, I will work with Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy to support programs in these areas that reinforce country accountability, save lives, and support U.S. strategic interests in the region.

Question. Will you ensure they are protected from cuts or administrative delays that could interrupt service delivery?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy to encourage strategic resources allocation and timely program implementation to protect taxpayer investments.

Question. How do you assess the importance of achieving peace in Somalia for regional stability and global security?

Answer. Somalia has been a source of instability in East Africa for decades. I believe it is important to prevent instability in Somalia, particularly terrorism and piracy, from threatening the United States homeland, American citizens, and U.S. maritime interests in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Question. What role should the U.S. play in achieving peace and stability in Somalia?

Answer. I believe the primary responsibility for addressing instability in Somalia lies with the people of Somalia, Somalia's neighbors, and international partners in the region most directly affected. I believe the United States should be involved to the extent to which Somalia's instability impacts direct U.S. interests, including threats to the U.S. homeland, American citizens, and maritime security impacting U.S. military and commercial interests.

Question. Beyond military engagement, what tools and authorities would you use to promote peace, democracy, and good governance in Somalia?

Answer. I understand Somalia continues to struggle with instability, democracy, and governance challenges despite billions of dollars of international economic, development, and security assistance over many years. I believe these problems are largely a result of corruption, parochial political interests, and the inability of Somalis to coalesce around a shared vision for their country. U.S. diplomatic engagement and economic leverage should be used to address these challenges to the extent to which doing so will make America safer, stronger, or more prosperous.

Question. If confirmed, would you commit to providing this Committee with the current organizational chart for the Bureau of African Affairs, including filled and vacant positions?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to doing so.

Question. Do you also commit to briefing this Committee on how you plan to manage the Bureau's mission effectively given these staffing gaps?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to doing so.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO FRANK GARCIA BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. In December, the U.S. embassy in Zambia said that the U.S.-Zambia health financing agreement was contingent on "collaboration in the mining sector and clear business-sector reforms." Do you agree that countries are more likely to partner with the United States rather than China when we advocate for U.S. interests with transparency and without coercion?

Answer. Countries are more likely to choose partnership with the United States when our engagement is transparent and respectful of national sovereignty. The United States is committed to maintaining a strong, open investment environment that benefits our economy and our people, while enhancing our ability to protect our nation from new and evolving threats that can accompany foreign investment. Our comparative advantage lies in promoting high standards, open markets, and accountable governance, and I have seen African partners respond to this. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for this approach to best position the United States as a reliable partner of choice across Africa.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO FRANK GARCIA BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. If confirmed, what will be your top priorities for advancing U.S. interests across the African continent across regional, economic, and security issues?

Answer. My top priorities for advancing U.S. interests in Africa will be to shift our engagement from aid to mutually beneficial trade and investment. If confirmed, I will support diplomatic efforts to resolve key conflicts. Defending religious freedom

and human rights will remain central. I will work tirelessly to protect Christians and all religious communities so that they can practice their faith freely and openly, without fear of persecution. I will ensure humanitarian assistance aligns with U.S. national security interests and encourage greater burden-sharing by partners.

Question. How will you approach strengthening commercial ties and expanding economic opportunities for U.S. businesses in Africa?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on trade, investment, and mutually beneficial partnerships. This includes empowering our embassies to advocate for commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses, support regulatory reforms that create a more attractive business environment, and promote projects and public-private partnerships in priority sectors, such as critical minerals and infrastructure. I will also work to remove barriers to U.S. exports and investment, ensuring American companies can compete fairly, create American jobs, and foster long-term prosperity for both the United States and African partners.

Question. How do you plan to strengthen U.S. collaboration with African governments on public health, including responses to infectious diseases, strengthening health systems and preparing for future pandemics?

Answer. I look forward to supporting and implementing the America First Global Health Strategy, if confirmed. I will work with the State Department's leads on health diplomacy to ensure U.S. partnerships and programs operate in ways that strengthen bilateral relationships, reinforce country accountability, and support U.S. strategic interests, including quickly detecting and containing cross-border disease threats.

Question. If confirmed, how will you enhance cooperation with African partners to better tackle the effects of climate change, specifically regarding climate resilience, clean energy and sustainable development?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. private sector and African governments to enhance cooperation on sensible environmental policies while respecting national sovereignty, economic growth, and energy security.

Question. What threats do the People's Republic of China's Belt and Road Initiative pose to the long-term economic and infrastructure security of African nations?

Answer. I have seen how China's Belt and Road Initiative has produced crumbling infrastructure, environmental damage, unsustainable debt, and rights abuses across Africa. Beijing cultivates financial dependence through opaque lending that enables corruption and extortion, leaving governments with heavy debt burdens that crowd out essential services and undermine stability and sovereignty. Chinese state-owned firms frequently design, build, and operate key assets in Africa—ports, railways, digital networks—reducing local control, misaligning projects with national priorities, sidelining local labor, and weakening long-term development gains. Poor environmental and social safeguards harm communities, and growing dependence can translate into strategic leverage that compromises sovereignty. I support the Trump Administration's focus on high-quality, transparent, and sustainable investment that strengthens African partners' long-term economic sovereignty and infrastructure security. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure U.S. engagement strengthens the economic resilience and autonomy of our African partners.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with African governments, regional organizations and other U.S. allies to provide transparent, sustainable alternatives to the People's Republic of China's Belt and Road Initiative?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to leading the Bureau of African Affairs' efforts to offer credible alternatives that leverage public and private financing in priority areas that make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, including through transparent critical minerals supply chains, trusted information and communications technology networks, connective transportation infrastructure such as rail and ports, and leveling the playing field to help U.S. firms compete. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting initiatives such as the U.S.-AU Commission Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Working Group (SIWG), as well as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. This approach emphasizes transparency, open procurement, and sustainable financing so infrastructure investments strengthen African economic sovereignty and long-term resilience.

Question. If confirmed, how will you partner with African governments, regional institutions and other U.S. allies to partner on high-quality, transparent and sustainable infrastructure projects—particularly modernizing ports, improving highways and strengthening critical transportation corridors?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize robust commercial engagement and treat African nations as partners advancing long-term, mutual economic prosperity. I will work with allies and other countries to encourage public and private sector investment in strategic projects. This will include efforts to advance transportation infrastructure and leveling the playing field so U.S. firms can compete in Africa. I will also coordinate with partners through the Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Working Group with the African Union and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment to identify bankable infrastructure projects, such as railway and port modernization and highway links, that can move forward with strong political support and transparent financing.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEE LIPTON BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

The U.S. and Philippines have dramatically increased their security cooperation in the last 4 years, including the expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), recent implementation of a military information-sharing agreement and increasingly complex joint exercises such as BALIKATAN. The Philippines is a key partner in the first island chain. Reflecting this, Congress recently authorized historic sums of foreign military sales and foreign military financing as part of the Philippines Enhanced Resilience Act (PERA) as well as appropriating an additional \$144 million for investments in EDCA site infrastructure.

Security Cooperation

Question. In your view, what are the key priorities for U.S.-Philippines defense cooperation?

Answer. America needs strong allies like the Philippines to deter regional aggression, counter terrorism, and address emerging security challenges. The long-standing, ironclad Alliance between the Philippines and the United States has contributed to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 75 years. Continuing to support and invest in the EDCA sites, ensuring that U.S. security assistance is targeted at strategic investments identified through the Philippines Security Sector Assistance Roadmap, and bolstering the Philippines' resilience and capacity to respond in the face of China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea are key priorities for U.S.-Philippines defense cooperation.

Question. If confirmed, would you support the implementation of the Philippines Security Sector Assistance Roadmap (P-SSAR)? How can we use PERA authorities to streamline this implementation?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to work with relevant agencies at Embassy Manila to support the implementation of the Philippines Security Sector Assistance Roadmap (P-SSAR). PERA provides a strong signal of support for the U.S.-Philippines Alliance and, if confirmed, I look forward to aligning PERA authorities with our current bilateral plans outlined in the P-SSAR.

Question. How can the U.S. improve capacity building for the Philippines Coast Guard, which is on the frontlines of daily Chinese aggression in the West Philippines Sea?

Answer. The Philippines Coast Guard boldly faces down China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I commit to continue leveraging our support for the Philippines Coast Guard through security assistance as well other training and public messages of support.

Question. Apart from offering rhetorical support, how can the U.S. better support transparency initiative to push back against Chinese aggression in the Philippines' EEZ and territorial waters?

Answer. Supporting the Philippines strategic messaging campaign highlighting China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea remains a shared goal for our bilateral engagement. In addition, we should continue to encourage like-minded regional and global allies and partners to call out China's dangerous actions against the Philippines. I applaud the Philippines' role in hosting the Maritime Security Ministerial on the margins of UNGA in 2025. If confirmed, I would encourage the Philippines to host a similar event at this year's UNGA.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for boosting the Philippines' cooperation with regional partners such as Australia, Vietnam, Japan, and Taiwan?

Answer. Enhancing cooperation between the Philippines and regional partners in the areas of security assistance, economic development, and private sector investment is a powerful force multiplier and an important component of burden sharing. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the effective work of our Embassy in Manila to convene partners and allies in support of the Philippines across a wide range of issues.

Economics, Trade, and Health Security

Question. How can the U.S. ensure that the Luzon Economic Corridor delivers for both Filipino and American citizens?

Answer. The Luzon Economic Corridor is a signature economic initiative that will accelerate high-impact infrastructure investment and improve logistics and energy access in the Philippines' most economically important region. This infrastructure will benefit U.S. companies operating within the Corridor as well as support the Philippines' economic security, defense security posture, and regional deterrence. If confirmed, I will work with our partners to catalyze investments in the Luzon Economic Corridor.

Question. What is the unique value-add of U.S. participation and investments in the Luzon Economic Corridor? In comparison, where are some areas where we can encourage regional partners or the private sector to increase their involvement?

Answer. U.S. Government and private sector participation in the Luzon Economic corridor provides both expertise and investment in this economically dynamic part of the Philippines. For example, working together with the Australian and Japanese governments and private sectors, we can accelerate coordinated, high-impact infrastructure investments to drive regional development and shared prosperity. The Luzon Economic Corridor provides a unique opportunity to make a return on an investment and support U.S. strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Question. Last year, the U.S. announced \$250 million to support the health security of the Filipino people. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for health-related diplomacy in the Philippines?

Answer. Secretary Rubio's announcement of plans to allocate \$250 million in health assistance to the Philippines reflects the Trump administration's prioritization of foreign assistance to a vital ally, partner, and friend. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues across the administration to identify priority areas for health diplomacy including tuberculosis and maternal health as well as investing in preparedness, detection, and response capabilities to reduce the threat of emerging diseases and protect our homelands.

Trafficking in Persons

Despite its Tier 1 designation in the State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report, the government of the Philippines failed to identify a large portion of potential trafficking victims exploited in online scam operations and did not take proper action to prevent inappropriate penalization for acts of forced criminality. The government also identified fewer victims and official corruption and complicity in trafficking remained of concern.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps would you take to help the Philippines operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the Trafficking in Persons Report?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Philippines to operationalize the recommendations in the Trafficking in Persons Report. I would also ensure that the findings of the report are delivered to the appropriate Philippines government officials to highlight the importance of countering trafficking in persons.

Religious Freedom

In the State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, the Philippines was noted for concern from religious minorities that the Magna Carta of Religious Freedom Act does not offer equal protections, prosecuting religious groups and organizations, and issues around religious accommodations for prisoners.

Question. What is your assessment of these issues, and if confirmed how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in-country?

Answer. As a member of the United State Holocaust Memorial Council, I take very seriously the issue of religious freedom for all. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious

Freedom and will use my position as U.S. Ambassador to advocate respect for religious freedom in the Philippines.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps will you take to help the Philippines increase societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the team at Embassy Manila to assess any constraints on religious freedom and align our public messaging and private outreach to senior Philippine government officials with guidance from the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

Human Rights

In the State Department's 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the Philippines was described that it had "significant human rights abuses included credible reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by terrorists and groups in rebellion against the government; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom ..."

Question. If confirmed, how will you direct embassy staff to engage with policymakers and civil society to encourage improvement regarding the concerning human rights situation in the Philippines?

Answer. Promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law is fundamental to U.S. relations with the Philippines. The alliance with the Philippines is foundational to the U.S. role in the Indo-Pacific, and the relationship is built on shared principles. I understand that President Marcos's administration has made some progress on improving the human rights situation in the Philippines. If confirmed, I will ensure the team at our embassy will continue to diligently monitor the human rights situation in the Philippines and engage with policymakers to encourage rights reform.

International Organizations

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you would work with IO and USUN colleagues in capital to promote American and likeminded initiatives in the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. My experience working at USOAS has taught me the importance of working in international organizations to advance U.S. interests, particularly when it comes to competing with China. If confirmed, I look forward to working with colleagues in IO and USUN to promote American initiatives in the U.N. system.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you will engage in capital to win support for key U.S. priorities at the U.N.

