

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:09 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Daines, Hagerty, Scott, Curtis, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, and Van Hollen.

Also present: Senator Lummis.

Senator RISCH. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Today we have a nominations hearing with five nominees here before us. Ordinarily what I would do is make an opening statement and then yield to the Ranking Member, but we have two introductions, and I know Senator Lummis has other things to do.

So, we will let you do the introductions, then we will move to a statement from myself and the Ranking Member, and then we will hear from the nominees, but Senator Lummis, let's start with you.

STATEMENT OF HON. CYNTHIA M. LUMMIS, U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

Senator LUMMIS. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to be with this distinguished panel of Senators, and it is also an honor to be at the table with this distinguished men and gentlewomen who are willing to serve our country in the capacity of Ambassadors. And so, thanks so much for allowing me to introduce my friend, Hon. Dr. David Brat, President Trump's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia. Dr. Brat served Virginia's 7th District in the U.S. House of Representatives for two terms, from 2014 to 2018. That is where we got to know each other when we served together in the House. It was a wonderful experience, and I can tell you firsthand that he is a man of extraordinary intellect, deep conviction, and unshakable integrity.

So David's path to public service is one that few could replicate. He has a foundation in theology, and you have a master's degree from—in theology from Princeton, correct?

Mr. BRAT. Seminary. Seminary, yes.

Senator LUMMIS. Princeton Seminary, a Ph.D. in economics. You know, you could probably be Ambassador to somewhere who spoke

Hebrew or Greek or Latin. You are going to an American speaking—

[Laughter.]

Senator LUMMIS [continuing]. I mean, an English speaking country, but that is beside the point. He has a Ph.D. in economics and years spent in the classroom as a professor teaching economics and ethics, not as separate disciplines, but as deeply connected ones. Dave brings a rare depth of experience to everything he does. His background across academia, finance, and public service has shaped his belief that economic questions are fundamentally moral questions, and that principled, faith grounded thinking leads to better outcomes for people and nations alike. He brought that same conviction to Congress.

Dave entered public service because he believed our country needs voices willing to speak hard truths about fiscal responsibility, the foundations that made America great, and the importance of ethics in government. He was never one to shy away from a difficult vote, and those who served with him will tell you that when Dave makes a promise, he keeps it. That is a rare quality in any arena, and it is exactly the quality you want representing the United States abroad.

Today Dave serves in senior leadership at Liberty University where he continues to champion the idea of good economics and good values are inseparable. In his current role, he oversees business relations on a global scale, traveling internationally, cultivating relationships with current and former world leaders, and bringing top executives and national and international figures together for meaningful dialogue. That will serve both of our countries well when you take up residence in Australia. Dave lives by example and believes that a clear conception of ethical living grounded in faith produces better leaders, better citizens, and a better world. He has carried that world view through every chapter of his career, and I have no doubt he will carry it with the same passion and integrity to Canberra. His rare combination of economic expertise, global relationship building, and principled leadership will serve America well.

Australia is one of our trusted and enduring allies. The relationship between our two nations is built on shared values, shared sacrifice, of which they are very proud by the way, and a shared vision for a free and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Dave Brat—economist, educator, man of faith, and my former colleague—is precisely the kind of ambassador who will strengthen that bond. I am very proud to introduce him to this committee and honored to call him my friend.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Lummis. We appreciate that, and we know you have another commitment, so you are welcome to stay or go about your business as you are required to do here. So, thank you so much. We appreciate that.

Senator LUMMIS. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Senator Curtis, I understand you have something for us.

Senator CURTIS. I do, yes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN R. CURTIS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH**

Senator CURTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Ranking Member.

So pleased today, and I can't tell you how pleased I was when, on April 13, President Trump nominated Michelle Steel to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. Michelle and I had the pleasure of serving together in the House, and I will share a little bit of her bio with you, but before I do that, I will just tell you if character matters to you, if hard work matters to you, if competency matters to you, if dedication matters to you, this is the right person for that position in South Korea.

Ms. Michelle Park Steel is one of the first Korean-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives where she served two terms representing California's 48th and 45th District. While in Congress, Ms. Steel fought for California families and small businesses, served on the influential House Ways and Means Committee, and worked on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Education and Labor, focusing on issues ranging from tax reform to U.S.-China policy. After fleeing North Korea during the Korean War, Ms. Steel's parents met and built a life in South Korea before moving to Japan where Michelle studied at the Japan Women's University. Her father encouraged her at a young age to move to the United States.

Motivated by the challenges her mother faced as a small business owner navigating tax laws and State regulations, Ms. Steel ran for and won a seat on the State Board of Equalization, the Nation's only elected tax board where she represented over 9 million constituents. She later served as supervisor and chairwoman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors. Ms. Steel's long record of achievement in elected positions and extensive service as a public service leader at a local and national level is coupled with her overseas experience, and that all makes her well qualified to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Steel earned a bachelor's of science, business administration from Pepperdine University and an executive master of business administration from the University of Southern California. Now, all that said, although she is trilingual, including fluency in Korean and Japanese, I did discover one small imperfection during our trip to Taiwan: she does not speak Mandarin.

[Laughter.]

Senator CURTIS. People there naturally assumed that if they wanted to talk to me, the Caucasian guy, they first needed to go through Michelle. They would begin speaking to her in Mandarin only to look surprised when the white guy turned out to be the translator.

[Laughter.]

Senator CURTIS. I am so proud to introduce and support Ms. Steel, and I hope you find her equally as qualified as I do. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you so much, Senator Curtis. We sincerely appreciate that. I have a few remarks to make, and then I am going to turn it over to the Ranking Member, and then we will hear from each of you.

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

Senator RISCH. So first of all, I want to thank all of you for being here and for being willing to serve, and especially we would like to thank your families. We know that on these kind of things, the families are as much a part of the service as you are. They sacrifice as much as you do, and in many instances, even more than you do, so we really appreciate the families. So, let's start.

Ms. Steel, in many ways, South Korea has been a model ally for the United States. As you know better than most, our economic and security relationship with Korea is incredibly important. President Lee has made commitments to up Korea's defense spending and to deepen relations with the United States and with Japan, but we also need to up our cooperation in shipbuilding, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and nuclear energy, all critical sectors, to ensure the U.S. and our partners remain at the forefront of tech competition. Today, I would like to hear from you on your priorities for implementing our trade and investment framework with Korea if confirmed in your—and if confirmed, and your views on how we can address the regional threats from China and North Korea.

Mr. Kavoukjian, as you know, Norway is a key U.S. ally in Europe and the High North. Its border with Russia as well as its sovereignty over Svalbard and the Long Arctic Coast make it a key partner in countering Russian and Chinese malign activities in the North Atlantic. Norway is also key to building a European energy mix that is independent and secure from Russian interference. We need to work together to advance this goal and protect critical infrastructure. I look forward to hearing how you would work with Norway to advance these key priorities.

Mr. Wendt, the United States' partnership with Albania has benefited from significant growth in recent years and now more than ever. Albania is an important NATO ally helping provide stability in the Western Balkans and standing up to Russian influence. It is very important for the U.S. to continue its support of Albania's implementation of government and economic reforms they have undertaken, which will in turn increase opportunities for greater cooperation. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these issues.

Mr. Dahl, I do not envy the task before you. The legal adviser is integral to the planning and execution of our most complex and consequential foreign policy decisions. Whether it is the military, economic, or gray zone threats posed by China and Russia, complex international treaty negotiations, or protecting our most precious resource—American citizens abroad—you will be uniquely poised to inform the President and the Secretary on extremely consequential issues. This job will certainly keep your hands full, but if confirmed, I trust you will work with this committee to ensure our national security is protected.

And finally, Mr. Brat, Australia is one of our most important partners in countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, you will oversee a historic transformation of our alliance with Australia as we step up our diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation through AUKUS and other initiatives. In this role, I hope you will also push our friends to fully implement their new investment screening and foreign influence laws to counter malign

Chinese influence, and assist them as they seek to counter the rise of antisemitism that we have seen in Australia, and for that matter, around the world.

Thank you again to the nominees and to the families, and with that, I turn the podium over to the Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all of our nominees today. Thank you for your willingness to think about continuing to serve this country, and welcome to all of your family and supporters who are here this morning.

Last year at our nomination hearing for the legal adviser to the State Department, Mr. Dahl, I asked him whether he would commit to following the law, and he actually struggled to answer. It was a “yes” or “no” question, but he couldn’t give me a “yes” answer. Over the last year, that attitude toward the law, including refusing to spend funds that Congress has appropriated, has had real consequences. We have seen the termination of global health programs, and now we are seeing an Ebola outbreak in Africa that has real implications for countries around the world. We have seen family planning commodities that have been left to expire in warehouses instead of reaching women and families who need them. Foreign assistance cuts have weakened our ability to stand with Ukraine against Russia, and none of that makes us safer or more secure.

Mr. Dahl, if confirmed as the State Department’s next legal adviser, I hope you will ensure that the Administration follows the law because as we know, the law is not optional.

Mr. Brat, you have been nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to Australia. Like the Chairman, I think Australia is a vital ally, particularly on AUKUS. It is going to be critical to—U.S. Ambassador to help encourage that AUKUS continues to move forward. It is also important for critical minerals for countering Chinese coercion in the Indo-Pacific, and the Administration’s prolonged review of AUKUS has created uncertainty that I think has really been unnecessary at a critical time in the region. It took more than a year for the Administration to nominate someone to this post, and I am glad that they finally have. I am delighted because it is delays like that that weaken American credibility with our allies.

Mr., is it “Kavoukjian?”

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Kavoukjian.

Senator SHAHEEN. Kavoukjian.