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working in close coordination with colleagues at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. and in the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations to advocate for U.S. interests with the appropriate Philippines interlocutors.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO LEE LIPTON BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. American personnel and their family members are facing evolving threats abroad in the wake of the U.S. strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation. These threats are not limited to the Middle East region, unfortunately. Do you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of Americans overseas, including individuals under Chief of Mission authority, and advocating for the resources you need to prioritize American citizen safety?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you commit to following the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to the staff you would oversee?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, do you plan to get to post as soon as possible, and are you aware that any arrival after 60 days is subject to a notification and accompanying justification to this Committee?

Answer. Yes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEE LIPTON BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

China's Influence in the Philippines: China has sought to expand its economic influence in Southeast Asia through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative. The Philippines remains a key strategic and economic partner for the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific. Through a combination of financial incentives and coordinated disinformation campaigns, China is seeking to shift the regional balance of power.

Question. If confirmed as Ambassador, what strategic measures would you pursue to ensure that the U.S. remains the Philippines' partner of choice, particularly in the context of China's expanding economic and political influence in the region?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with our full interagency country team, including the Department of War as appropriate, and the private sector to ensure our ties with the Philippines remain strong on all fronts. In addition to our 75-year bilateral alliance, the United States remains a leading investment and trade partner that delivers prosperity and innovation throughout the country. Besides doing my part to shore up defense ties, I will work with the Philippines government on addressing trade and investment irritants and work to ensure U.S. firms can continue to play a leading role in the Philippine economy.

Asian Development Bank: Manila is home to the headquarters of the Asian Development Bank, a major regional multilateral development institution that provides loans, grants, and policy support to promote sustainable economic and social development across Asia and the Pacific.

Question. How do you intend to work with and coordinate with the ADB, ASEAN, and other international organizations to strengthen U.S.-Philippine cooperation and advance shared economic and security goals in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The ADB and ASEAN are key partners in our cooperation with the Philippines. If confirmed, I will consider it a great honor to take over the Ambassadorship in Manila when the Philippines serves as ASEAN chair. I look forward to advancing infrastructure projects in the Luzon Economic Corridor and working with the ADB on high standard financing developments to unlock further growth. The ASEAN calendar creates a constant drumbeat of gatherings that offer opportunities to pursue security and economic objectives. I will work closely with the Philippine government and our own mission to ASEAN to support the Philippines as chair while advancing U.S. goals.

Mutual Defense Treaty: China continues to assert expansive claims and employ coercive tactics in the South China Sea, including against Philippine vessels.

Question. In your view, how should the U.S. respond if China escalates pressure on the Philippines?

Answer. We have a longstanding alliance with the Philippines, and our peoples have stood together in war and peace. Chinese pressure has only served to strengthen our resolve and bring us closer together. I commit to working with our full interagency team to support our alliance in the face of any challenges.

Question. What role should the Mutual Defense Treaty play in deterring further aggression from the PRC?

Answer. The Mutual Defense Treaty is the bedrock of the U.S.-Philippines Alliance. Our alliance supports a free and open Indo Pacific. China must always know that our commitment to the Philippines is ironclad.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response: The termination of USAID programs by the Trump Administration in 2025 has threatened to undermine critical domestic support for Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites. To justify the need for four new EDCA bases in 2025, President Marcos secured the Biden Administration's support to pre-position humanitarian aid at the sites. Previously, that aid proved crucial in responses to six typhoons in 2024.

Question. In the absence of USAID, if confirmed, how would you improve rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster response capacity to these communities in a country frequently affected by typhoons and natural disasters?

Answer. Working together to respond to acute needs in the face of disasters is a priority in our defense cooperation. If confirmed, I will work with the Philippine government, the new Bureau for Disaster and Humanitarian Response, and our full interagency team, including the Department of War as appropriate, to make sure

we are fully prepared before disasters strike and to facilitate a robust response in the moment of crisis.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEE LIPTON BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Despite some improvements under President Marcos, the Philippines remains one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists: three journalists were killed in 2025, and the former Eastern Vista reporter Frenchie Mae Cumpio has been detained for 6 years.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reviewing the state of press freedom and raising press freedom cases with the Government of the Philippines?

Answer. Yes. Press freedoms are essential pillars of free societies and democratic governance.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEE LIPTON BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. In September 2025, the Trump administration announced plans to allocate \$250 million to the Philippines to address public health challenges, including strengthening health systems, tuberculosis control and maternal health. If confirmed, how will you help ensure that this funding is used to strengthen health institutions in the Philippines?

Answer. If confirmed, I pledge to work with our country team in Embassy Manila and other stakeholders to identify the most pressing areas of need and collaborate on creative, impactful programming that will help ensure the \$250 million is used efficiently and effectively.

Question. If confirmed, will you work with U.S. companies, some of which have been in the Philippines for decades, to ensure that this funding is spent not only on traditional communicable disease programs, but also on emerging chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease?

Answer. If confirmed, I pledge that our health assistance programming will be spent in ways that advance our shared goals and defend the health security of both the United States and the Philippines. I believe health challenges are multifaceted and complex, and I look forward to seeing how our funding can advance progress on challenges including chronic disease. I look forward to working with private sector partners with expertise on the ground and to hearing their perspectives as we shape our programs.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Government of the Philippines to advance opportunities for U.S.-Philippine drone co-production?

Answer. Developing the defense industrial base is a key goal of our bilateral defense cooperation. I understand the Philippines' implementation of its Self-Reliant Defense Posture program is creating opportunities for drone manufacturing, both for defense and civilian use. I look forward to drawing on my decades of private sector experience to identify and advance opportunities for U.S. firms.

Question. What other international partners do you think the U.S. and the Philippines could work with to support drone co-production?

Answer. Our cooperation with like-minded partners is an important force multiplier for our efforts in the Philippines, both in drone co-production and for our economic and defense efforts more generally. I understand Taiwan is particularly interested in drone co-production and know [trilateral] cooperation with the Philippines is particularly advanced with Japan in general. I look forward to working with them, and any other interested like-minded partner, to advance this critical industry.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to seeking a briefing on your roles and responsibilities in the event of a U.S. non-combatant evacuation operation in the Philippines within 30 days of presenting your credentials?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring Embassy Manila and Consular Agency Cebu review and update their Emergency Action Plans annually?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, what additional steps will you take to improve Mission Philippines' ability to protect U.S. citizens during a crisis?

Answer. If confirmed, protecting U.S. citizens overseas will be my number one priority. In the Philippines, I will work with the entirety of our interagency country team to ensure we are utilizing our full capacity to protect U.S. citizens in any potential crisis.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ASELE ROBERTS BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report, Slovenia was upgraded to Tier 1 given significant improvements during the reporting period. Despite this progress, the government identified less victims, initiated fewer persecutions, and did not identify child or asylum-seeker victims despite the risks posed to these groups.

If confirmed, what concrete steps would you take to help Slovenia operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the Trafficking in Persons Report?

Answer. The Trump administration is committed to the fight against human trafficking, and the Trafficking in Persons Report is an important tool to press countries to take serious action. Slovenia has made significant progress on the Department's 2025 prioritized recommendations, including by improving victim identification, screening, and efforts to investigate and prosecute labor trafficking. If confirmed, I will work to spur Slovenia to continue making progress on combatting trafficking in persons.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, Slovenia was noted for instances of religious intolerance including vandalization of memorials and houses of worship, complaints from larger institutions regarding changes to state benefits for religious workers, and concerns from religious minorities of insufficient spiritual care in hospitals, prisons, and the military.

What is your assessment of these issues, and if confirmed how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in-country?

Answer. Religious freedom is a key priority for the Administration. Slovenia's constitution guarantees equal rights for all religious communities. If confirmed, I commit to engaging on religious freedom issues bilaterally with the Slovenian government and to working with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in Slovenia.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps will you take to help Slovenia increase societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. The Slovenian government generally maintains strong protections for religious freedoms. If confirmed, I will ensure my team works closely with the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom to promote respect for religious freedom in our diplomatic engagements and public messaging. I will also engage with faith leaders and non-governmental organizations to promote interfaith dialogue and tolerance.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you would work with IO and USUN colleagues in capital to promote American and likeminded initiatives in the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. The United States and Slovenia cooperate closely in the United Nations, and Slovenia is an active participant in U.N. technical and specialized bodies. For example, we work together in the IAEA to support nuclear safety and nonproliferation. If confirmed, I will cooperate closely with my colleagues in the IO Bureau and at our U.N. Missions around the world to ensure my bilateral engagements support and advance U.S. priorities in multilateral fora.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you will engage in capital to win support for key U.S. priorities at the U.N.

Answer. As President Trump has said, the U.N. has potential—but it has fallen far short. The U.N. has strayed from its founding mission of promoting peace and security, but the Administration is working to bring it back to basics, including by advancing President Trump's America-first, peace-through-strength foreign policy and significantly streamlining the U.N. budget and staff footprint. If confirmed, I

will consistently engage Slovenian government counterparts to press them to support U.S. priorities at the U.N.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ASEL ROBERTS BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. American personnel and their family members are facing evolving threats abroad in the wake of the U.S. strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation. These threats are not limited to the Middle East region, unfortunately. Do you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of Americans overseas, including individuals under Chief of Mission authority, and advocating for the resources you need to prioritize American citizen safety?

Answer. If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of Americans under my authority. I will engage with Department leadership throughout the budget process to ensure my team has the necessary resources to prioritize American citizen safety.

Question. Do you commit to following the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to the staff you would oversee?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will follow the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to my team.

Question. If confirmed, do you plan to get to post as soon as possible, and are you aware that any arrival after 60 days is subject to a notification and accompanying justification to this Committee?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed I will plan to arrive at post well within 60 days.

Question. Slovenia has a unique historical experience as a regional country that successfully joined NATO and the EU. How do you think the US can partner with Slovenia on promoting rule of law in the Western Balkans region necessary for facilitating Euro Atlantic integration?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with Slovenian government counterparts to further cooperation in advancing our goals of peace and stability in the Western Balkans.

Question. Slovenia is also an important contributor to the KFOR peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. Do you agree we should remain committed to a U.S. presence in KFOR, and will you commit to inform the Administration and Congress about any concerns raised by the Slovenian government should we consider adjusting our posture?

Answer. KFOR plays an essential role in maintaining peace and stability in the region, and we value Slovenia's participation. While I am not aware of plans to adjust the U.S. presence in KFOR, if confirmed I would relay any Slovenian concerns about our KFOR posture.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. TROY EDGAR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In the State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report, El Salvador remained on Tier 2, despite increased efforts by the El Salvadorian government. The government did not meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in several key areas including fewer investigations and victim identification, and no identification of adult male or foreign national victims. If confirmed, what concrete steps would you take to help El Salvador operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the Trafficking in Persons Report?

Answer. I understand the Government of El Salvador has continued to improve its efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons, including prosecuting more suspects, convicting more traffickers, assisting more child victims in the government's specialized shelter, and increasing anti-trafficking training for criminal justice officials, but work remains to be done. If confirmed, I commit to continuing and elevating the important work underway and I would leverage available partnership and technical assistance opportunities to work with the Government of El Salvador to operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the Trafficking in Persons Report.

Question. In the State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, El Salvador was noted for generally respecting religious freedom, with some key exceptions regarding the State of Exception and its application to gang members. What is your assessment of these issues, and if confirmed how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in-country?

Answer. I understand that because of the State of Exception, gangs could no longer effectively restrict religious groups' activities. If confirmed, I will support Embassy San Salvador's ongoing work to engage with the religious community and will collaborate with the Principal Advisor for Global Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in El Salvador.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps will you take to help El Salvador increase societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. I understand the Salvadoran constitution already provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religion. Additionally, I understand Embassy San Salvador has engaged on religious freedom and tolerance with the government and religious leaders from the Catholic and Jewish communities. If confirmed, I commit to continuing and elevating the important work underway with relevant government institutions and the religious community in El Salvador to promote religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you would work with IO and USUN colleagues in capital to promote American and likeminded initiatives in the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with Embassy San Salvador staff to develop strong relationships with IO and USUN colleagues to deliver on American and likeminded priorities in the U.N. system. I would coordinate with IO and USUN to ensure the Embassy San Salvador team continues to deliver demarches and other messaging and reports updates back to Washington in an efficient and effective manner and would proactively identify and communicate additional opportunities to coordinate with my Salvadoran counterparts.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you will engage in capital to win support for key U.S. priorities at the U.N.

Answer. If confirmed, I would develop strong relationships with Salvadoran leadership to promote American and likeminded initiatives in the U.N. system. I would work with our Salvadoran partners to proactively identify shared economic and national security priorities so we can jointly advance those throughout the U.N. system.