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. But I am not fussy, Senator.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. When you are at this kind of a hearing.

[Laughter.]

Senator SHAHEEN. Now, are you of Armenian descent, because in New Hampshire we have a lot of Armenians whose last name ends in the same way.

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Yes. You will hear about this in my opening statement. I am Armenian on my father’s side and Norwegian on my mother’s side.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, we are delighted that you are going to have a chance to go back and see Norway firsthand.

When our embassy in Oslo was targeted in a terrorist attack in March, we had no U.S. Ambassador on the ground, and just as key posts across the Middle East remain vacant following Iran's recent retaliatory attacks, it is critical that we have Ambassadors in U.S. posts around the world. Norway is on the front lines of growing Russian activity and sabotage efforts in the Baltics, in the North Sea, and in the Arctic. If confirmed, I hope you will work closely with our Norwegian allies to strengthen NATO's presence in the Arctic and to counter Russian aggression. The United States needs to show up and lead in moments like these.

Mr. Wendt, you have been nominated to serve as Ambassador to Albania, and, again, as the chairman said, Albania is one of our closest partners in the Western Balkans and a NATO ally, and it has really stood with us in so many ways. It has also stood with Ukraine and supported sanctions on Russia. If confirmed, you will be the first U.S. Ambassador to Albania in 3 years. At a consequential moment for the region, diplomatic leadership matters.

Ms. Steel, you have been nominated to serve as Ambassador to South Korea. Senator Curtis talked about your trip with him to Taiwan, but he and I and Senator Rosen from this committee recently traveled there with a bipartisan delegation, and across Asia we heard the same message repeatedly. They want to see the United States stand by its allies. That is why I was troubled when I heard the President suggest that arm sales to Taiwan might actually be an open item to negotiate with China. I think Taiwan security is not a bargaining chip. It is central to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, and allies like South Korea are watching closely to see whether American commitments remain firm. That matters not only for our security alliances, but for our economic partnerships as well. If confirmed, I hope you will work to strengthen our alliance with Seoul and reinforce deterrence in the region.

Let me conclude by highlighting that last week, more than 250 Foreign Service officers were separated from the Department of State. These are professionals with deep expertise, in whom the United States has invested time and resources. I am very distressed that we are hollowing out America's Diplomatic Corps and—at the time when America's leadership needs to remain strong in the world, when growing threats around the world could move us in the wrong direction. So again, I appreciate all of you being here this morning, your willingness to be nominated and considered for these critical posts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

We will now hear from the nominees.

We would like you to keep it to about 5 minutes. If you have more lengthy remarks than that, we are more than happy to have those included in the record. So, give us all you want, and just keep your remarks to about 5 minutes, if you would. We appreciate it.

So, Mr. Brat, we will start with you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID BRAT, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AM-
BASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE COMMONWEALTH
OF AUSTRALIA**

Mr. BRAT. Thank you very much. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member—

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you want to turn on your mic?

Mr. BRAT. Thank you. It has been a while. Thank you very much.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as the United States Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia. President Trump and Secretary Rubio have called upon diplomats to be champions for the American people above all else. If confirmed as ambassador, I will ensure American interests and American citizens always come first.

First, I want to thank President Trump for the incredible honor of representing him and the United States in Australia. Second, I want to thank Secretary Rubio for the incredible team sitting all around us that he has shaped at the State and for the crucial support I have received all the way through this process. It has been remarkable. Finally, I want to thank my loving wife, Laura, behind me, for her strength and courage as we face another great journey together.

I also want to say a personal hello to Australia on this big day, if confirmed. I love everything about your country. I am a tennis fanatic. I follow your pros, the Open, and of course, the game of Prime Minister Albanese. I am looking forward to sports diplomacy across the board. I love the Australian people I have met in life, and I appreciate their decency, their wit, their sense of humor above all. As Aristotle said, “True friends must pursue similar ends and similar goals,” and we do. We all share the same values of life, liberty, and happiness. The United States lost 160,000 of our best who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the great Pacific wars of World War II to gain a maritime foothold and ensure free navigation for the next generations. Australia has been with us every step of the way with loyal friendship and with courage. If confirmed, I am excited to build great friendships with you in person.

Few countries are as integral to U.S. interests as Australia, as evidenced by the broad bipartisan support for the alliance. A long-standing treaty ally, Five Eyes partner, AUKUS, and Quad member, our partnership with Australia makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, in the words of Secretary Rubio. Our relationship with Australia under this Administration is deepening. During the President’s meeting last October with Prime Minister Albanese, our leaders charted a course to take the alliance to new highs. Building on that historic summit, I see opportunities to advance our priorities in three key areas, which the committee has already suggested this morning: critical minerals and commercial diplomacy; number two, defense cooperation; and number three, partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.

On the first priority, the critical minerals framework signed by President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese lays a solid foundation for securing these important supply chains. If confirmed I

would focus our team on fully executing this foundational agreement. Australia remains a promising market for U.S. companies. Building on the Administration's recent success in securing access for beef—U.S. beef, I would work to ensure a level playing field for all U.S. companies. I would also be a steadfast champion of Australian investment into the United States, partnering with Australia's superannuation funds, which will go over a trillion dollars in the next 10 years, to execute on plans to invest in the U.S.

If confirmed, I would also continue to strengthen defense cooperation, including working with Congress to further streamline defense trade controls. Amidst China's unprecedented military buildup, the U.S.-Australia Alliance is an essential pillar of regional stability and deterrence. As the President has instructed, I would ensure the mission moves full steam ahead, including AUKUS—on AUKUS and other alliance priorities. Finally, if confirmed as ambassador, I would expand our partnership with Australia across the Indo-Pacific, and especially in the Pacific Islands. Working with Australia to build out critical infrastructure, support private sector investment, and deliver security assistance, we can bolster the resilience of our regional partners to help—to fight against malign influence of our adversaries.

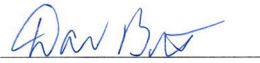
The United States is a Pacific nation, and our partnership with Australia maintains our edge in this vast strategic region. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

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:


David Brat

Date:

May 20, 2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brat follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. David Brat

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as United States Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia.

President Trump and Secretary Rubio have called upon diplomats to be champions for the American people above all else. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will ensure American interests and American citizens always come first.

First, I want to thank President Trump for the incredible honor of representing him and the United States in Australia. Second, I want to thank Secretary Rubio for the incredible team he has shaped at State and for the crucial support I have received all the way through. Finally, I want to thank my loving wife Laura for her strength and courage as we face another great journey together.

I also want to say a personal hello to Australia on this big day. I love everything about your country. I am a tennis fanatic and follow your pros, the Open, and of course, the game of PM Albanese! I'm looking forward to sports diplomacy across the board. I love the Australian people I have met in life and appreciate their decency, wit, and sense of humor above all. As Aristotle said, true friends must pursue similar ends and goals, and we do. We share the same values of life, liberty and happiness.

The U.S. lost 160,000 who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the great Pacific wars of WWII to gain a maritime foothold and ensure free navigation for the next generations. Australia has been with us every step of the way with loyal friendship and courage. If confirmed, I am very excited to build great friendships with you in person.

Few countries are as integral to U.S. interests as Australia, as evidenced by the broad bipartisan support for the Alliance. A longstanding treaty Ally, Five Eye partner, AUKUS, and Quad member, our partnership with Australia makes America "safer, stronger, and more prosperous."

Our relationship with Australia under this Administration is deepening. During the President's meeting last October with Prime Minister Albanese, our leaders charted a course to take the Alliance to new heights.

Building on that historic summit, I see opportunities to advance our priorities in three areas:

- (1) critical minerals and commercial diplomacy;
- (2) defense cooperation; and
- (3) partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.

On the first priority, the Critical Minerals Framework signed by President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese lays a solid foundation for securing these important supply chains. If confirmed, I would focus our team on fully executing this foundational agreement.

Australia remains a promising market for U.S. companies. Building on the Administration's recent success in securing access for U.S. beef, I would work to ensure a level playing field for all U.S. companies. I would also be a steadfast champion of Australian investment into the United States, partnering with Australia's super-annuation funds to execute on plans to invest over a trillion dollars in the U.S. in the next 10 years.

If confirmed, I would also continue to strengthen defense cooperation, including working with Congress to further streamline defense trade controls. Amidst China's unprecedented military buildup, the U.S.-Australia alliance is an essential pillar of regional stability and deterrence. As the President has instructed, I would ensure the Mission moves "full steam ahead" on AUKUS and other Alliance priorities.

Finally, if confirmed as Ambassador, I would expand our partnership with Australia across the Indo-Pacific, and especially in the Pacific Islands. Working with Australia to build out critical infrastructure, support private sector investment, and deliver security assistance, we can bolster the resilience of regional partners to the malign influence of our adversaries. The United States is a Pacific nation, and our partnership with Australia maintains our edge in this vast strategic region.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Brat.

We will turn to Mr. Wendt.

The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL ERIC WENDT, U.S. ARMY, RETIRED, OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

Mr. WENDT. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, I am honored and grateful to President Trump for the trust placed in me with this nomination for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Albania.

For over 34 years, I served the United States of America as an active duty soldier. I spent 4½ years in the infantry and 30 years as a Green Beret. That tenure included being assigned to the U.S. State Department for 2 years while leading an eight country coalition as the U.S. security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In that position, I operated daily as a part of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem while reporting directly to the U.S. Secretary of State. Since retiring from uniformed service, I have been blessed to teach command and leadership at my graduate school alma mater, the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California.

So today my wife is overseas in Okinawa, Japan, with our U.S. Air Force captain son-in-law and with our daughter and our granddaughter to help care for another newly arrived granddaughter. Our son, a U.S. Army first lieutenant, serving as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, is sitting behind me. He and his wife are serving the country while stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We are a family that loves the United States of America, and we are thankful for the opportunity to serve such a remarkable country.

As the commander for NATO's Special Operations Forces, Albanian Special Operations Troopers were a part of my command, and I worked with them on the ground in Albania. In Afghanistan, I served as the deputy commander of a regional command that included Albanian troopers. I found that the Albanian Special Forces Troopers exemplify the warrior spirit of the Albanian hero, Skanderbeg, and the Albanian people themselves are a proud, hardworking, and hospitable people. If confirmed, my top priorities will be to protect U.S. citizens and advance American interests. If confirmed, at post, we will utilize four lines of operation as we assess our way forward to further develop the embassy's country plan.

The first line will explore ways to make America safer. Supporting Albania as they continue their fight against corruption, as well as transnational organized crime and drug trafficking linked with Latin-American drug cartels, will help make America and Albania safer. Second, we will work to make America more secure. These actions will also benefit Albanian security. I will work diligently to support Albania's progress toward the Hague 2025 NATO Summit Agreement to thoughtfully increase defense spending to 5 percent of GDP by 2035, while supporting increased U.S. and Albanian cybersecurity capabilities and investigating mutually beneficial initiatives across multiple military domains.

Third will be our focus on making America more prosperous. These efforts will simultaneously benefit Albanian prosperity. As

Albanian's AI, energy, infrastructure, mining, and other economic sectors grow, U.S. businesses and investors should face level, contractual, and legal playing fields. Fourth will be our focus on the post itself, including a key line of effort that I call human factors, which will seek to utilize both standard and creative ways to care for the most valuable part of the post—its people—both publicly and in their professional careers and with information they are willing to offer privately and personally.

In conclusion, if confirmed I look forward to collaborating with the members of this committee and our partners in Albania to achieve these important goals, and I welcome any questions you may have.

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: Eric Wondt

Date: 20 May 2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wendt follows:]

Prepared Statement of Eric Wendt

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Members of the Committee:

I am honored and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the trust placed in me with this nomination for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Albania.

For over thirty-four years I served the United States of America as an active-duty Soldier. That tenure included being assigned to the U.S. State Department for 2 years while leading an eight-country coalition as the U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In that position I operated as an integral part of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem while reporting directly to the Secretary of State.

Since retiring from uniformed service, I have been blessed to teach Command and Leadership at my graduate school Alma Mater: the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Today my wife is overseas in Okinawa, Japan with our U.S. Air Force Captain son in law and with our daughter and granddaughter, to help care for another newly arrived granddaughter. Our son, a U.S. Army First Lieutenant serving as a paratrooper with the 82d Airborne Division, is sitting behind me. He and his wife are serving the country while stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We are a family that loves the United States of America and are thankful for the opportunity to serve such a remarkable country.

As the commander for NATO's Special Operations Forces, Albanian Special Operations troopers were a part of my command. I was fortunate to experience Albania itself while working with their special operations troopers and military leadership. In Afghanistan, I was honored to serve as the deputy commander of a regional command that included Albanian troopers. Albanian Special Forces troopers exemplify the warrior spirit of the Albanian hero Skanderbeg, and the Albanian people themselves are a proud, hard-working, and hospitable people.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Albania, my top priorities will be to protect U.S. citizens and advance American interests. If confirmed, upon arrival in Albania, I will initiate an assessment to further develop a country plan to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, while being mutually beneficial for Albania.

Our partnership with Albania is rooted in shared interests and a commitment to freedom and security. Albania has a strong track record of delivering on our shared bilateral and global priorities.

If confirmed, at Post we will utilize four lines of operation as we assess and then move forward. The first line will explore ways to make America safer. Albania continues its fight against legal and economic corruption as well as transnational organized crime and drug trafficking linked with Latin American drug cartels. Challenges that reach our shores. Supporting Albania's continued fight in these areas will help make America safer.

Second, we'll work to make America more secure. These actions will also benefit Albanian security. In just a few decades, Albania has transformed from isolation under communist rule to status as a key U.S. partner and NATO Ally, and as a reliable force for regional and global stability. I will work diligently to support Albania's progress toward the Hague 2025 NATO summit agreement to thoughtfully increase defense spending to 5 percent of GDP by 2035 while supporting increased US and Albanian cybersecurity capabilities and investigating mutually beneficial initiatives across multiple military domains.

Third will be our focus on making America more prosperous. These efforts will simultaneously benefit Albanian prosperity. If confirmed, I will promote economic and commercial diplomacy to benefit our citizens. As Albania's AI, energy, infrastructure, mining and other economic sectors grow, U.S. businesses and investors should be welcomed and treated fairly, with transparency and level legal and contractual playing fields.

Fourth will be our focus on the people of the Post, including a key line of effort I call "Human Factors," which will seek to utilize both standard and creative ways that can be institutionalized to care for the most valuable part of the Post, its people, both professionally and personally.

In conclusion, I am honored to be considered for the role of United States Ambassador to Albania. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating with the members of this Committee and our partners in Albania to achieve these important goals.

I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Wendt.
We will now turn to Ms. Steel.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MICHELLE STEEL, OF CALIFORNIA, TO
BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA**

Ms. STEEL. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is honor of a lifetime to be President Trump's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Republic of Korea. I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me to serve the American people.

I want to thank my family: my husband of 45 years, Shawn; my daughters, Cheyenne and Siobhan; and their husbands, Wolff, who's been deployed since March—this is second deployment. He is a Navy lieutenant commander. Johnny still stays in London with my fourth grandchild; my sister, Joey, and my brother-in-law, Sherman, and my actually three adorable grandchildren—Declan, Rosemary, Charlie—are sitting in the back.

Today, I am reminded of a Korean saying [speaking foreign language]: "After hardship comes joy."

Like so many Korean Americans, our story began in hardship. My parents fled North Korea during the Korean War. They started the family in South Korea, a place made safe and free because more than 36,000 Americans gave their lives in defense of freedom. While we were living in Japan, my father encouraged me to study in the United States, which he saw as beacon of hope, freedom, and prosperity. He was right. English is my third language, and only in a country like ours could someone like me serve their community in Congress. During my two terms in Congress, I worked to strengthen our national security, preserve economic prosperity, protect American workers and businesses, and advance human rights, including on the Ways and Means Committee. If confirmed, I will continue that commitment by strengthening our alliance with the Republic of Korea.

For more than 7 decades, the alliance between United States and the Republic of Korea has served as the linchpin of peace, security, and prosperity in Northeast Asia. Our combined defense posture, anchored by the 28,500 members of U.S. Forces Korea, and reinforced by America's extended nuclear deterrent, remains ironclad. It is the bedrock of our alliance. President Trump opened a historic new chapter in our alliance with his 2025 state visit to Gyeongju. The 2025 UK-ROK Joint Fact Sheet outlined the once in a generation upgrade to our security cooperation. As part of this modernization, Seoul has pledged to expand its defense spending and to bolster our shared deterrence posture. Our governments cooperate closely to respond to the DPRK's unlawful weapons programs, its expanding cybercrime operations, and its deepening military cooperation with Russia. We are strengthening a vital trilateral partnership, alongside Japan, to defend the free and open Indo-Pacific.

South Korea is one of America's most important trading partners and a critical investor in rebuilding American industry. In 2025 we welcomed the U.S.-ROK Strategic Trade Investment deal in which South Korea commits to invest \$350 billion in U.S. strategic industries and reduce barriers to U.S. exports. American companies op-

erating in Korea deserve the same market access that Korean companies enjoy in the United States.

The United States and Republic of Korea share one of the world's strongest alliances, and I look forward to supporting the next phase of our great alliance. 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: Michael Steel
 Date: 5/20/26

[The prepared statement of Ms. Steel follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Michelle Park Steel
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 20, 2026**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and honorable Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is the honor of a lifetime to be President Trump's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me to serve the American people.

I want to thank my family: my husband, Shawn; my daughters, Cheyenne and Siobhan; their husbands, Wolff and Johnny; my sister, Joey; and my four adorable grandchildren.

Today, I am reminded of a Korean saying:

고생 끝에 낙이 온다

“After hardship comes joy.”

Like so many Korean-Americans, our story began in hardship. My parents fled North Korea during the Korean War. They started a family in South Korea, a place made safe and free because more than 36,000 Americans gave their lives in defense of freedom.

While we were living in Japan, my father encouraged me to study in the United States, which he saw as the beacon of hope, freedom and prosperity.

He was right. English is my third language, and only in a country like ours could someone like me serve their community in Congress.

During my two terms in Congress, I worked to strengthen our national security, preserve economic prosperity, protect American workers and businesses, and advance human rights, including on the Ways and Means Committee.

If confirmed, I will continue that commitment by strengthening our alliance with the Republic of Korea.

For more than seven decades, the Alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea has served as the linchpin of peace, security, and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

Our combined defense posture, anchored by the 28,500 members of U.S. Forces Korea and reinforced by America's extended nuclear deterrent, remains ironclad. It is the bedrock of our Alliance.

President Trump opened a historic new chapter in our Alliance with his 2025 state visit to Gyeongju. The 2025 U.S.-ROK Joint Fact Sheet outlined a once-in-a-generation upgrade to our security cooperation. As part of this modernization, Seoul has pledged to expand its defense spending and to bolster our shared deterrence posture.