Question. What are aspects of El Salvador's economic, political, or security cooperation with China that in your view would be contrary to or threaten U.S. national interests?

Answer. China's economic and political expansion into the Western Hemisphere poses risks for U.S. national security and prosperity and threatens critical supply chains in the hemisphere. As the United States and El Salvador deepen our partnership, we must work together to ensure our technology and infrastructure are secure and protected from potential threats.

Question. Please explain whether El Salvador's diplomatic recognition of China has brought any tangible benefits to the Salvadoran people.

Answer. While I cannot comment on behalf of the Salvadoran people, if confirmed, I commit to seeking deepened U.S. trade, and commercial, security, and cultural ties with El Salvador to benefit both our countries and as partners push back against malign influence.

Question. What are your views on the Chinese run Confucius institute in the University of El Salvador? Does the administration believe this expands Chinese malign influence?

Answer. I understand China is attempting to grow its cultural influence in El Salvador, including through the Confucius Institute. If confirmed, I look forward to working with actors across the Salvadoran government, and the public and private sectors to ensure the United States remains the prime partner in El Salvador.

Question. Please explain what steps you would take to implement the February 2025 MOU on Strategic Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation with El Salvador.

Answer. I understand implementation of the February 2025 MOU is already underway, including through El Salvador's participation in the Fundamental Infra-

structure for the Responsible Use of Small Modular Reactor Technology initiative. If confirmed, I would support continued technical partnerships and information sharing with the Government of El Salvador and would work with relevant stakeholders across the U.S. Government to leverage additional technical cooperation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. TROY EDGAR BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. American personnel and their family members are facing evolving threats abroad in the wake of the U.S. strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation. These threats are not limited to the Middle East region, unfortunately. Do you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of Americans overseas, including individuals under Chief of Mission authority, and advocating for the resources you need to prioritize American citizen safety?

Answer. Yes. There is no higher priority for an Embassy or an ambassador than the safety and security of U.S. citizens.

Question. Do you commit to following the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to the staff you would oversee?

Answer. Yes.

Question. If confirmed, do you plan to get to post as soon as possible, and are you aware that any arrival after 60 days is subject to a notification and accompanying justification to this Committee?

Answer. Yes.

Question. The United States is giving millions of dollars to foreign governments in exchange for those governments taking third country nationals, with little-to-no oversight over how those funds are being used. El Salvador has received \$4.76 million from the United States related to its agreement to take third country deportees. Yet it is unclear if the U.S. is conducting any due diligence or following up on how that money is being spent. If confirmed, do you commit to do so and report back to this Committee on how those funds are being spent?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you believe President Bukele or high-level members of his government have links to transnational criminal organizations, including MS13?

Answer. I would defer assessment of this question to the Department of Justice.

Question. If under your tenure as Ambassador to El Salvador you were to receive credible information that President Bukele had links with transnational criminal organizations, how would you respond?

Answer. If confirmed, I would share any credible information about alleged criminal activity with the Department and interagency leadership, including our law enforcement agencies, to formulate an appropriate response to any potential information received.

Question. What is your assessment of the ongoing state of exception in El Salvador, and do you support its continuation?

Answer. I understand before the State of Exception, criminal gangs and violence dominated daily life in El Salvador and severely limited economic opportunities, as well as enjoyment of the rights to life and freedom of movement for ordinary Salvadorans. El Salvador is now regarded as one of the safest countries in the Western Hemisphere, with the realization of the above rights by ordinary Salvadorans finally possible.

If confirmed, I commit to continued engagement with the Government of El Salvador to build on those security gains making both countries safer and stronger while emphasizing the importance of operating within a constitutional framework of due process and law and order.

Question. Do you believe that the activities committed under the state of exception by President Bukele's government, which include mass trials and limited access to representation, comply with El Salvador's human rights obligations and amount to fair due process?

Answer. I understand before the State of Exception, criminal gangs and violence dominated daily life in El Salvador and severely limited economic opportunities, and enjoyment of the rights to life and freedom of movement for ordinary Salvadorans.

Salvadorans regularly talk about how the improved security situation contributes to their quality of life.

If confirmed, I commit to continued engagement with the Government of El Salvador to build on those security gains making both countries safer and stronger while emphasizing the importance of a constitutional framework of due process and law and order.

Question. According to Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, public sector corruption in El Salvador remains close to its all-time high in 2022, scoring 32 out of 100, where 0 means highly corrupt. The State Department's 2022 human rights report states that multiple officials in the executive branch were accused of corrupt acts and characterized the impunity for official corruption as endemic and that the Bukele government actively prevented prosecution of those officials unless they were political opponents. Do you agree with these assessments?

Answer. I understand from the 2025 Investment Climate Statement recent polling shows public confidence in government institutions has significantly increased, and the public believes there is less corruption in government institutions. If confirmed, I look forward to meeting with a broad range of private sector, civil society, and government officials to gain a better understanding of current dynamics related to continuing to improve the business climate and government transparency, both of which are vital to attract U.S. investment.

Question. Are you concerned that corruption in El Salvador undermines U.S. national security and creates a negative environment for private investment?

Answer. I understand the government aggressively prosecutes credible allegations of corruption and enacted a new Anti-Corruption Law last year. The Department of State's 2025 Investment Climate Statement reports that businesses assess the once-common practice of government officials demanding bribes to perform government services has stopped almost entirely.

If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the Government of El Salvador to continue to strengthen the operating environment for U.S. companies and the Salvadoran economy.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. TROY EDGAR BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. During your tenure as Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security beginning in March 2025, did you personally visit the Terrorism Confinement Center, also known as CECOT?

Answer. No.

Question. Were you aware that CECOT was reported to have violated human rights through systemic torture, physical abuse, sexual violence, deprivation and inhumane living conditions?

Answer. I did not have knowledge of that.

Question. As Deputy Secretary, what role, if any, did you play in approving the transfer of individuals to CECOT in March 2025, including at least one who had a U.S. court order preventing him from transfer to El Salvador?

Answer. As DHS has stated in court, Secretary Noem made that decision.

Question. As Deputy Secretary, when individuals were transferred to CECOT in March 2025, were you concerned about inhumane prison conditions, mistreatment, or the risk of torture?

Answer. As previously mentioned, I had no knowledge of those reports.

Question. In 2025, President Trump stated that he would support sending American citizens to CECOT. If confirmed, do you support sending American citizens to CECOT?

Answer. I support convicted criminals being held accountable.

Question. As Deputy Secretary, are you aware of how many individuals sent to El Salvador under the Trump Administration remain detained at CECOT as of today?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. TROY EDGAR BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. During your hearing, you said you were not aware of human rights abuses in El Salvador but committed to reviewing all of the facts including relevant reports and data. If confirmed, do you commit to meeting with human rights organizations with expertise in El Salvador before departing for post?

Answer. Yes. Additionally, if confirmed, I commit to engaging with a wide range of actors in El Salvador across government, the private sector, and non-governmental institutions, including human rights organizations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. TROY EDGAR BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. When do you believe it is appropriate for a sitting U.S. Ambassador to contact the State Department Office of Inspector General (OIG)?

Answer. It is appropriate for a sitting U.S. Ambassador to contact the State Department Office of Inspector General to prevent and detect waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in the programs and operations of the Department of State. Additionally, the head of a Post is required by law to submit a report to the IG within five business days after being made aware of allegations of waste, fraud, or abuse in a Department program or operation or certain misconduct on the part of a Department employee. If confirmed, I will take this obligation very seriously and commit to strictly abide by it.

Question. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, what would you do if you were alerted to credible allegations that an employee of Embassy San Salvador had attempted to prevent, prohibit or otherwise obstruct the State Department OIG's execution of an audit, investigation, inspection, subpoena or other activity?

Answer. If confirmed, I would take all necessary steps to ensure the State Department OIG receives necessary cooperation from Embassy San Salvador staff and will follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding potential disciplinary or other action.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do if you were alerted to credible allegations that an employee of Embassy San Salvador had lied to a criminal investigator employed by the State Department OIG?

Answer. If confirmed, I would take all necessary steps to ensure the State Department OIG receives necessary cooperation from Embassy San Salvador staff and will follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding potential disciplinary or other action.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do if you were alerted to credible allegations that an employee of Embassy San Salvador had lied to a criminal investigator employed by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security?

Answer. If confirmed, I would follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding necessary follow up and potential disciplinary or other action.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do if you were alerted to credible allegations that an employee of Embassy San Salvador had lied to a criminal investigator employed by the U.S. Department of Justice?

Answer. If confirmed, I would follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding necessary follow up and potential disciplinary or other action.

Question. If confirmed, if an employee of Embassy San Salvador told you that they were pressured by another State Department employee to lie to Federal criminal investigators, what immediate steps would you take?

Answer. If confirmed, I would follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding necessary reporting and potential disciplinary or other action.

Question. If confirmed, if the State Department OIG initiated an investigation or audit involving activities at your mission or conducted an inspection of Embassy San Salvador under your tenure, what steps would you take to ensure full cooperation by embassy staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I would take all necessary steps to ensure the State Department OIG receives necessary cooperation from Embassy San Salvador staff, including provision of their time and input to any investigations or audits.

Question. If confirmed, if the Secretary of State instructed you to delay or limit your cooperation with a State Department OIG audit, investigation, inspection or subpoena, what would you do?

Answer. If confirmed, I would follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding cooperating with a State Department OIG audit, investigation, inspection, or subpoena.

Question. If confirmed, if the Secretary of State instructed you to delay or limit a subordinate's cooperation with a State Department OIG audit, investigation, inspection or subpoena, what would you do?

Answer. If confirmed, I would follow all laws, regulations, and policies surrounding cooperating with a State Department OIG audit, investigation, inspection, or subpoena.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing the maintenance and expansion of Embassy San Salvador's American Liaison Network to improve country-wide coverage for U.S. citizens?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to prioritizing the maintenance and expansion of Embassy San Salvador's American Liaison Network to improve country-wide coverage for U.S. citizens.

Question. If confirmed, what other steps will you take to improve Embassy San Salvador's ability to protect U.S. citizens during a crisis?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Embassy San Salvador and the Department to avail the Embassy of all available training opportunities to improve Embassy San Salvador's ability to protect U.S. citizens during a crisis.

Question. If confirmed, would you ever instruct or pressure a consular officer at Embassy San Salvador to issue a visa to a specific foreign national?

Answer. If confirmed, I would not instruct or pressure a consular officer at Embassy San Salvador to issue a visa to a specific foreign national.

Question. If confirmed, would you ever instruct or pressure a consular officer at Embassy San Salvador to deny a visa to a specific foreign national?

Answer. If confirmed, I would not instruct or pressure a consular officer at Embassy San Salvador to deny a visa to a specific foreign national.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), have you ever communicated with the DHS OIG about Secretary Noem's authorities pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 417?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, have you ever instructed, ordered, counseled or suggested that DHS General Counsel James Percival, or any other official or Special Government Employee of DHS, communicate with DHS OIG regarding 5 U.S.C. § 417?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, have you ever instructed, ordered, counseled or suggested to a DHS component that it delay or refuse cooperation with the DHS OIG?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, have you ever instructed, ordered or counseled or suggested to a DHS component that it deny DHS OIG access to a DHS system?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, have you ever instructed, ordered, counseled, or suggested to a DHS component that it delay or refuse cooperation with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Professional Responsibility (ICE OPR) or Customs and Border Protection Office of Professional Responsibility (CBP OPR)?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, have you ever instructed, ordered, counseled or suggested to a subordinate that they direct ICE OPR or CBP OPR not to investigate a specific use of force incident?

Answer. No.

Question. In her role as Secretary of Homeland Security, are you aware of any situation in which Secretary Noem instructed, ordered, counseled or suggested to a subordinate that they direct ICE OPR or CBP OPR not to investigate a specific use of force incident?

Answer. No.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, has Gregory Bovino ever reported directly to you in your capacity as Deputy Secretary of DHS?

Answer. No.

Question. As of March 6, 2026, does Gregory Bovino directly report to CBP Commissioner Scott?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, who does Gregory Bovino directly report to?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If a Border Patrol agent received conflicting orders from Gregory Bovino and Commissioner Scott, whose order do you believe, in your current capacity as Deputy Secretary of DHS, that agent should prioritize?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, did you make the final determination to task ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents with investigating the shooting of Alex Pretti?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Alex Pretti shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, who made that determination?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Alex Pretti shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Why was ICE HSI brought in to investigate the shooting of Alex Pretti?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Alex Pretti shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Are you aware of examples, aside from the shooting of Alex Pretti, in which ICE HSI was tasked with investigating a use of force incident by a DHS agent or officer?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. In her role as Secretary of Homeland Security, did Secretary Kristi Noem personally approve the hiring of all individuals at or above GS-15?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How many GS-15 or higher positions are currently vacant at DHS? Please list the position, agency, and number of current vacancies.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Who at DHS makes the final determination as to which employees are excepted during a government shutdown?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Please provide a breakdown of the number of excepted vs. furloughed employees at each DHS component agency as of March 6, 2026.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Please provide a breakdown of the number of excepted vs. furloughed 1811 criminal investigators at each DHS component agency as of March 6, 2026.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Have any ongoing ICE use of force investigations been paused due to the current shutdown?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Have any ongoing CBP use of force investigations been paused due to the current shutdown?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, do you believe ICE and Border Patrol agents have a duty to intervene if they witness a fellow Federal officer using inappropriate force against an individual?

Answer. I am not aware of DHS's specific policy on this, though it is my understanding that the policy has not been changed since the Biden Administration.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, do you believe ICE and Border Patrol agents have a duty to render aid to an individual who has been injured by an agent?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you believe DHS agents and officers have absolute immunity while performing their duties?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. When surging DHS resources for a major operation such as Operation Midway Blitz, does DHS also surge OPR personnel to provide oversight?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What factors does DHS consider when determining the types and amounts of munitions needed for a major operation such as Operation Midway Blitz?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What types of munitions and how many of each type were sent to Illinois for the purposes of Operation Midway Blitz?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Following the shooting of Silverio Villegas Gonzalez, were any ICE OPR or CBP OPR investigators tasked with determining whether DHS personnel operated in compliance with agency policy?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of this shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Following the shooting of Marimar Martinez, were any ICE OPR or CBP OPR investigators tasked with determining whether DHS personnel operated in compliance with agency policy?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Martinez shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Following the shooting of Renee Good, were any ICE OPR or CBP OPR investigators tasked with determining whether DHS personnel operated in compliance with agency policy?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Good shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Following the shooting of Alex Pretti, were any ICE OPR or CBP OPR investigators tasked with determining whether DHS personnel operated in compliance with agency policy?

Answer. I was not involved in the aftermath of the Pretti shooting. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Is CBP Directive 4320-030B, Incident-Driven Video Recording System Directive, currently in effect? If not, what guidance now dictates CBP's use of body worn cameras?

Answer. I am not aware of this policy or whether it has been changed. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How many body worn cameras does DHS currently possess?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Does DHS currently possess enough body worn cameras to issue one to every agent or officer deployed to the field?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, what efforts has DHS made to procure enough body worn cameras to do so?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Is ICE Directive 10039.2, Consideration of U.S. Military Service When Making Discretionary Determinations with Regard to Enforcement Actions Against Noncitizens currently in effect?

Answer. I am not aware that this policy has been changed. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, please explain what guidance now dictates ICE's policy regarding removable non-citizens with U.S. military service.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How many non-citizens with U.S. military service did DHS deport in fiscal year 2025?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How many non-citizens with U.S. military service did DHS deport to countries other than a country of nationality in fiscal year 2025?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. As of March 6, 2026, how many non-citizens with U.S. military service has DHS deported in fiscal year 2026?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. As of March 6, 2026, how many non-citizens with U.S. military service has DHS deported to countries other than a country of nationality in fiscal year 2026?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What resources and authorities does DHS need from Congress to identify foreign nationals' military service and Veteran status before initiating removal proceedings and throughout that process?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Have you read or been briefed on the May 12, 2025, memo signed by acting ICE Director Todd Lyons authorizing ICE agents to rely on Form I-205 (an administrative warrant) to enter the residence of an alien subject to a final order without consent, including by force?

Answer. This policy may have been reviewed by my office, but it was based on the position of the Acting General Counsel, the Acting ICE Director, and ultimately the Secretary. I do not recall the specifics of this policy, and I do not recall expressing any opinion on it.

Question. Do you believe an ICE administrative warrant, unsigned by a Federal judge, meets the standard for a warrant requirement under the Fourth Amendment?

Answer. I am not an attorney. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Do you believe the First Amendment protects an individual's right to photograph and film DHS agents in public?

Answer. I am not an attorney. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Have you read or been briefed on the contents of an August 26, 2025, Seven-Day letter from the DHS OIG regarding a failed audit of TSA's airport security checkpoint screenings?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Have you read or been briefed on the contents of the DHS OIG's November 1, 2025, final report OIG-26-01, Covert Testing of TSA's Checkpoint Security Screening Effectiveness?

Answer. No.

Question. Does DHS maintain or utilize any phone applications or data bases to track the identities, addresses, license plate numbers or other personally identifiable information of U.S. citizens?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, what guardrails has DHS implemented to ensure their employees do not violate the constitutional rights of individuals in the data base(s)?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How would you define a domestic terrorist?

Answer. My general understanding of a domestic terrorist is someone who uses violence against the government for ideological and political reasons. I am not an attorney. If confirmed, I would rely on legal counsel for determinations like this, just as I did at DHS.

Question. Do you believe an individual non-violently protesting DHS activity qualifies as a domestic terrorist?

Answer. No.

Question. After a public allegation of domestic terrorism by DHS is proven false, what is DHS policy on retracting any statement which incorrectly identified an individual as a domestic terrorist?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Do you believe it is ever appropriate for a DHS agent or officer to deploy tear gas near a school while children are present?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, what kinds of adverse actions would DHS take against an agent or officer who is found to have done so?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did DHS take or does it plan to take adverse actions against any agent or officer found to have committed an improper use of force during Operation Midway Blitz?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, how many individuals did DHS initiate such adverse actions against?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Do you believe it is ever appropriate for a DHS agent or officer to lie, under oath, to a Federal judge?

Answer. No.

Question. If not, what kinds of adverse actions would DHS take against an agent or officer who is found to have done so?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did DHS take or does it plan to take adverse actions against any agent or officer found to have lied, under oath, to a Federal judge?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, how many individuals did DHS initiate such adverse actions against?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Do you believe it is ever appropriate to defy a legal order from a Federal judge?

Answer. No.

Question. Why has TSA failed to meet the 90-day deadline to provide a Management Decision to DHS OIG regarding final report OIG-26-01?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. In your current role as Deputy Secretary of DHS, did you or one of your designees instruct TSA to refrain from providing Management Decision regarding final report OIG-26-01?

Answer. No.

Question. In her role as Secretary of Homeland Security, are you aware of any instances of Secretary Noem or one of her designees instructing TSA to refrain from providing Management Decision regarding final report OIG-26-01?

Answer. No.

Question. When does TSA intend to provide a Management Decision regarding final report OIG-26-01?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Has TSA taken corrective actions to resolve the deficiencies identified in final report OIG-26-01?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If not, why?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How soon after receiving the DHS OIG's August 26, 2025, Seven-Day Letter did TSA initiate corrective actions?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did DHS request Department of Defense (DoD) support to use a laser-based counter-unmanned aircraft system (C-UAS) system in El Paso, TX in February 2026?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Are you aware of any analyses or assessments by DHS, DoD, or the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the impact to civilian airspace of the use of this C-UAS system?

Answer. I am not. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did DHS coordinate with FAA regarding the operationalization of this C-UAS system in El Paso, TX?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, how and when did this coordination occur?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did DHS provide FAA with any details of how long and for which time and dates the operation of the C-UAS system would last or require the use of airspace?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Were DHS personnel providing with training from DoD regarding the use of this C-UAS system?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, please describe the nature of this training and which unit within DoD provided it.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Were you or any member of DHS leadership made aware of FAA's concerns that utilizing the C-UAS system without restricting flights would pose a grave risk to civilian aircrafts?

Answer. I was not. Otherwise, I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did you or any member of DHS leadership speak directly to FAA regarding these concerns?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Has DHS employed this C-UAS system prior to the February 2026 incident in El Paso, TX?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, when and for what missions?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What are DHS' existing systems of info-sharing or coordination with FAA ahead of operational testing, exercises, or training on any systems/platforms that could affect civilian airspace?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What role do you believe the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) should play in election security?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question.

Question. Do you believe CISA should reduce its coordination with States when it comes to maintaining election security?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question.

Question. As of March 6, 2026, which services does CISA still provide to States when it comes to maintaining election security?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. What role do you believe U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plays in the U.S. immigration system?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question.

Question. Do you believe USCIS is a law enforcement agency?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question.

Question. Do you believe USCIS employees should serve as law enforcement agents?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question.

Question. Between January 20, 2025, and March 6, 2026, how many immigrants had their benefit request denied because USCIS determined they have endorsed, promoted, supported or espoused anti-American views?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. How would you define anti-American views?

Answer. I am seeking confirmation as Ambassador to El Salvador. For purposes of serving in that role, I have no opinion on that question as it touches on immigration benefits.

Question. Would USCIS consider an immigrant to have endorsed, promoted, supported or espoused anti-American views if that immigrant was critical of President Trump or his administration?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. Did Corey Lewandowski play any role in approving DHS contracts?

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

Question. If so, please describe the nature of the role he played.

Answer. I would refer you to DHS.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JARED NOVELLY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. If confirmed, what would be your priorities for deepening security cooperation between the U.S., New Zealand, and Australia?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio stated, “America First is not America only or America alone. Alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific matter a great deal to the administration because it is the region of consequence.” Increasing security cooperation between the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, including greater interoperability, is critical to ensuring a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will fully support New Zealand’s efforts to modernize its defense capabilities and procure U.S. aircraft and weaponry. I will also seek opportunities for our countries to work together on technologies that strengthen deterrence, improve situational awareness, and ensure our forces can respond quickly to challenges across the region.

Question. How can the U.S. and New Zealand improve cooperation with regards to Pacific islands diplomacy?

Answer. New Zealand is an important and valued partner for U.S. engagement in the Pacific. New Zealand attended Deputy Secretary Landau’s recent U.S.-Pacific Investment, Security, and Shared Prosperity Summit in February, where delegates from across the Pacific discussed partnerships with the United States private sector on infrastructure, critical minerals, supply chains, energy security, the digital economy, tourism, food security, and financial services. If confirmed, I will seek to improve bilateral cooperation in the Pacific through our annual strategic dialogue with New Zealand and regional architecture including the Pacific Islands Forum.

Question. If confirmed, what will be your priorities for countering Chinese malign influence in New Zealand?

Answer. China’s willingness to engage in foreign interference, including transnational repression, pressure to change policies in support of Taiwan, and spread malign influence is well known and threatens the security of every country. The New Zealand government recognizes this threat, and in its most recent annual Security Threat Environment assessment called out China for its foreign interference.

If I am confirmed, I will work with partners in New Zealand to further bolster resilience to China’s malign influence. I will support intelligence sharing through our Five Eyes partnership and deepen law enforcement cooperation to give New Zealand the information and tools it needs to confront China at home. I will also

increase our public diplomacy efforts to expose China's foreign interference and increase the New Zealand public's awareness of this threat to New Zealand's sovereignty.

Question. How can we improve cooperation with New Zealand to counter China's growing presence in the Pacific Islands and Antarctica?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has noted, we want to ensure our Pacific neighbors remain free, secure, and supportive of U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will work with allies and partners, including New Zealand, to deter China in the region. New Zealand has shown leadership in the Pacific, including through its naval transit through the Taiwan Strait and its willingness to call out China's aggressive behavior in regional waters. Together, we can outcompete China by offering better options that strengthen resilience, promote prosperity, and respect sovereignty across the Pacific.

As the staging location for most of the U.S. Antarctic Program, New Zealand is one of our most important partners in Antarctica. The United States recently concluded its first inspections of foreign research stations since 2020, including China's Zhongshan Station, with the assistance of New Zealand.

If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to deepen cooperation with New Zealand through strategic alignment, regular dialogue, and joint activities to counter China in the region.

Question. Building off of the 2025 MoU signed between the U.S. and the Cook Islands, what are some of your priorities for cooperation to advance the responsible development of seabed mineral resources in the Cook Islands?

Answer. I believe that any development of seabed resources must be based on sound science and transparency. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to share the United States' scientific expertise and set the gold standard for responsible practices. At the same time, I will also prioritize supporting U.S. firms working in this space to ensure that economic opportunities benefit both the United States and the Cook Islands.

In the State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report, New Zealand remained on Tier 2 as the government did not convict any new traffickers, provide certain services for victims, or proactively and regularly screen all vulnerable groups. It also struggled with providing and implementing guidelines for front-line officials.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps would you take to help New Zealand operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the Trafficking in Persons Report?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio noted, the Trafficking in Persons Report promotes accountability, protects American workers, and defends our communities. New Zealand recognizes it must do more to eliminate human trafficking and is making significant efforts to meet the minimum requirements to do so. If confirmed, I will work with our partners in New Zealand and the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to support New Zealand counterparts to operationalize the Report's recommendations. My goal will be to ensure New Zealand is able to achieve Tier 1 status.

In the State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, New Zealand highlights reports of religious discrimination against minority communities including online hate speech, threatening letters, bullying in schools, and a rise in antisemitic activity.

Question. What is your assessment of these issues, and if confirmed how will you work with the office of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to support religious freedom in-country?