Our governments cooperate closely to respond to the DPRK's unlawful weapons programs, its expanding cybercrime operations, and its deepening military cooperation with Russia. We are strengthening a vital trilateral partnership alongside Japan to defend a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

South Korea is one of America's most important trading partners and a critical investor in rebuilding American industry. In 2025, we welcomed the U.S.-ROK Strategic Trade and Investment Deal, in which South Korea commits to invest \$350 billion in U.S. strategic industries and reduce barriers to U.S. exports. American companies operating in Korea deserve the same market access that Korean companies enjoy in the United States.

The United States and the Republic of Korea share one of the world's strongest Alliances, and I look forward to supporting the next phase in our great Alliance. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Ms. Steel.
Let's go to Mr. Kavoukjian.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL KAVOUKJIAN, OF FLORIDA, TO BE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF
NORWAY**

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as the nominee for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I am deeply grateful to President Trump for the trust he has placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to serve the American people with diligence, fortitude, and integrity in this important post.

I also want to thank my family, my former colleagues in the CIA, my partners at White & Case, which has been my professional home for the last 40 years, the nominations team at the State Department, some of whom are here today, and Senator Tom Cotton. I appreciate all of their support throughout this process. Thanks as well to my late parents, who made patriotism a core value in our home. And finally, special thanks to my wife, Jana. I would not be in this position without her. She will be our best asset in Oslo if I am confirmed.

This nomination is especially meaningful to me as my mother was born in Norway near the Lofoten Islands in a house my great-grandfather built that still stands. My Norwegian born uncle served in the OSS during World War II, working with the Norwegian Resistance. I was raised in Minnesota, home to more Americans of Norwegian ancestry than any other State and the center of Norwegian-American culture. I was, believe it or not, a competitive ski jumper in my youth.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. I am hopeful that this background will help me build strong relationships with our Norwegian allies. It also means that, if confirmed, our family will have gone from a rustic island farmhouse in a fjord north of the Arctic Circle to the ambassador's residence in Oslo in one generation. That is a quintessential American story with some Nordic nuance.

If confirmed as ambassador, my top priorities will be to, one, aid and protect U.S. citizens in Norway, including our embassy staff; two, advance American security interests by building on our long tradition of military and intelligence cooperation with Norway; three, further strengthen our economic ties with Norway, especially in the area of critical minerals and energy, to diversify the global supply chain; and four, build closer cultural connections between the American and Norwegian people so that the bond of trust we have forged over the last 200 years continues into the next generation.

As a founding member of NATO and the eyes and ears of the alliance in the Arctic, Norway understands its commitment to our shared security. It is meeting NATO's enhanced defense spending targets. Indeed, it is now the first country in the history of the alliance to spend more per capita on defense than the United States. Many of its upgraded systems are purchased from the United

States. Norway's strategic location, its military capabilities, and its experience operating in extreme cold weather make it an indispensable security partner. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen cooperation with Norway on defense issues with special attention to Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic that are opposed to our interests.

National security is inextricably linked to economic strength. I will, therefore, if confirmed, work to increase business ties and trade between our two countries, especially in critical areas like rare earth elements. Norway's recent joining of the Pax Silica Initiative is an important step in ensuring U.S. access to these resources. Norway also has a thriving energy sector that plays a vital role in global energy security, supplying 30 percent of Europe's oil and natural gas, and reducing reliance on more problematic producers. Norway has the world's largest sovereign wealth fund valued at \$2 trillion, roughly half of which is invested in the U.S. I would welcome the opportunity to encourage more direct investment by Norwegian companies in the United States to create American jobs and to reduce trade barriers so American firms can compete fairly in the Norwegian market.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to promote cross-cultural initiatives that bring the Norwegian and American people closer together. Norwegian immigrants have made enormous contributions to the United States, especially in the upper Midwest. Roughly 5 million Americans have Norwegian ancestry, but as new generations grow more distant from their immigrant past, we must work to ensure the bond between our two great peoples remains strong. For example, if confirmed, I will seek to arrange for a Minnesota Vikings football game to be played in Oslo.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Nothing could be more effective in inspiring Norwegian Americans to visit their ancestral homeland and form new ties with their American—with their Norwegian cousins.

[Laughter.]

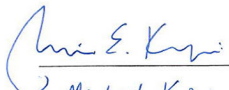
Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. I want to conclude with a quote from our former Secretary of State, George Schultz, on the most important lesson he learned from his many years on the world stage: "Trust is the coin of the realm. When trust was in the room, good things happened. Everything else is details." Our relationship with Norway is built on a foundation of trust. That trust comes from a long history of working together, shared values, shared interests, and candor. If confirmed, I will continue that tradition of trust. With that foundation, I am confident that as Secretary Schultz said, good things will happen.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

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: Michael Kaveney
Date: 5/20/26

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kavoukjian follows:]

Prepared Statement of Michael Kavoukjian

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you as the nominee for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I am deeply grateful to President Trump for the trust he has placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I pledge to serve the American people with diligence, fortitude, and integrity in this important post.

I also want to thank my family; my former colleagues in the CIA; my partners at White & Case, my professional home for the last 40 years; and Senator Tom Cotton. I appreciate their support throughout this process. Thanks as well to my late parents, who made patriotism a core value in our home. And, finally, special thanks to my wife, Jana. I would not be in this position without her. She will be our best asset in Oslo if I am confirmed.

This nomination is especially meaningful to me as my mother was born in Norway, near the Lofoten Islands. My Norwegian-born uncle served in the OSS during World War II, working with the Norwegian Resistance. I was raised in Minnesota, home to more Americans of Norwegian ancestry than any other State and a center of Norwegian American culture. I was a competitive ski jumper in my youth. I am hopeful that this background will help me build strong relationships with our Norwegian allies. It also means that, if confirmed, our family will have gone from a rustic island farmhouse in a fjord north of the Arctic Circle to the Ambassador's Residence in Oslo in one generation. A quintessential American story, with some Nordic nuance.

If confirmed as Ambassador, my top priorities will be to (i) aid and protect U.S. citizens in Norway, including our Embassy staff; (ii) advance American security interests by building on our long tradition of military and intelligence cooperation with Norway; (iii) further strengthen our economic ties with Norway, especially in the area of critical minerals and energy to diversify the global supply chain; and (iv) build closer cultural connections between the American and Norwegian people so that the bond of trust we have forged over the last two hundred years continues into the next generation.

As a founding member of NATO and the eyes and ears of the Alliance in the Arctic, Norway understands its commitment to our shared security. It is meeting NATO's enhanced defense spending targets. Indeed, it is now the first country in the history of the Alliance to spend more per capita on defense than the United States. Many of its upgraded systems are purchased from the United States. Norway's strategic location, its military capabilities, and its experience operating in extreme cold weather make it an indispensable security partner. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen cooperation with Norway on defense issues, with special attention to Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic that are opposed to our interests.

National security is inextricably linked to economic strength. I will therefore, if confirmed, work to increase business ties and trade between our two countries, especially in critical areas like rare earth elements. Norway's recent joining of the Pax Silica initiative is an important step in ensuring U.S. access to these resources. Norway also has a thriving energy sector that plays a vital role in global energy security, supplying 30 percent of Europe's oil and natural gas and reducing reliance on more problematic producers. Norway has the world's largest sovereign wealth fund valued at \$2 trillion, roughly half of which is invested in the U.S. I would welcome the opportunity to encourage more direct investment by Norwegian companies in the United States to create American jobs; and to reduce trade barriers so American firms can compete fairly in the Norwegian market.

Finally, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to promote cross-cultural initiatives that bring the Norwegian and American people closer together. Norwegian immigrants have made enormous contributions to the United States, especially in the Upper Midwest. Roughly 5 million Americans have Norwegian ancestry. But as new generations grow more distant from their immigrant past, we must work to ensure the bond between our two great peoples remains strong. For example, if confirmed, I will seek to arrange for a Minnesota Vikings football game to be played in Oslo. Nothing could be more effective in inspiring Norwegian Americans to visit their ancestral homeland and form new ties with their Norwegian cousins.

I want to conclude with a quote from our former Secretary of State, George Schultz, on the most important lesson he learned from his many years on the world stage: "Trust is the coin of the realm. When trust was in the room ... good things happened ... Everything else is details." Our relationship with Norway is built on a foundation of trust. That trust comes from a long history of working together,

shared values, shared interests, and candor. If confirmed, I will continue that tradition of trust. With that foundation, I am confident that, as Secretary Schultz said, “good things will happen”.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Kavoukjian.
We are going to move now to Mr. Dahl.

**STATEMENT OF BROCK DAHL, OF MARYLAND, TO BE LEGAL
ADVISER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. DAHL. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, it is the privilege of a lifetime to appear today as the President’s nominee to be the legal adviser to the Department of State. I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their confidence in me. I also want to thank my wife, who has been so supportive over my career and who is here today, my wife, Jessica, along with our children, Elias, Vivian, and London. My twin brother is here along with my parents, and my mother and father-in-law are also here. I am deeply indebted to the sacrifices and support that they have shown. I also want to thank the team at the Department who helped me prepare for this opportunity. The prospect of working with such superb and dedicated people has demonstrated a key facet of why this position is so desirable.

Years ago, I came to Washington, DC, from Kansas where both my wife and I were raised, wanting to pursue a career in the government. Interested in international relations, in early September 2001, I submitted an application for a National Security Education Program scholarship to study Turkish in Istanbul, which itself entailed an obligation to work for the government thereafter. Little did any of us know how the events of that month would reshape our lives. I was eventually granted the chance to pursue a master’s in Arabic and Modern Middle Eastern studies and subsequently filled a role at the Treasury Attaché’s Office at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. I later returned to Treasury in DC and worked on the interagency group focused on Afghanistan before heading to law school.

I share these experiences because they formed my impressions of the fundamental role of the rule of law, incredible institutions, and ensuring pathways to stable and prosperous coexistence. In short, they highlighted the centrality of communal trust to the success of any public endeavor. A thriving society rests on predictable legal norms, and when it acts as a single community externally, it must do so with conviction and credibility.

The Legal Adviser’s Office is core to those principles and accomplishes its functions across an array of complex and intersecting legal regimes. Paramount, of course, is the delivery of accurate and objective legal advice to the Secretary and to the Department, more broadly. It has a particularly distinct role, moreover, in advising on and articulating the meaning of international law. That law is not just a set of rules, but a framework for communicating our principles, expectations, and aspirations to the global community. The Department then grants to the legal adviser, in supporting the Secretary, a legal mouthpiece for conveying our values abroad and engaging in dialogue about those values.

My legal career spanning both government and private practice informs how I understand the obligations of the Legal Adviser's Office and the wide array of talents and skills that the Office possesses. I have spent years advising clients on a variety of crisis management, international negotiations, litigation, governance, and operational strategy issues. That experience also provides signals on how the Office can continue to engage effectively with the various communities of interest: with Congress, across the executive branch, with the American public, and with the world community.

I am incredibly grateful to be considered by this committee, and if confirmed would be deeply honored to serve. But for now, I recognize we have much to discuss, and I look forward to that engagement.

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?

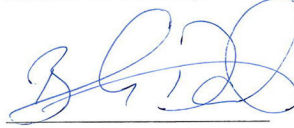
Answer: Yes

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: BROCK DAHL

Date: 5/20/26

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dahl follows:]

Prepared Statement of Brock Dahl

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the committee. It is the privilege of a lifetime to appear today as the President's nominee to be the Legal Adviser to the Department of State. I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their confidence in me.

I also just want to thank the family who has been so supportive over my career, and who are here today, including my wife, Jessica and our three children, my mother and father, my twin brother, and my mother and father-in-law. I also want to thank the team at the Department who has helped me prepare for this opportunity. The prospect of working with such superb and dedicated people has demonstrated a key facet of why this position is so desirable.

It is always inspiring to see the accomplishments of those who have preceded one in a role and distinctly humbling to recognize how the events they influenced ultimately shaped the contours of your own career. I came to Washington, DC, from Kansas after high school, where both my wife and I were raised, wanting to pursue a career in the government. Interested in international relations, in early September 2001 I applied for a National Security Education Program scholarship to study Turkish in Istanbul, which itself entailed an obligation to work for the government. Little did any of us know how the events of that month would reshape our lives. In large part because of these experiences, I was eventually granted the chance to pursue a master's in Arabic and Modern Middle Eastern studies at Oxford.

It was because of these investments in my own development that I felt duty bound, when then asked to do so, to fill a role in the Treasury Attaché's office at the US Embassy in Baghdad. I eventually returned to Treasury in DC and worked on the interagency group focused on Afghanistan before heading to law school. I share these experiences not to bore with a personal prehistory, but to highlight how my early career formed my impressions of peace and security, and the fundamental role of the rule of law, and credible institutions, in ensuring pathways to stable and prosperous coexistence.

What struck me then, and continues to ring true today, is the integral role of communal trust in the success of any public endeavor. A thriving society sits on a bulwark of predictable legal norms, and when it acts as a single community externally, it must do so with conviction and credibility. The Legal Adviser's office is core to those functions, and I am humbled by the chance to occupy a role that so manifestly embodies the hard lessons of a past not unique to me but shared by all of us in different ways.

The Legal Adviser's office accomplishes its functions across an array of complex and intersecting legal regimes. Paramount, of course, is the delivery of accurate and objective legal advice to the Department and the Secretary on all legal and legal policy issues arising in connection with U.S. foreign policy activities and the work of the Department more generally. It has a distinct role, moreover, within the Federal Government in advising on and articulating the meaning of international law. That law, the scope and contours of which are seemingly debated endlessly in the public square, is not just a set of rules in the sense that some may conceive of law, but a framework for communicating our principles, expectations, and aspirations to the global community. The Department, then, grants to the Legal Adviser, in supporting the Secretary, a legal mouthpiece for conveying our values abroad and engaging in dialogue about how those values interact with those of other nations.

My legal career, spanning both government and private practice, informs how I understand the obligations of the Legal Adviser's office, the breadth of the Department's functions, and the wide array of talents and skills that the office brings to bear in advising on those functions. I have spent years advising clients on a variety of crisis management, international transactional negotiations, litigation, regulatory compliance, internal governance, and operational strategy issues. That experience also provides signals on how the office can continue to engage effectively with various communities of interest: across the executive branch, with Congress, with the American public, and with the world community.

For all these reasons and more, I am incredibly grateful to be considered by this committee, and if confirmed, would be deeply honored to continue to serve. But for now, I recognize we have much to discuss and I look forward to that engagement.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Dahl.

We will now proceed to a round of questions, 5 minutes for each member here, and I am going to start with myself.

Ms. Steel, you know, I think most everybody on this committee has gone to Korea, and stood on the DMZ, and looked one direction and then the other direction. And you can't help but think about what happened there in Korea and on the Korean Peninsula after World War II as the world was readjusting itself to a new world order, and people were deciding what kind of government they are going to have. On the one side, you got this autocracy that is incredibly closed society with no rule of law, and an incredibly difficult standard of living, and a communist country. On the other side, you have a robust democracy, and people have a high standard of living, and obviously it is a capitalist, free market system. And you look at those two, and you think, how could any human being stand here and look at this and not easily see which way is better. To me, that was—that is just staggering.

And here you had a really monolithic population of people who occupied the Peninsula, all one country, all one race, one group of people, and yet one went one way and one went the other. And half of them living a horrible life right now, and the other really living a life that is not much different than here in America as I travel around South Korea.

So in any event, the thing that struck me is, over the years back, each country had a reunification department, if you would, and now that is gone. Each of them have disbanded that, and it seems like you can't pick up the paper every day or turn on TV or the internet and not see that North Korea is challenging, more and more, South Korea. It is not a pretty picture, and it really isn't very encouraging for the future. I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

Ms. STEEL. As I said on the opening statement, that my—both parents fled from North Korea from communism. They lost everything there, and they came down to South Korea, and they rebuilt, and then my father became diplomat and then went to Japan, and then we came to United States. We all know that how many people suffering in North Korea. That is why we need very strong alliance between United States and Japan and South Korea. It is not just protecting South Korea, but it is protecting all in the Pacific region. So, that is why we have to have a strong alliance between United States, and United States been there, and our relationship is really ironclad, and we have a very, very strong relationship.

It is not just military-wise, but economy side, it is same thing, too. So because of U.S. is a help that Korean economy just grew top in the world for top six. So I am very proud that I, if confirmed, that love to be in South Korea. We are going to work better, and we are going to work together, and we are going to have stronger relationship between South Korea and United States.

Senator RISCH. Well said. Thank you so much.

Mr. Brat, the AUKUS Agreement has really reinvigorated the relationship between the United States and Australia, and I am sure you followed that. There are a lot of us that have been involved in that from the very beginning and are very enthusiastic about it. Then following that, of course, we have got the new critical minerals agreement, which I am sure you are aware of. That is something that is really necessary for us, for the free world, really, and again, that has helped reinvigorate our relationship. I know Aus-

tralia has got some—we think we have a China problem here. They got a real China problem there. Your thoughts?

Mr. BRAT. Yes. Thank you, Chairman.

Let me just start off with the rare mineral piece. I am not a chemist, but I am trying to get up to speed on all that. I talked to the heads of national security, and they put it in terms that I had not yet heard, right? So, if you look at the economic value of the rare earth minerals, et cetera, it doesn't really show up, but what is so important about the rare earths and the minerals and the processing is that they are vital to every aspect of the economy, every aspect of our economy, not just the F-35s, not just the submarine engines. It is your lawnmower engine, et cetera, right on down the line. And the impact of—if we get into an adversarial position on that with some of the countries around the world right now, that can have—the loss of that—trading of rare minerals can have a significant GDP effect that goes beyond a few percent.

And so I think it is important to convey that to the American people, as you said, the importance of that and convey how important Australia is to us. They are mining experts. They are processing experts. They are refining experts. They have engineers. We need to get that skill base going over here and invest beyond STEM into that kind of engineering and the processing of the rare earths where China has got 90 percent of the processing around the world. And so, I am going to work on that, will probably be one of my main priorities working with the mission and the embassy.

And then on AUKUS, as you have just laid out, and I see Senator Kaine walking in the room—the AUKUS, I know, is vital in his work—that is huge. That is just not a submarine deal. It is—you know, that is three submarines over a decade, and then three more down in Adelaide built with the U.K., and interoperability, and all this kind of thing. Nuclear powered conventional arms is important in that respect. Australia has already put over \$2 billion into industrial production on AUKUS, and that doesn't even include the subs yet. And so, but the key, I think, to that piece is it is a model for multilateral coordination with the U.K. as we pivot to the Pacific.

Now, we have the U.K., with Australia, with the United States, with interoperability with the Marines. More forces are on the way. We have to work that out with Australia, but that AUKUS framework is much more than just industrial, you know, economics. It is security for the South Pacific, and right now, we are having maritime challenges across the board throughout the Islands, all the way through the Marianas, through South Korea, the Philippines. And so, I look forward to working with this committee on those issues.

Senator RISCH. I think you have got a good understanding of this, particularly your focus on the critical minerals. I was really surprised when the Aussies tell us they got like 53 of the 55 we are looking for there—

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator RISCH [continuing]. And they have got processing figured out, which is going to be really important to us.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dahl, as I said in my opening remarks, your predecessor, last year or when he came before the committee couldn't commit to following the law, and I appreciate your opening statement and your adherence to the law, but I feel compelled to ask you this question. Do you commit to following the law if you are confirmed for this post?