Answer. These reports are concerning. Religious intolerance and discrimination are unacceptable and have no place in society. These reports underscore the importance of continued vigilance and protective measures to ensure religious freedom for all communities in New Zealand. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of International Religious Freedom and its leadership to engage the New Zealand government and public to advance this fundamental right. I will seek open dialogue with New Zealand government officials, civil society, and faith leaders to better understand the scope of religious discrimination and to identify effective responses. And I will ensure the U.S. Mission in New Zealand continues to monitor the situation and report on both progress and challenges.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps will you take to help New Zealand increase societal and governmental respect for religious freedom?

Answer. I believe that one of the United States' greatest strengths is our foundation built upon religious freedom. If confirmed, I will use public diplomacy tools to highlight the importance of religious freedom and support exchanges and partnerships with U.S. and New Zealand-based organizations to promote interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, and religious tolerance. I will also engage with the New Zealand government to encourage it to sign on to the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you would work with IO and USUN colleagues in capital to promote American and likeminded initiatives in the U.N. system, including on technical matters at specialized bodies.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with IO and colleagues at our missions to multilateral organizations to increase alignment with the governments of New Zealand and Samoa on key issues and initiatives, including in specialized agencies and technical bodies where critical global standards are shaped. I will also work to translate that alignment into concrete outcomes on the issues that matter most to our security and prosperity.

Question. If confirmed, please describe how you will engage in capital to win support for key U.S. priorities at the U.N.

Answer. I believe that building strong relationships, fostering open and frank communication, and focusing on shared values and interests are of paramount importance. If I am confirmed, I will maintain open communication with the New Zealand and Samoan governments to ensure alignment, understanding, and support of U.S. priorities and initiatives at the United Nations. I will also identify areas where our interests overlap and opportunities to advance our shared objectives at the United Nations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JARED NOVELLY BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. American personnel and their family members are facing evolving threats abroad in the wake of the U.S. strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation. These threats are not limited to the Middle East region, unfortunately. Do you commit to prioritizing the safety and security of Americans overseas, including individuals under Chief of Mission authority, and advocating for the resources you need to prioritize American citizen safety?

Answer. An American ambassador has no higher priority than ensuring the safety of American citizens in the countries to which they are accredited. I assure the Committee that if confirmed, there will be no priority more important to me than the safety and security of American citizens overseas, including those under Chief of Mission authority. I will not hesitate to advocate for resources needed to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens.

Question. Do you commit to following the same policies on telework and remote work that apply to the staff you would oversee?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all applicable State Department regulations, including those regarding telework. I would be remiss in not also mentioning, however, that interpersonal interaction would also be required with officials in Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue.

Question. If confirmed, do you plan to get to post as soon as possible, and are you aware that any arrival after 60 days is subject to a notification and accompanying justification to this Committee?

Answer. Thank you for the reminder of the 60-day notification requirement. Serving as United States Ambassador to New Zealand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Niue would be the honor of a lifetime. If confirmed, I look forward to taking up my position as soon as possible.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JARED NOVELLY BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. U.S. presence and engagement in the Pacific Islands region is foundational to advancing U.S. interests, especially given China's efforts to exploit gaps in U.S. engagement.

If confirmed, do you commit to prioritizing initiatives to address staffing needs at Pacific Islands posts, including by incentivizing Foreign Service Officers to serve in the Pacific Islands?

Answer. To advance U.S. interests in the Pacific, the United States must be able to engage on the ground with host governments and communities. If I am confirmed, I will work with management colleagues at the Department to ensure our staffing and incentive structures for personnel serving in Samoa, where we have an embassy, are calibrated to best advance U.S. interests. I will also support more frequent official travel to the Cook Islands and Niue, where we do not currently have embassies.

Submitted by Senator Chris Van Hollen



May 19, 2025 11:27AM

50+ Venezuelans Imprisoned in El Salvador Came to US Legally, Never Violated Immigration Law

By [David J. Bier](#)

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Shortly after the US government illegally and unconstitutionally transported about 240 Venezuelans to be imprisoned in El Salvador's horrific "terrorism" prison on March 15, CBS News [published](#) their names. A subsequent CBS News investigation [found](#) that 75 percent of the men on that list had no criminal record in the United States or abroad. Less attention has been paid to the fact that dozens of these men never violated immigration laws either.



Why This Review Was Needed

The US government not only denied these men due process; it has also generally failed to provide their families, their attorneys, or the public *any* information about what it alleges these men did to deserve incarceration in El Salvador. In fact, it has never even published a comprehensive list of individuals that it has sent to El Salvador, and it has refused to verify the CBS News list. Journalists [have already discovered](#) that the list obtained by CBS News was incomplete.

Moreover, in most cases, the men never knew the “evidence” against them or that they were being removed to El Salvador. Finally, the US and Salvadoran governments won’t allow the men to talk to anyone, so there is no way to interview them directly.

Given the total lack of transparency by the federal government, we have compiled what the families of the men themselves are reporting about their entries and what likely triggered their incarceration in El Salvador. Their stories are often corroborated by government entry documents, witness testimony, and the administration’s statements about them.

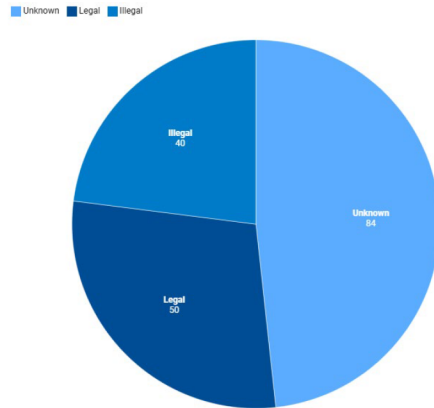
How the Imprisoned Venezuelans Came to America

Sadly, no information regarding one in three of the men could be found online. Maybe no one in their families knows they are missing, or maybe they are too afraid to speak up. For 48 percent of the 174 about whom we have some information, we have no information about their method of crossing into the United States. For many, the only information is Facebook or Instagram posts from their mothers pleading for information about their children. About 100 relatives also signed [a letter](#) to Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, but it contains no case-specific information.

The government calls them all “[illegal aliens](#).” But of the 90 cases where the method of crossing is known, 50 men report that they came legally to the United States, with advanced US government permission, at an official border crossing point. A [Reuters survey](#) of 50 men also placed the proportion of those who entered legally at about half. This isn’t surprising because about half of all the Venezuelans who have immigrated over the past two years came legally as well—either as [refugees](#), [parolees](#), or [visa holders](#). The proportion isn’t what matters the most: the astounding absolute numbers are. Dozens of *legal* immigrants were stripped of their status and imprisoned in El Salvador.

Immigrants Sent to El Salvador's Prison About Whom Some Info Is Online

Legal Status at arrival

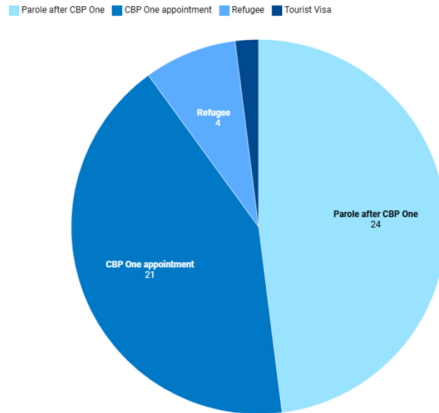


Source: Cato Institute review • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

These legal immigrants include a temporary visa holder and four men who were authorized to travel through the US refugee program. The government vetted these refugees abroad and concluded that they would face persecution, letting them resettle in the United States. The other 45 legal immigrants scheduled appointments using the CBP One app, through which they were permitted to seek entry. Among those with appointments, 24 were paroled into the United States, where they could live and work legally for up to two years, while the other 21 were detained at the port of entry.

Legal Immigrants Sent to El Salvador Prison By Entry Type

Of those with information online



Source: Cato Institute's review - Get the data - Created with Datawrapper

These people came to the United States with advanced US government permission, were vetted and screened before arrival, violated no US immigration law, and the US government turned around and “disappeared” them without due process to a foreign prison. It **is paying** the Salvadoran government to continue to keep them incarcerated.

Who Is the US Government Paying to Be Imprisoned?

The men were workers—construction laborers, pipe installers, cooks, delivery drivers, a soccer coach, a makeup artist, a mechanic, a veterinarian, a musician, and an entrepreneur. Most of those who were released quickly found jobs in the United States.

A majority of the men are fathers. Altogether, the men were trying to support 44 children. The US government did not inform their families, lawyers, or anyone else of their impending imprisonment at US government expense in a Salvadoran prison **known for torture and other abuses** that would be illegal inside the United States. Agents simply disappeared them without charge or trial or even acknowledgment, which is rightly considered **a crime against humanity**.

CBS News obtained **a list** of the flight manifests from March 15, but there was never any official recognition of that list, so no one could confirm the whereabouts of their loved ones. It turned out that the CBS list was incomplete, and two of these legal immigrants vanished without a trace. It took **media investigations** to reveal their whereabouts in the Salvadoran prison. In one case, ICE lied to the family before **admitting** that their relative was sent to the prison.

What's the Evidence Against Them?

The US government asserts that they are “criminal terrorists” who are “confirmed” members of a criminal organization known as Tren de Aragua (TdA). Investigations by the [New York Times](#), [Bloomberg](#), and [CBS News](#) have all found that few of the imprisoned men have any criminal record. All these legal immigrants denied gang membership, and only two appear to have had a US criminal conviction of any kind, both for minor drug offenses. About two dozen of the legal immigrants were detained immediately at the port of entry where they were authorized to seek entry, so there is no possibility that they demonstrated any gang ties or committed any crimes inside the United States.

Most, at least 42, were labeled as gang members primarily based on their tattoos, which Venezuelan gangs do not use to identify members and are not reliable indicators of gang membership. According to court documents, DHS **created** a checklist to determine that heavily weights “dressing” like a gang member, using “gang signs,” and, most critically, tattoos. No criminal conviction, arrest, or even witness testimony is required.

DHS’s images of “TdA tattoos” include the Jordan logo, an AK-47, a train, a crown, “hijos,” “HJ,” a star, a clock, and a gas mask. But as the American Immigration Council’s Aaron Reichlin Melnick has shown, [all of these supposed TdA tattoos](#) were not taken from Venezuelan gang members but rather stolen by DHS from social media accounts that have nothing to do with TdA or Venezuela. For instance, DHS obtained its TdA “Jordan” from a Michael Jordan fan account in the United States. It pulled its AK-47 tattoo from a Turkish tattoo artist.

Because these men were denied due process, the public had no opportunity to obtain a real accounting of any evidence against them. DHS **says**, “We aren’t going to share intelligence reports and undermine national security every time a gang member denies he is one.” Of course, they [do share details](#) every time that those details support their negative portrayal of this group.

Therefore, DHS’s failure to give any information on anyone else corroborates these men’s assertions that they are innocent. In one case, DHS **has even tried** to say that one imprisoned man “entered illegally ... via CBP One,” which is incoherent and only further highlights how DHS views anyone it wants to expel as “illegal” regardless of how they entered.

Since DHS refuses to be transparent, we must often rely on media reporting and family accounts. However, these accounts often include official government documents, showing no criminal records and legal entries.

Among the supposedly damning tattoos from the legal immigrants were several roses, multiple clocks, crowns over the names of family members, playing cards used to cover up an ugly scar from a childhood accident, a song lyric from a reggaeton artist from *Puerto Rico*, the Real Madrid logo on a professional soccer player, and a reference to the video game Call of Duty on a teenager.

Here are gay makeup artist Andry Hernandez Romero's tattoos. He entered legally:



As Cato's Ilya Somin [points out](#), all people are entitled to due process under the US Constitution before the US government imprisons them. This is true whether they entered legally or illegally. But the fact that the US government now has the reputation of sending legal immigrants to foreign prisons without due process may deter many people from wanting to come legally and build their lives in a country where the rule of law is so absent.

Read the reports for each individual below:

[Profiles of 50 Legal Immigrants Imprisoned in El Salvador](#)

The tables below summarize the information for each person.