Mr. DAHL. Absolutely, Senator. We all, if confirmed, take an oath to the Constitution, and the lawyer's role is to follow and advise on the law.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, last year, the Administration let \$5 billion in foreign aid and international organization funding expire without congressional approval. The chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, of which I am a member, who is a member of the majority party, called that a clear violation of the law. Do you agree that funds that are appropriated by Congress should be spent as provided by Congress?

Mr. DAHL. Thank you, Senator, and obviously, I recognize the criticality of the appropriations process and the various components of the appropriations bills, the mandatory spending bills. I don't know what the internal discussions were or the legal analysis that was done on those issues, but I know that in the process of analyzing any sorts of appropriations bills, there will be recognition for mandatory spending clauses, incorporations by reference, and additional analysis, which I would be working on the team to address—with the team to address. Excuse me.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, you make me a little nervous, Mr. Dahl, because I hear that as hedging. I think that was a simple question, a "yes" or "no" question, but I would ask that you commit to explain the Department's view on why you believe the path that you are recommending on whatever the issue is, is legal. Do you commit to do that and to share with the committee those views, because I also serve on the Armed Services Committee, and it has been like pulling teeth to try and get legal opinions for actions through the military.

Mr. DAHL. Yes, Senator, I absolutely commit to that type of transparency and discussion. It is something that has been a healthy part of my experience in the past with the Federal Government on engaging with the relevant committees, and would continue to do so if confirmed.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Brat, in 2024, you said that if you were still in Congress, you would oppose additional support for Ukraine. Now, if confirmed, you are going to be headed to one of our most important posts in the Indo-Pacific, as we have all acknowledged, but Australia is also a major donor of equipment and training to Ukraine, including through contributions to the Pearl Program, despite not being in Europe or NATO. So, if confirmed, will you work to ensure that Australia's dollars that have been contributed toward the Pearl Program go toward the intended goal of providing Ukraine with U.S. made weapons and not be used for something else?

Mr. BRAT. Yes, of course. Australia is a sovereign country. They will be our partner. They have been our best partner for a hundred years. I will be working underneath the President of the United States, if confirmed, underneath Secretary Rubio, again, if con-

firmed, and I will get security clearances that might help educate me beyond what I know now.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

General Wendt, as I said, I am a big fan of the partnership that the United States has had with Albania. I find Prime Minister Rama to be very interesting, and one of the things that I am encouraged is that as a tall man yourself, you will stand eye to eye with Prime Minister Rama.

[Laughter.]

Senator SHAHEEN. Prime Minister Rama has what he calls the “Tall Man’s Caucus.”

[Laughter.]

Senator SHAHEEN. So, I am delighted that you will be able to join him in that, and I think you should share that with him if you are approved and on the ground.

But one of the things I think we should continue to do is to support Albania’s efforts to reform, which are part of its EU membership ambitions. They have created an anticorruption body, the Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime, or SPAK it is called—I assume that is how they pronounce it—and it has been very successful in tackling transnational criminal organizations and high level corruption. I think it is a great example of what U.S. foreign assistance has been able to support to safeguard Albania’s democracy and investments in the country. So, can you talk a little bit about, from your perspective, what role you think that kind of a corruption body can play in supporting the investment climate in Albania?

Mr. WENDT. Thank you, Senator, for that very important question, and just before I get into it, I will make a point, if confirmed, of discussing the “Tall Man’s Caucus” over in Albania.

The SPAK is, from everything that I read, and in my previous visits in Albania, I did not interact with them. I was interacting with military and with regular people in Albania. The SPAK, from everything that I read, has been a very valuable organization. It has been apolitical. It has been independent. The prosecutors that go into the SPAK undergo very careful vetting to include being polygraphed. They are overseen by the IMO—the International Monitoring Organization—with both Europeans and Americans. They have their own investigative body with the NBI. They are the National Bureau of Investigation. They have their own special prosecutors’ office with the SPO that is there and their own special courts, and they are codified in Article 148 of the Albanian Constitution. And so, if confirmed I can certainly commit to pushing forward in supporting their continued apolitical and independent operations.

You mentioned the transnational criminal organizations also that they are working against. They have—they have been invaluable. Everything, again, that I have read about them, their information sharing with U.S. law enforcement agencies there in Toronto with the Department of Justice, the FBI, the DEA plug that is there has been seamless, it has been transparent, and it has resulted in the U.S., I am told, and again, in reading about it, that it has resulted in prosecutions against criminal elements in the United States and

U.S. cities, and also fairly recently, in a multi-ton interdiction of cocaine coming out of Paraguay.

So just to sum, I think their work in these areas are critical as long as they remain apolitical and independent. And I also think that effect on U.S. business opportunities with contract law enforcement, it will aid in security and tenders transparency, and it will help to level the playing field for U.S. businesses in Albania. Thank you, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Chairman, thank you.

I am struck by how highly qualified this panel is today. Thank you for stepping back into the arena to serve our country in these very important capacities.

I want to start with my Norwegian ski jumper, Mr. Kavoukjian. We share a Norwegian heritage thanks to our mothers. Your mother as well as my mother was an Erikson.

As you know, Norway was one of the original members of NATO. It has long shared a contentious border with Russia and has a very clear eyed vision of the threats it possesses. Norway has been a most important partner for the United States. How would you as ambassador prioritize Norway and Europe's posturing toward Russia?

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Well, thank you for that important question, Senator, and I agree with everything you said.

I actually have given a lot of thought as to how I would signal my priorities if I were confirmed. We haven't had an ambassador there for a while, so I think it is important that the next ambassador hit the ground running. And again, this would be if I were confirmed, I have a plan, and that plan is as follows. Obviously, upon landing in Oslo, the first thing I would do is present my credentials to the king, which would be a great honor—one of the great honors of my life, and then proceed to give my introductory talk to the embassy staff. I would then plan, again, following all the necessary protocols, to immediately get on a plane and fly to Kirkenes on the Russian border with top level Norwegian military and intelligence officials, to hold meetings with them and local officials about the Russian and Chinese activities on the border and the threats that they are perceiving there as well as in the greater Arctic. I think that would send a very clear signal as to what my priorities are, and I think it is important that we do that.

Senator DAINES. You have thought this through. Thank you. I think that would send a very strong message out of the gate in terms of priorities and the importance.

General Wendt, you are not only tall, but you were 30 years as a Green Beret. So, I think in the "Tall Man Caucus" here, Senator Shaheen, he certainly is sending the right guy over there to stand tall for America in Albania. You have got an incredible amount of experience leading soldiers, working with embassies around the world, including direct experience with the Albanian military. How do you believe this experience would enable you to have conversations to advance our interests in Albania?

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

When I arrive at an organization that I am going to lead, what I have done both as—again, as the U.S. security coordinator in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and then also taking command of all of NATO's Special Operations Troopers, that the first thing I like to do is to listen. And some of the worst leaders I have ever found in any—whether it is civilian or military organizations, are those that show up on day one and just say, "This is how it is going to be." And so, what I plan is an assessment—if confirmed, an assessment that the third line of that assessment—or excuse me—the second line of that assessment, as I mentioned in opening remarks, is making America stronger in ways that are mutually beneficial in making Albania stronger also.

So, a key piece to this, Albanians—I have found the Albanians that I have served with, both in Afghanistan and again, as the commander for NATO Special Operations, they have guts. They are good men, and so making sure that they are properly equipped, that they meet NATO's capability targets. Albania has this last year, according to NATO numbers that I have read, met their 2 percent Hague GDP spending requirement. And then, of course, they have signed up now for the 5 percent out of the Hague and 2 percent out of Wales, GDP 3.5 percent of base costs for defense, and then 1.5 for infrastructure, and cyber, and some of the others. I am confident that there will be—as a part of this assessment, there will be a plethora of ways that we will be able to find that are beneficial for our NATO alliance with them and strengthening them that will go across the military domains, that meet current NATO capability targets, and then also infrastructure pieces that can be dual use potentially for military and for civilian growth there.

Porto Romano is one of the key ports there that currently if it had in the future a secure cargo facility, a secure pier. It is co-located with—it won't be effective until 2030 is the target, but with Pan-European Corridor Number 8, and then from their military items, could absolutely flow in, and that would be very beneficial for NATO and beneficial, by the way, for potentially U.S. businesses that can help in those port improvements and infrastructure improvements.

So, I think a key piece, to put a pointed piece on your question, Senator, is to—after going in, getting on the ground. I am just such a believer of—I have learned around the world that I really don't know a lot unless I personally see what is happening on the ground, and I will look forward to forwarding—

Senator DAINES. General Wendt, thank you. I know I am out of time here, and congrats on your new grandchild, by the way, as well.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

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

General Wendt, there has been a disturbing and growing list of examples in the Balkan Region where the Trump family and political allies of the President have been seeking to use their proximity to power in order to get rich. There is the example of the Trump

Hotel proposed to be built in Belgrade, which fell apart amidst a massive corruption probe regarding permits that likely were not supposed to be given. There is the example of Trump ally, Michael Flynn, and Trump's personal election lawyer having won approval to build a lucrative energy pipeline worth millions of dollars in the region despite these two individuals having zero experience in energy infrastructure. There is actually an emerging story in Albania where some of the President's political consultants are now making millions off of advising the opposition.

In Albania, this is a country that has made a lot of progress on corruption, but I do worry that our diplomats in the region are being asked to facilitate these contracts that are not in the best interests of the United States, but are putting money into the pockets of Trump himself, his family, and his friends. And so I just want a personal commitment from you that you are not going to be in the business of trying to facilitate business that is not in the best interest of the United States, but is in the best interests of people close to the President, and your commitment that you will stand up in our effort—longstanding effort to fight corruption in Albania. Albania is a great friend, but a country that still needs to make progress, and our embassy there has to be fighting corruption, not helping to enable it.

Mr. WENDT. Well, thank you, Senator, for your question. I am not familiar to be with—personal, you know, family—President's family investments in Albania, but I—if there are any questions about their personal interactions, I would direct you to them. I know my job as a U.S. Ambassador is to facilitate U.S. businesses, and if they are conducting business, they are all U.S. businesses, without preferential or derogatory treatment based on personalities. My job, I want to make sure that things are done the right way, that the rule of law is followed, that the playing field is level.

And yes, the second piece, Senator, that you mentioned about corruption, again, I agree that the SPAK organization that is there, the Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime, I believe, has been—from what I read, has been very effective. I will look forward to getting on the ground to understand really what is happening and not happening.

Senator MURPHY. I think the phrase you used, “make sure the playing field is level,” that is what is most important because right now, it doesn't look like it is level. It looks like if you are a friend of the President, you get advantage, even from the embassy, in pushing your business deals. Of course, your job is to stand up for U.S. interests, but we want to make sure that every U.S. business, not just those that have connections to the President, get a chance to do business in the Balkans.

Mr. WENDT. Thank you, and I can commit that to you, Senator. I will ensure across the board to be advocating for U.S. businesses.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Dahl, I understand you are going to be sensitive about commenting on the war in Iran, but just give us a broad sense of how you think about the kind of hostilities that would require the Administration to come to Congress for consent. Obviously, this is the most sacred clause, some may argue, in the entire Constitution. Just, you know, let me give you a real world example. Does a conventional ground war, like the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan, are those the kind of military engagements that require congressional authorization?

Mr. DAHL. Senator, thank you for the question.

I am obviously sensitive to how live of an issue this is for all of us and the significance which we take the discussion. Obviously, the question of defining hostilities has been something that the executive branch, in conversation with the legislature, has been examining for 50 years since the War Powers Resolution was passed, and there are a myriad of OLC opinions that look at different facts and circumstances. And as an attorney, my obligation is to take an objective analysis, in conversation with the other executive grants agencies, like OLC, in assessing what "hostilities" means.

Senator MURPHY. I appreciate your careful answer here, and I am not trying to provide a gotcha, but maybe just—and I am over my time, just maybe try to answer my direct question because I hope it is an easy one. For a conventional war like Afghanistan and Iraq, would you agree that those wars required congressional authorization, that the President did not have the power to engage in those conflicts without the authorization of Congress?

Mr. DAHL. Again, Senator, these things can seem very simple. You have to look at the facts and circumstances relating to every single event that you are discussing, and if called upon to analyze these types of issues, I would be taking them all fact by fact to give that type of—

Senator MURPHY. I think that was a pretty easy question, but I am over my time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our candidates and your families for your willingness to continue to serve the United States. We are really lucky to have people like you and your families who are willing to step up and serve our nation, so thank you for what you are doing.

Congresswoman Steel, you talked about, you know, your experience in fleeing North Korea. One of my friends, who has since passed away, was a Marine corporal during the Korean War, and he would be so proud of looking at—you know, those satellite maps that show the Korean Peninsula at night where you can see above the 38th parallel, it is all black, and below it, you see the lights of Seoul and all the other Korean cities that are vibrant. And it always made him feel good that he had been a part of that conflict to help preserve the freedom for at least half the Peninsula and looking, I think to the Chairman's point, about how much South Korea has done versus what has happened in the north. So, I think it is—as you mentioned, it is the linchpin of our Indo-Pacific alliance and security is that relationship with the Republic of Korea because it exemplifies exactly what we as free nations can do to oppose tyranny, and that is why this is very, very important.

Under President Trump, that partnership has evolved to prioritize economic and supply chains, and I think you mentioned that as well. Certainly, last year's Korea Strategic Trade and Investment Deal was a historic leap forward, and in that deal Seoul pledged to eliminate the non-tariff barriers and end discrimination

against U.S. firms. However, USTR's March 2026 National Trade Estimate tells a little bit of a different story there. It highlights a broad range of Korean barriers that continue to stifle American agricultural and digital services. Of particular concern is South Korea's recent decision to end voluntary additions to the soybean quota—import quota. The U.S. provides about 80 percent of Korea's soybean imports. This policy hurts farmers in my home State of Nebraska.

We cannot celebrate new deals while old barriers remain or new ones are being created. American farmers and companies deserve the full benefits of agreements that we sign. So, if confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the full implementation of the Korea Strategic Trade and Investment Deal?

Ms. STEEL. Thank you, Senator, for that question, and first of all, that I want to say thank you to all those Korean veterans that they have been serving in South—during the Korean War, because if they were not there, I was never born because my father and my mother came from different regions of North Korea to South. That is the way they met, in South Korea, and I am here, and I am so grateful for that.

For the trade issue, actually there is a Joint Fact Sheet. There is \$350 billion, it is coming in, mostly investment in United States, and we have three most important things right there between South Korea and United States, is we advancing that U.S.-ROK, that alliance, military capability is important. Second thing is trade. Trade issue for the beans and other agricultures that, if confirmed, that I am going to sit down with the Korean government and whoever that is control of these trade issues, because that Joint Fact Sheet is not really clear about that \$350 billion plus \$150 shipbuilding, so I want to see that exactly where that is coming from.

On the free trade agreement between South Korea and United States right now, that it is surplus in South Korea, over \$50 billion. I always think that free trade is always win-win, and we can renegotiate, so love to see that ag side, that how we are going to actually export more to South Korea, if I confirmed—I get confirmed.

Senator RICKETTS. OK. Wonderful, Congresswoman Steel.

Also, you know, AI has the potential to revolutionize many industries and dictate the global balance of power. Semiconductor supply chains are critical to winning this race, and we cannot cede this dominance to our adversaries. Our current export controls have seen some success, but there are still loopholes that are dangerous that remain. While American firms follow the law, some foreign companies, including Korean ones, are backfilling communist China with dual use tools. We need to permanently close these loopholes. It is one of the reasons why I introduced the MATCH Act with Senator Kim, Risch, and—Senators Kim, Risch, and Schumer to be able to help do this. We have added Senators Crapo, Shaheen, Cotton, Coons, Warren, and Banks. We would welcome other co-sponsors.

The bill would level the playing field for American companies, and U.S. technology must not empower the coercion of our Korean allies in the [unclear] or other partners in the Indo-Pacific. If you

are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the ROK prioritize collaboration on these emerging technologies to prevent them from getting into communist China's hands?

Ms. STEEL. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for introducing MATCH Act, and yes, I would love to do that.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much.

Ms. STEEL. If I get confirmed.

Senator RICKETTS. We will work on that. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Let's see.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to all the witnesses.

I am going to start with my Virginian colleague, Representative Brat. He and I served together in the Virginia delegation, but he made a controversial decision earlier in his career. When I was Governor, I asked him to serve on the Governor's Board of Economists to give advice to Virginia on revenue forecasts, and of course, he agreed to serve the Commonwealth. And later when he was running for office as a Republican, the fact that he had agreed to serve at the request of a Democratic Governor got him in a little bit of hot water. So, I don't want to hurt him with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. He is standing in a line here, so——

[Cross-talking.]

Senator KAINE. But he did a good job for the Commonwealth and a good job in Congress.

Representative Brat, I just want to say this. I just came back from Australia, and I heard what you said about AUKUS, and just two thoughts from 37 events in 7 days in four cities. It is a really powerful alliance. The Australians, whether it is the government or the opposition, strongly in support. There was a report at the Pentagon sort of questioning—Bridge Colby did a questioning, Australian compliance, and also questioning us, some tough love for both sides, and one of his questions was are the Aussies investing enough in the infrastructure, and what I saw tells me yes, and you will reach your own conclusion.

But one thing I did hear that I just wanted to bring to your attention is, there is huge opportunity for American businesses to do work, say, in critical mining. And also, in the AUKUS partnership, there is a little bit of anxiety on the Australian side about AUKUS, that if all the work is done by American firms in Australia, hey, what about our great, innovative defense firms? So, I hope you will not only engage American firms——

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator KAINE [continuing]. But look for joint venture opportunities and make sure the Australian firms know that they are also really welcome to help this relationship be all that it can be.

Mr. BRAT. Yes. No, I appreciate the comments and the question, and of course, that is—I have been getting more LinkedIn friends over the past month than—I got chamber people, press people. I am staying quiet, and if confirmed I am going to go all in on the

business side. The President and Secretary Rubio a couple of weeks ago sent a missive out to all the ambassadors on top of everything else, foreign direct investment, but that has got to be a win-win, you know, what Michelle was just saying. That is the way free markets work, right, and so it is win-win.

They are our good friends. I have a very positive feeling about the Australian people. I think they like us, and we need to step up and show that we are all in. And with respect to bridging all that, the President said full speed ahead.

Senator Kaine. Yes.

Mr. BRAT. I think Bridge said, "I work for the President. It is full speed ahead," and so I am full speed ahead. I have been amazed and very happy to see the bipartisan—

Senator Kaine. Yes.

Mr. BRAT [continuing]. Nature of the work on all of Australia. Every meeting I had with the majority, the minority—

Senator Kaine. Yes. The last AUKUS bill we did—

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator Kaine [continuing]. Was a Ricketts-Kaine.

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator Kaine. You know, every bill we do on AUKUS is very bipartisan, so thank you for that.

Mr. BRAT. Yes. Sure.