Name	Method of Entry	Entry Date	Mentions No Crime	Tattoos	Married	Kids	Released?
Widmer Josneyder Agelviz Sanguino	Refugee	Sep-24	No criminal record	Y			N
Nolberto Rafael Aguilar Rodriguez	CBP One	Mar-24	No criminal record	Y		3	Y
Gustavo Adolfo Aguilera Aguero	CBP One	Dec-23	No criminal record	Y	Y	2	Y
Nixon Jose Azuaje Perez	CBP One	Aug-23	Arrested	?			Y
Jose Alfredo Bastidas Venegas	CBP One	Aug-24	No criminal record	Y			N
David Cabrera- Rico	CBP One	2023	No criminal record	Y		4	Y
Jhon Williams Chacin Gomez	CBP One	Oct-24	No criminal record	Y			N

Name	Method of Entry	Entry Date	Mentions No Crime	Tattoos	Married	Kids	Released?
Wild Chirinos Romero	CBP One	Jan-25	No criminal record	Y	Y	1	N
Aldo Colmenarez Abreu	CBP One	Jan-25	Unconfirmed record abroad	Y		1	Y
Frizgeralth De Jesus Cornejo Pulgar	CBP One	Jun-24	No criminal record	Y	N		N
Leonel Echavez-Paz	CBP One	Dec-23	No criminal record	Y	Y	1	Y
Pedro Rafael Escobar Blanco	CBP One	Jul-24	No criminal record	Y	Y	2	Y
Julio Rafael Fernandez Sanchez	CBP One	Jul-24	No criminal record	Y			N
Yohan Fernandez	CBP One	2024	No criminal record	Y	Y	2	Y
Wilken Rafael	CBP One	Dec-24	No criminal record	Y			Y

Name	Method of Entry	Entry Date	Mentions No Crime	Tattoos	Married	Kids	Released?
Flores Jimenez							
Angel de Jesus Gonzalez Fuenmayor	CBP One	Sep-24	No criminal record	Y			N
Wilvenson Guevara Munoz	CBP One	2024	No criminal record	Y		2	N
Darwin Gerardo Hernandez Carache	CBP One	2023	No criminal record		Y	1	Y
Andry Hernandez Romero	CBP One	2024	No criminal record	Y	N	0	N
Eddie Adolfo Hurtado Quevedo	CBP One	Aug-24	No criminal record	Y			N

All Immigrants Sent to El Salvador

Entry methods and sources

Table with 10 columns and 243 rows. Currently displaying rows 1 to 20.

Name	Method of Entry	Source	Source2	Source3	Source4	Source5	Source6
Widmer Josneyder Agelviz Sanguino	Refugee	Source	Source	Source			
Nolberto Rafael Aguilar Rodríguez	CBP One	Source	Source	Source			
Gustavo Adolfo Aguilera Aguero	CBP One	Source	Source	Source	Source	Source	
Henry Albornoz- Quintero	illegally	Source	Source	Source	Source	Source	
Neri Jose Alvarado Borges	Illegally	Source	Source	Source	Source		
Jinder Angulo- Aparicio	Unknown	Source	Source	Source			
Jose Aray- Cardona	No info						

Table with 10 columns and 243 rows. Currently displaying rows 1 to 20.

Name	Method of Entry	Source	Source2	Source3	Source4	Source5	Source6
Jose Arregoces Rincon	No info						
Nixon Jose Azuaje Perez	CBP One	Source	Source	Source	Source	Source	
Rolando Barreto Villegas	No info						
Jose Alfredo Bastidas Venegas	CBP One	Source	Source				
Marcos Jesus Basulto-Salinas	Illegally	Source					
Elvis Batista-Arias	Unknown	Source					
Alirio Guillermo	Illegally	Source	Source	Source	Source		

Table with 10 columns and 243 rows. Currently displaying rows 1 to 20.

Name	Method of Entry	Source	Source2	Source3	Source4	Source5	Source6
Belloso Fuenmayor							
Yornel Santiago Benavides Rivas	Unknown	Source					
Andry Omar Blanco-Bonilla	Illegally	Source	Source	Source	Source		
Angel Blanco-Marin	Illegally	Source	Source	Source			
Angel Bolivar Cruz	Unknown	Source					
Victor Bracho Gomez	Unknown	Source					
Javiar Brazon-Lezama	No info						

Submitted by Senator Tim Kaine

Democracy Dies in Darkness

top EXCLUSIVE

Rubio promised to betray U.S. informants to get Trump's El Salvador prison deal

To secure Washington's access to El Salvador's most notorious prison, the secretary of state made an extraordinary offer to President Nayib Bukele.

October 19, 2025

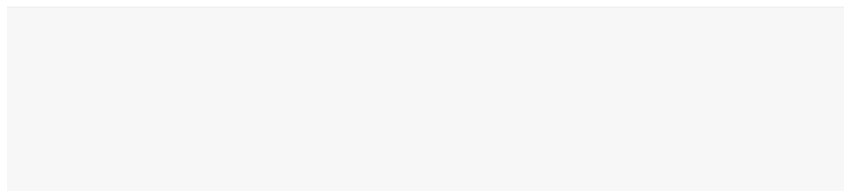
By [John Hudson](#), [Jeremy Roebuck](#) and [Samantha Schmidt](#)

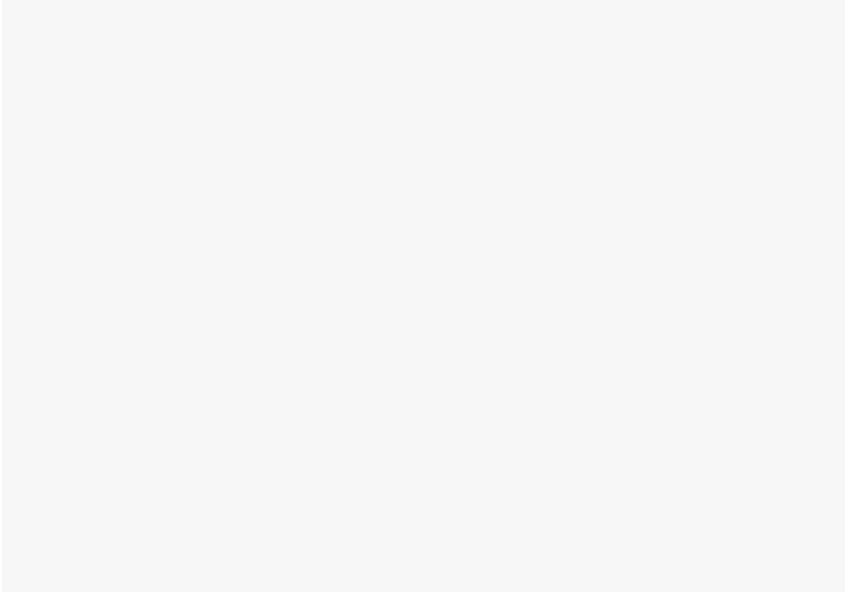
In the days before the Trump administration deported hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants to a notorious prison in El Salvador, the president of that country demanded something for himself: the return of nine MS-13 gang leaders in U.S. custody.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in a March 13 phone call with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, promised the request would be fulfilled, according to officials familiar with the conversation. But there was one obstacle: Some of the MS-13 members Bukele wanted were "informants" under the protection of the U.S. government, Rubio told him.

To deport them to El Salvador, Attorney General Pam Bondi would need to terminate the Justice Department's arrangements with those men, Rubio said. He assured Bukele that Bondi would complete that process and Washington would hand over the MS-13 leaders.

Rubio's extraordinary pledge illustrates the extent to which the Trump administration was willing to meet Bukele's demands as it negotiated what would become one of the signature agreements of President Donald Trump's early months in office. While the outlines of the quid pro quo have been public for months, the Trump administration's willingness to renege on secret arrangements made with informants who had aided U.S. investigations has not been previously reported.

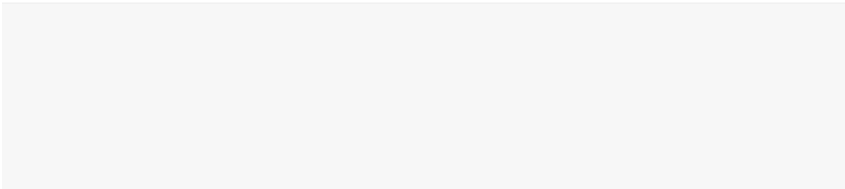


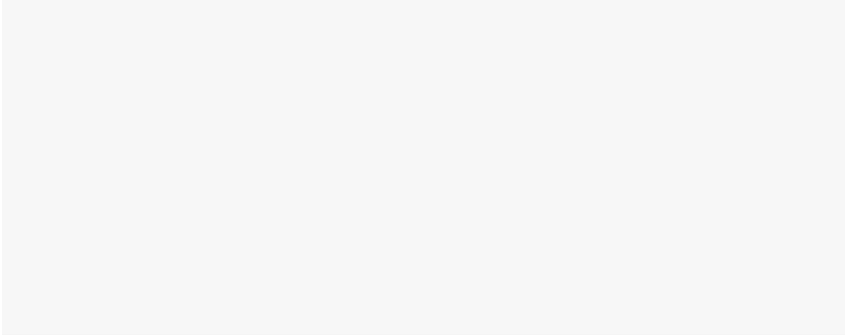


The deal between Rubio and Bukele granted the administration access to a sprawling foreign prison dubbed the Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT, that would be integral to Trump's ongoing efforts to conduct the "largest deportation in American history."

The deal would give Bukele possession of individuals who threatened to expose the alleged deals his government made with MS-13 to help achieve El Salvador's historic drop in violence, officials said. For the Salvadoran president, a return of the informants was viewed as critical to preserving his tough-on-crime reputation. It was also a key step in hindering an ongoing U.S. investigation into his government's relationship with MS-13, a gang famous for displays of excessive violence in the United States and elsewhere.

But in promising to terminate the informant arrangements, current and former Justice Department officials say Rubio threatened to undercut years of work by U.S. law enforcement to apprehend and secure the cooperation of high-ranking members of one of the world's most deadly gangs.





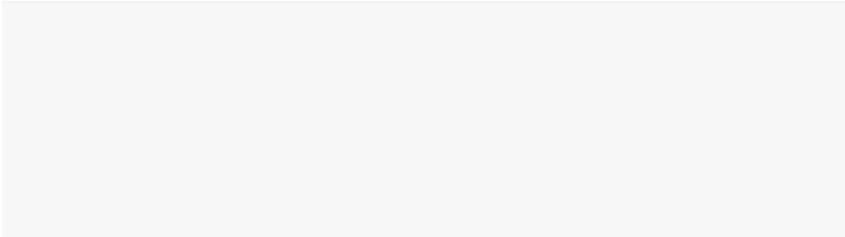
“The deal is a deep betrayal of U.S. law enforcement, whose agents risked their lives to apprehend the gang members,” said Douglas Farah, a U.S. contractor who worked with federal officials to investigate and help dismantle the MS-13 gang.

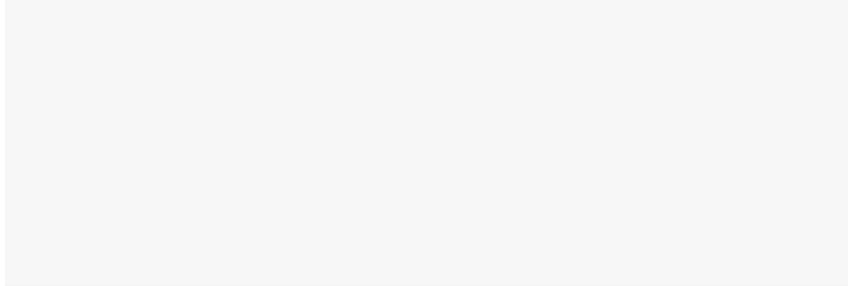
Nixing the agreements also threatens to damage the credibility of the Justice Department, which routinely relies on informants to build cases against high-level criminals, officials said. Informant agreements are based on assurances the cooperators will be protected by the United States. Reneging on promises made in exchange for information could hinder the ability of U.S. law enforcement to develop relationships with potential cooperators in the future.

“Who would ever trust the word of U.S. law enforcement or prosecutors again?” Farah said.

At least three of the MS-13 leaders Bukele requested had divulged incriminating information about members of his government suspected of cutting deals with the gang, officials said. One of them — César López Larios, whom U.S. prosecutors charged last year with directing MS-13’s activities in the United States — was sent back to El Salvador two days after the Rubio-Bukele phone call. The others remain in the United States, waiting to learn whether they, too, will be handed over to the very government they were cooperating against.

The State Department dismissed criticism of Rubio’s dealmaking, saying the secretary’s diplomacy allowed the United States to deport hundreds of alleged members of the gang Tren de Aragua, or TdA, to El Salvador before they were later transported to Venezuela, where the group was founded.

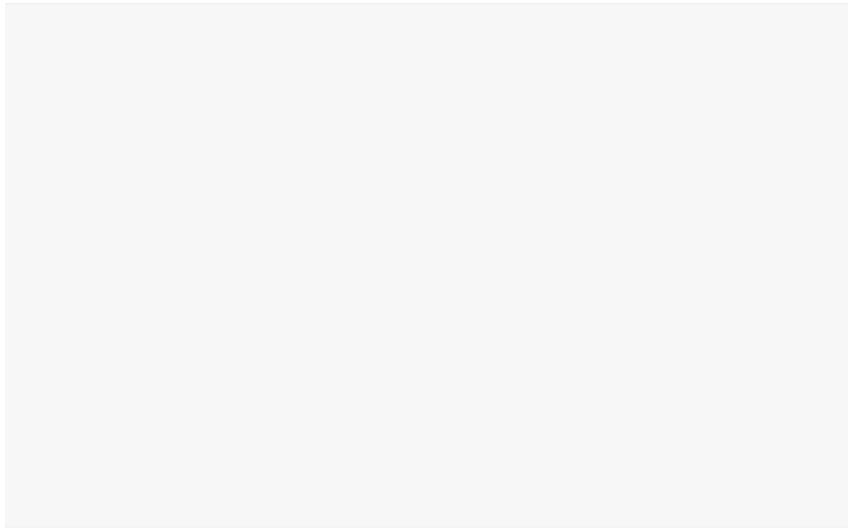




“The Trump Administration’s results speak for themselves,” said Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesman. “Hardened TdA gang members are back in Venezuela ... MS-13 gang members are being prosecuted in the U.S. and El Salvador. And Americans are safer as a result of these incredible efforts.”

Justice Department spokesperson Gates McGavick said the department is “proud” to collaborate with the State Department on dismantling MS-13. “This administration has investigated, prosecuted, and taken custody of key foreign terrorists with unprecedented success,” the official said.

The government of El Salvador did not respond to requests for comment. Damian Merlo, a lobbyist for the Bukele government, defended the Salvadoran president’s pursuit of the MS-13 leaders.

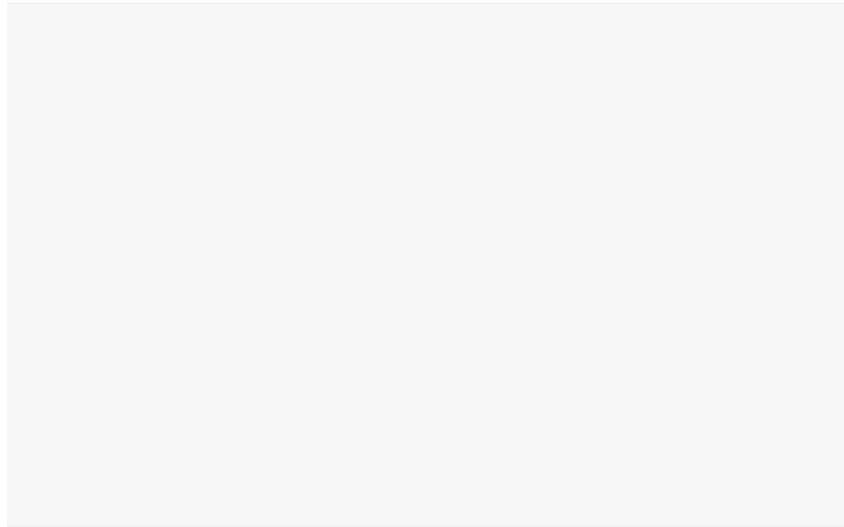


“These are Salvadoran terrorists and he wants them to do time in El Salvador,” Merlo said. “There’s a terrorism center and that’s where they should be, not in what would be considered a posh detention facility in the U.S.”

This article is based on accounts from dozens of officials from the United States and El Salvador, lawyers representing MS-13 gang members, prosecutors, diplomats, former Justice Department officials and political appointees. Most spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive law enforcement matters.

The deal

Rubio’s central role in brokering the deal highlights his evolution from a onetime Trump critic to a dogged implementer of the president’s agenda, exploiting his Spanish fluency and rapport with Latin American leaders to supercharge Trump’s most hard-edged policies.



As Rubio was finalizing the deal with Bukele in March, he was on a multiday trip to Saudi Arabia and Canada and had received multiple phone calls from Trump about the status of the deal, said two political appointees. The White House was concerned that if the Venezuelans weren’t deported immediately, a federal judge could order their release in response to challenges to their detention.

The trade that Rubio brokered helped both Trump and Bukele tackle issues core to their political ascendancy. Trump, who campaigned on ridding the country of undocumented immigrants, needed a foreign partner to accept deportees regardless of nationality or legal considerations.

Bukele, who cultivated a reputation as a crime-fighting visionary, needed the U.S. justice system to help ward off threats to that image. The Central American leader — and self-described “world’s coolest dictator” — is enormously popular in El Salvador for his aggressive crackdown on organized crime and record reductions in homicides. But his curtailment of civil liberties, sweeping accumulation of executive power and oversight of a prison system beset by abuse allegations have earned condemnation among human rights advocates.

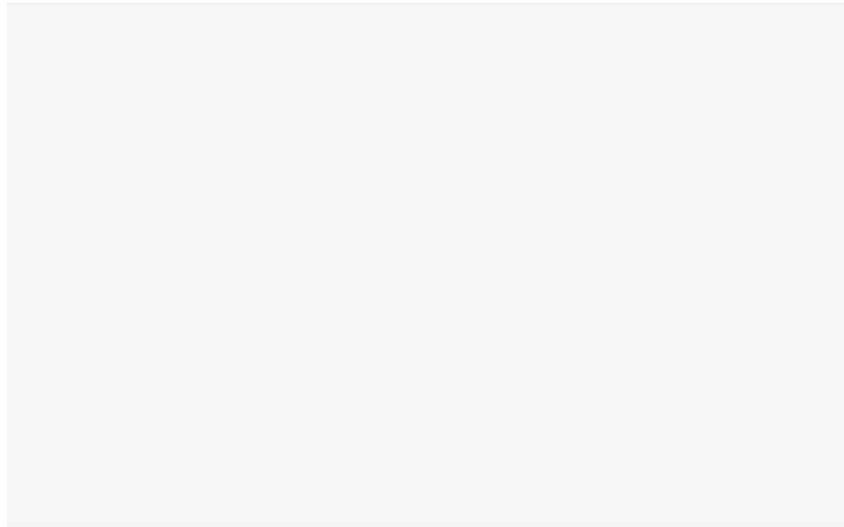
Those criticisms have been brushed aside by Trump, who hailed his leadership during a high-profile meeting at the White House in April.

“You’re doing incredibly for your country, and we appreciate working with you because you want to stop crime and so do we,” Trump told Bukele in the Oval Office.

“We’re very eager to help,” Bukele replied. “You have a crime problem, a terrorism problem, that you need help with.”

Thus far, Bukele has held up his end of the bargain, housing roughly 250 deportees in the CECOT prison before they were sent to Venezuela in the subsequent deal brokered between Washington, San Salvador and Caracas.

The same cannot be said of the Trump administration, which has returned only one of the nine men Bukele demanded: López Larios. Prosecutors moved to dismiss the case against him, citing “geopolitical and national security concerns” and he was deported to El Salvador in mid-March.



The other eight remain in U.S. custody. It is unclear if the Trump administration still intends to send them back and if so, whether it can prevail over legal hurdles that could prevent their deportations.

The administration began the process for deporting Vladimir Arévalo Chávez, an alleged MS-13 leader known as “Vampiro,” in April — but the effort has drawn scrutiny from a federal judge in New York, who imposed a delay.

Such obstacles were top of mind for Bukele during his mid-March calls with Rubio, said officials familiar with the conversations.

The Salvadoran president worried his request would get bogged down in the U.S. legal system, and he repeatedly pressured Rubio to guarantee all nine MS-13 leaders would be returned, these officials said. He promised to incarcerate hundreds or even thousands more immigrants from the United States if that helped sweeten the deal. And he vowed that no physical harm would come to the MS-13 leaders members once in his custody.



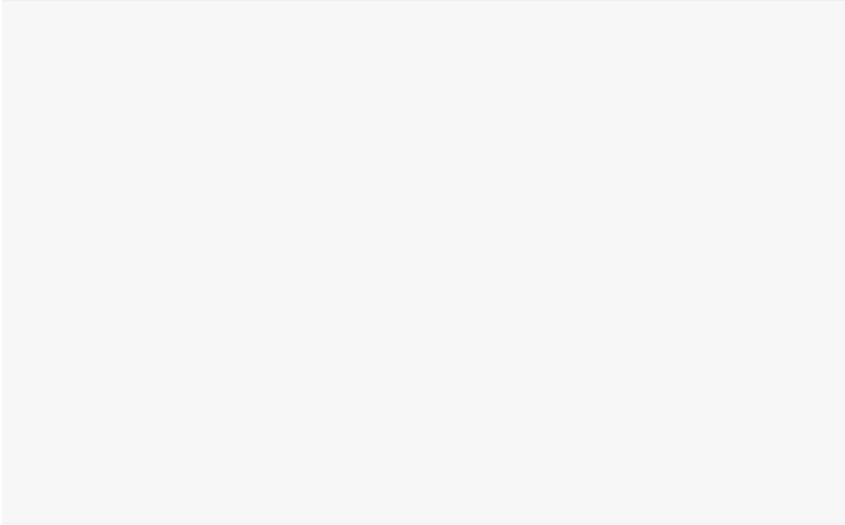
Rubio assured Bukele he would get his men and stressed that the American public cared little about the fate of Salvadoran gang members, officials said.

Each of the eight men who remain in U.S. custody could be removed to El Salvador at a moment's notice, putting them at immediate risk of potential reprisal from MS-13 members or the Bukele government.

"My life is in very danger if I'm deported," Arévalo Chávez wrote in June in a letter to the judge overseeing his case. "I will be tortured and [disposed] of."

The investigation

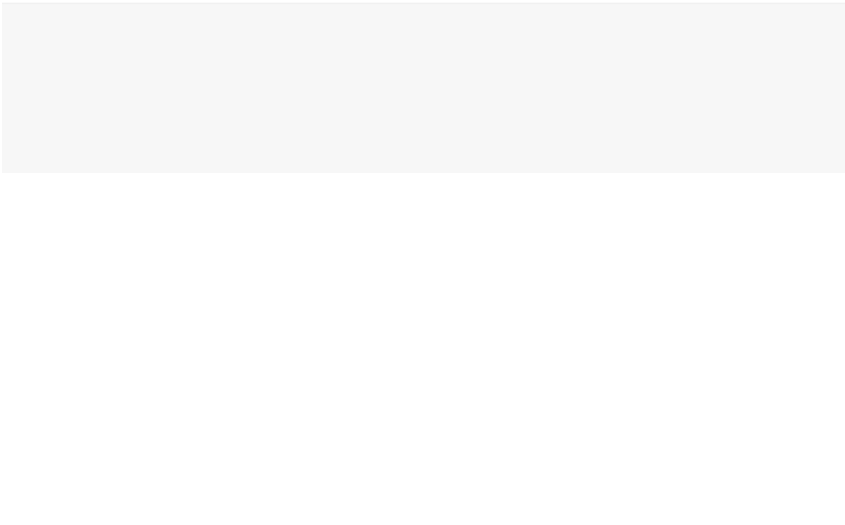
The investigation that brought the nine men into U.S. custody was among the most significant gang prosecutions undertaken by the Justice Department in years.

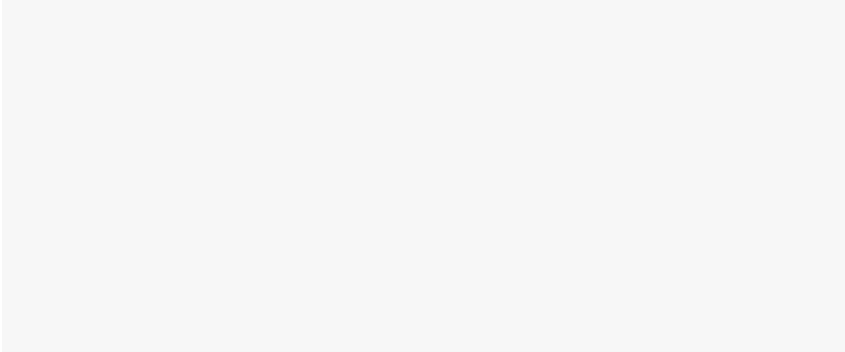


Late in Trump's first term, the Justice Department convened a special team of investigators and prosecutors from across the country known as Joint Task Force Vulcan. Its goal was to target not just low-level MS-13 gang members believed to be responsible for kidnappings, drug trafficking and murders in the United States but also more senior gang members directing the gang's activities from El Salvador.

When the task force announced its first high-profile indictment in 2021, more than a dozen alleged MS-13 leaders were named as defendants, including López Laríos. The charging document detailed how a council of top gang leaders, many of them incarcerated in El Salvador, maintained an iron grip in that country through acts of violence and a lucrative trade in drugs and weapons throughout Central America, Mexico and the United States.

A second indictment followed a year later, laying out striking allegations about MS-13's ties to the Bukele government. Though the prosecutors did not charge — or even name — Bukele or any specific officials in El Salvador, they alleged unidentified members of his administration had secretly met “numerous times” with MS-13's leaders in prison in El Salvador.

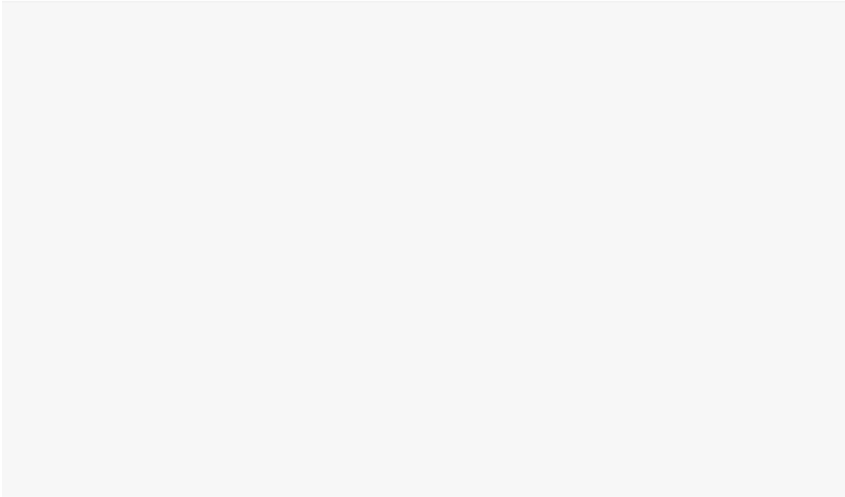




Bukele's government, the U.S. indictment said, had agreed to give them financial benefits and less restrictive prison conditions in exchange for their promise to reduce the number of MS-13's "public murders," so it would appear the country's homicide rate was decreasing — a development Bukele's subordinates had hoped would boost him and his party at the polls, court documents allege.

The gang leaders also demanded that El Salvador refuse to extradite them to the United States, according to the indictment.

Bukele has repeatedly denied negotiating with gang members. "How can they put out such an obvious lie without anybody questioning it?" he tweeted after the Treasury Department under the Biden administration sanctioned two Salvadoran officials for their roles in alleged gang negotiations.



But in the months following Task Force Vulcan's first MS-13 indictment, the Salvadoran government released from prison at least four of the gang's charged leaders.

One of those men — Elmer Canales Rivera, also known as “Crook de Hollywood” — was among the lead negotiators of MS-13's pact with the Bukele government, according to the Justice Department's 2022 indictment. A Bukele official arranged for his release in an attempt to show the gang his “loyalty,” according to recordings obtained by the investigative news outlet El Faro.

U.S. prosecutors allege that “high-level Salvadoran government officials” personally escorted Canales Rivera from prison, housed him in a luxury apartment, provided him with a gun, and drove him to the Guatemalan border to be smuggled out of the country.

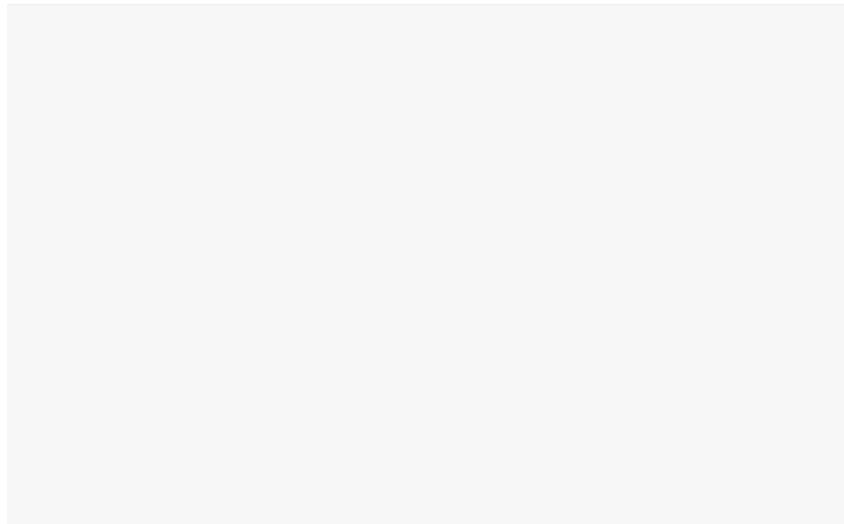
After the Justice Department made public its allegations about the Bukele government's role in Canales Rivera's escape, he was apprehended in Mexico in November 2023 and authorities in that country quickly agreed to send him to the United States.

Once in U.S. custody, Canales Rivera offered to hand over recordings, photos, videos and other documentation, according to three people familiar with the matter, that would implicate the Salvadoran government in dealmaking with MS-13.

He agreed to a confidential plea deal, and provided investigators information central to an investigation they had been building for years — one aimed at exposing how the deals struck between MS-13 and the Bukele government used U.S. resources and put Americans in harm's way, several people familiar with the matter said.

Canales Rivera's lawyers declined to discuss details of his cooperation. But three officials with knowledge of the matter said Vulcan investigators had been pursuing two top Bukele officials who allegedly facilitated the deals to benefit the gang.

Reuters reported in late 2021 that U.S. authorities were preparing indictments against Carlos Marroquin, who ran the government's social welfare agency, and Bukele's deputy justice minister Osiris Luna. Marroquin and Luna did not respond to requests for comment. A Justice Department spokesperson declined to answer questions about that investigation.



U.S. authorities suspected Bukele's government had used U.S. Agency for International Development programs to benefit MS-13's leaders, according to three people familiar with the investigation, though it is unclear how much evidence investigators found to back up those claims.

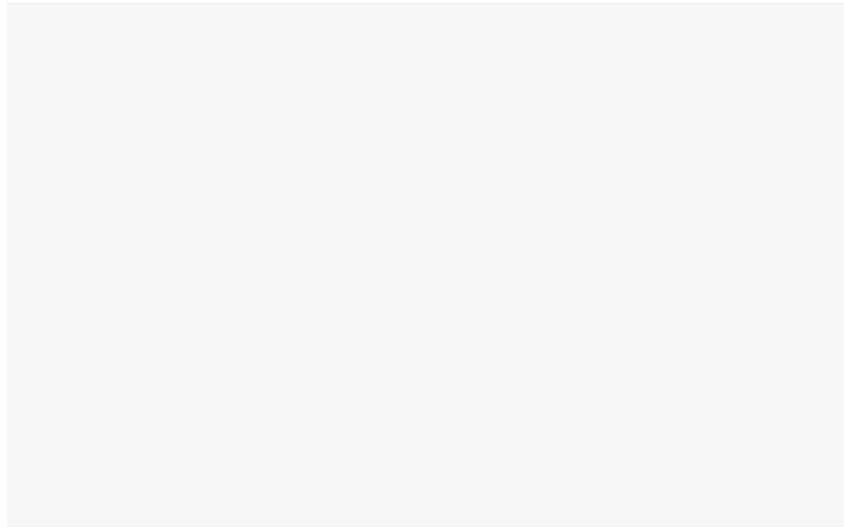
"We were trying to follow the money, to locate who was involved in moving money and how the gang received money, and that's where we started to find the connections to the political figures," said Chris Musto, a former Homeland Security Investigations agent who worked on Vulcan until 2021.

A former State Department official said the U.S. government believed Canales Rivera could “provide a mountain of evidence that DOJ needed to pursue these indictments.”

If he were returned to El Salvador, as Rubio promised Bukele, “the entire case could fall apart,” one current U.S. investigator said.

The aftermath

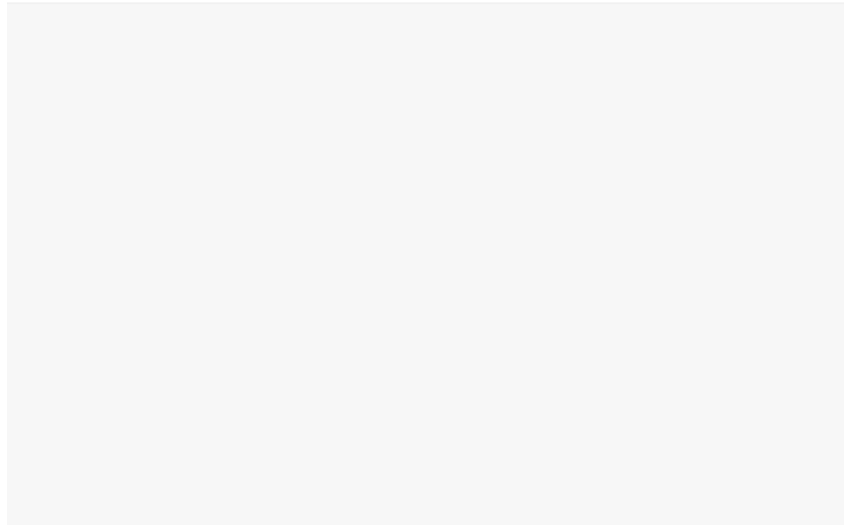
On March 11, the U.S. took its first formal steps to comply with Bukele’s requests. Justice Department lawyers asked a federal court to dismiss the case against López Larios, one of the men whose return Bukele had demanded.



Prosecutors provided little explanation for that request, which was initially filed under seal and made no mention of any deal struck with Bukele. They wrote that while they believed the evidence against the gang leader was “strong,” the United States had determined that “sensitive and important foreign policy considerations” outweighed the value in bringing López Larios to trial.

Like Canales Rivera, López Larios had provided at least some information to U.S. investigators as had a third defendant, according to three people with knowledge of the investigation. At the time of Rubio’s promise to Bukele, neither López Larios nor the third defendant had cemented a formal plea agreement with U.S. prosecutors as Canales Rivera had done, the three people said.

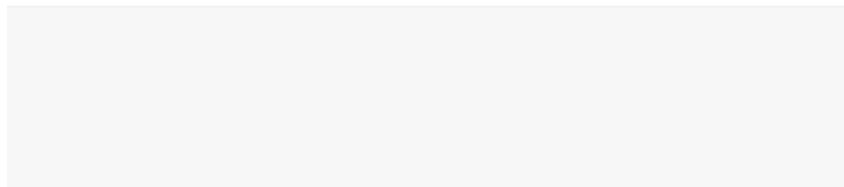
Within four days of the Justice Department's request, U.S. District Judge Joan Azrack had signed off and López Larios was flown out of the country on one of the first flights the Trump administration launched as part of its deal to ship Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador.



A video posted by Bukele showed authorities loading a shackled López Larios onto a military vehicle bound for CECOT where he was told to say his name on camera as he was shorn of his beard on bended knee. Now he resides at what one Salvadoran official described as a "safe house," a measure that could be aimed at protecting him from gangs seeking to kill him in prison.

López Larios's lawyer, Jeffrey G. Pittell, declined to comment. Attorneys for the third defendant did not respond to multiple requests made over months to discuss his case.

In early April, U.S. prosecutors asked to drop charges against another of the alleged MS-13 leaders — Arévalo Chávez, who had been in U.S. custody since early 2023 but, according to his attorneys, is not among those who have been cooperating with U.S. authorities.



But this time, in a remarkable ruling, Azrack acknowledged that she now regrets taking the government at its word and so quickly agreeing to its requests for secrecy amid López Larios's removal, given details that have since emerged in the news media. She questioned the propriety of some aspects of the U.S. agreement to return López Larios, Arévalo Chávez and the other men to Bukele's control.

For now, the judge has refused to grant an immediate dismissal of Arévalo Chávez's case while she presses for more details on the Trump administration's deal with Bukele and whether the accused gang leader should be granted an opportunity to challenge his deportation on grounds he could be "tortured or 'disappeared'" should he be returned to El Salvador.

Still, Azrack ultimately has little legal latitude to deny prosecution requests to withdraw charges against any of the alleged gang leaders or to stop the government from eventually deporting them — a fact that's left the remaining MS-13 leaders in U.S. custody wondering if they could be next.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, which is prosecuting the cases, referred all questions to the Justice Department, which declined to discuss its plans.

Bukele, as recently as July, expressed frustration that the U.S. hadn't delivered the MS-13 leaders that Rubio promised to send, according to a Salvadoran official.

Some Justice Department officials, meanwhile, have bristled at attempts to deport people the U.S. spent years trying to arrest and persuade to cooperate.

"It would be very disheartening if I worked my butt off for a year to collect that evidence ... to get him into custody, to bring him to justice, just for the Department of Justice or the State Department to turn around and say, 'Okay we're going to drop all charges,'" said Daniel Brunner, a former FBI agent who worked on Vulcan. "It would gut me as a case agent."

While the Justice Department's investigation formally continues into the alleged agreements between MS-13 and the Salvadoran government, current and former officials said resources have been redirected to boost efforts elsewhere.

"No one is wanting to investigate anything related to El Salvador or Bukele, because the Bukele administration right now has a direct line to the White House," said one former State Department official who was in El Salvador. "No one is touching that."

Schmidt reported from Bogotá. Salvador Rizzo in Washington contributed to this report.

What readers are saying

The comments express strong disapproval of Secretary of State Marco Rubio's promise to deport U.S. informants to El Salvador, highlighting concerns about the erosion of trust in the U.S. government. Many commenters argue that this action undermines the integrity and reliability... [Show more](#)

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