Senator Kaine. Representative Steel, I want to congratulate you for your nomination. You may not know this, but you and I were co-sponsors of a piece of legislation in each House that passed that was really meaningful to me, but I know it is even much more meaningful to you, the Korean American Divided Families National Registry Act. You were the lead sponsor on the House side. Senator Cruz and I sponsored it on the Senate side. It got included in the NDA in 2026, and the idea of it is what can we do to help families that were divided by the war to at least start to gather the information that would enable them to communicate one to another. And I don't really need to ask you about it because since you were the sponsor, I know, should you be confirmed, you will make that a priority. The relationship between South and North Korea is pretty tough right now, but I think you would be the perfect person to make that a priority, and I look forward to supporting your nomination.

I just have 1 minute left, and so I do want to direct a question up to Mr. Dahl. You are a good lawyer and you give a lot of advice to clients, and you have worked in government for a good while. You would agree with me that being as communicative and transparent as you can be with this committee in Congress is an important aspect of your work, correct?

Mr. DAHL. Yes, Senator, that has been a part of my past work, and I understand an important part, some of these issues we are discussing are a dialogue between the branches, and that is a priority.

Senator Kaine. Yes, and I know that you have a chain of command, and they have opinions about these things, too, and I get that, but here is an issue for my committee colleagues. Wars are always accompanied by a legal opinion that is written by the Office of Legal Counsel at the Justice Department. You referred to OLC

opinions earlier. I have been here for nearly 14 years. Every time we have been engaged in anything that is hostilities, there is a legal opinion, and the Senate gets to look at it, often look at it and classify it, but we at least get to look at it.

We are at day 82 in this war against Iran, and the Administration is refusing to let us look at the OLC legal opinion. They are asking for a trillion and a half dollars in the defense budget this year, but they will not even let members of the committees—Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Appropriations, Intel—review the legal opinion. Now, as a lawyer, I can't ask you about the OLC. You are not up here for that position, but when a lawyer tells me, "We have a legal justification for war, but sorry, Senator, we are not going to let you look at it," some natural thoughts occur. It doesn't even have to be a particularly suspicious mind to say, "Hmm, that has never happened before. Why can't we see the legal opinion? Is there something about it that is questionable? Is there a factual statement in it that is wrong?"

And so, I appreciate you saying you recognize that communication, dialogue, transparency is important, and I would say to my colleagues, whatever we think about the war, this committee—the members of this committee, which have jurisdictions over war powers issues, should be able to see the legal opinion on which it is based. And I—we have made a request and been rebuffed—a bipartisan request, and we have been rebuffed in that request. I hope we might follow up and eventually get to see the legal opinion.

Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congressman Brat, good to see you.

Congratulations to all of you on your nominations.

Mr. Dahl, a question for you. You would agree that, if confirmed, you have a duty to provide the Secretary of State and the Administration with your very best legal advice, right?

Mr. DAHL. Yes, Senator, always.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And so, I want to ask you some questions based on legal principles, and I want to start with the issue of blockades. And there is a Supreme Court decision from 1862 that lays a foundation on this question in the Prize cases, and I am quoting from the opinion, "The proclamation of a blockade," made by President Lincoln at the time, "The proclamation of a blockade is itself official and conclusive evidence to the Court that a state of war existed." This may be an old opinion, but it is current and good law, in my view. Do you know anything that would dispute the finding in this Supreme Court decision that a blockade—if you are blockading someone you are at war with them?

Mr. DAHL. Senator, I think whenever you review old precedent, it is very important to look at the facts and circumstances relating to the words that are used, how they are used now, how they have been used over time. And when you are analyzing and giving advice on the basis of those types of precedents, the words matter a lot. This word has been used much in the public debate. It has many different meanings to many different parties. And so as part of an analysis that you would be doing as the attorney and with the team responsible for those issues, you have to get down to the

exact meaning, what the context was, how it is defined, and what that means for the advice you are giving now.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So, when you say, “this word has been used,” you mean the word, “blockade?” Is that what you are referring to?

Mr. DAHL. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK.

Mr. DAHL. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, you are right. Let’s look at some more up to date legal opinions from the U.S. Government. I am looking at an OLC opinion from January 1961 and reading here: “A blockade is a belligerent act which, as a matter of international law, is ordinarily justified only if a state of war, legal or de facto, exists.” So, there is no other opinion that I am aware of from the U.S. Government that contests that finding, and so, simple question. Do you think that that statement, just that statement, is legally correct?

Mr. DAHL. Senator, again, when we look at words——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I am not asking—with all due respect, I am not asking about facts. I know you have to apply this to the facts, but this is the statement. It says, “A blockade is a belligerent act which, as a matter of international law, is ordinarily justified only if a state of war, legal or de facto, exists.” Do you agree with the statement in the most current OLC opinion?

Mr. DAHL. Yes, and, again, Senator, respectfully, when a lawyer is advising on these types of questions, it is always more than just a simple “yes” or “no,” and it would be imprudent for me to answer it that way.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes. Well, with respect to somebody who practiced law, I find it really surprising that you can’t answer a simple question that has been the basis of Supreme Court decisions and U.S. law. Do you dispute the fact that there is a blockade—a U.S. blockade in effect against Iran right now?

Mr. DAHL. I see that it has been described that way. I don’t have all the facts and circumstances about how the naval assets are spread across the region and what the considerations would be relating to that, but certainly, in the context of an international armed conflict, the quote that you referenced discussed international law. International law, of course, is a distinct body from the domestic law, and sometimes words are used between those two, but they have very different meanings. So you——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, with respect to what I was reading from the OLC opinion and the early Supreme Court case—the Supreme Court case was U.S. law. In case you have any doubt that we have a blockade on, let me just read you from Secretary Hegseth’s statement. He goes on to say, “which is why our ironclad blockade remains in full effect as well.” President Trump: “The blockade is genius. The blockade is 100 percent foolproof.” Are you really doubting that we have a blockade in effect in Iran?

Mr. DAHL. Senator, thank you, and I think the issue is that when you are using those terms in the context of both international and domestic law, there are implications, and you have to analyze what those implications are. For example, we discussed with——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Look. Look——

Mr. DAHL [continuing]. Discussed with Senator Murphy the War Powers Resolution——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Mr. DAHL [continuing]. Which uses different terms around war and conflict.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Mr. DAHL. And when you use the word, “blockade,” it has implications in both international law and domestic law. And so just agreeing to simple framings of that concept is not acceptable for a lawyer. You have to be able to analyze——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense are, to use your words, just engaged in simple framing.

Let me ask you a simple framing question. If a foreign power blockaded the United States, would you consider that an act of war, or would you have to really look at all the facts?

Mr. DAHL. Again, when you are saying “blockades the United States”——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. A blockade. Let me——

[Cross-talking.]

Mr. DAHL [continuing]. Understand what you are——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Let me describe the blockade: “a hundred percent foolproof blockade,” is President Trump. If a foreign power imposed a 100 percent blockade on the United States, do you have any doubt that we would consider that an act of war?

Mr. DAHL. Senator, the question about an act of war, declaration of war is a conversation. The branch—the congressional branch has a say in that. And again, sitting here right now, speaking in terms of hypotheticals, it is just too complicated to give——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Mr. DAHL [continuing]. Simple “yes” or “no” answers.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. With respect, Mr. Chairman, this is not a hypothetical. As the Secretary of Defense, as the President of the United States have said, we have a hundred percent blockade. That is not hypothetical. It is happening as we speak, and we also know that international law as well as previous U.S. opinions say that if you have got a blockade, that is an act of war. And I understand why you and the Administration are ducking this issue. It is because of the War Powers Act, because you cannot—you want to toll the War Powers Act at 60 days and pretend this conflict is over while we have a blockade, which U.S. legal opinion has said means we are engaged in hostilities and engaged in a war, and then you are failing, of course, to comply with the War Powers Act.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. I just have two final points.

The first is for you, Ms. Steel. I was pleased to hear you say that you really want to see where the \$350 billion is coming from because when we were in Seoul earlier this year, this issue came up, but there was no transparency around how the money was going to be spent, and the Administration has not been transparent with Congress about its investment agreements, either with South Korea or with Japan. So, I think this lack of transparency really

raises a lot of questions, so I appreciate that you are very interested in seeing what those dollars—where they are coming from and what they are going to be used for, and will you commit to sharing that information with this committee?

Ms. STEEL. Yes, I do.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Kavoukjian, I just wanted to say I appreciated your thoughtful approach to what you would do to send a message to Russia about the commitment that the United States has and the concern that we have about Russia's actions in the Arctic, in the high north, and their other nefarious activities around the world. So, thank you for that commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Would you like to ask another question? I am waiting for Senator Hagerty.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Feel free.

Senator SHAHEEN. OK. All right. Here we go.

Senator RISCH. Don't go on and on, though.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, let me follow up then, Mr. Kavoukjian. If you are confirmed, one of the issues that has been a real concern in the Baltic region has been Russia's sabotage of subsea cables, and we actually have legislation before this committee—that has actually gone out of this committee that would address a response to the activities that we are seeing from Russia and China, from other adversaries that disrupt our subsea cables. But if you were confirmed, what particular areas of Russia's hybrid war efforts do you think would be important to prioritize in Norway and with the Norwegians?

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. Well, thank you for that question, Senator.

I am familiar with that legislation which you and Senator Risch co-sponsored. It is great to see bipartisan agreement on these issues.

The big priority is the undersea cables, as you pointed out, not just communication cables, but pipelines, and we see—I only have access to open source information right now. If I am confirmed, I will get classified briefings, but just from the open source information, there is so much troubling activity. We need to monitor and counter with our Norwegian allies all of these malign activities that we are seeing. Every day you seem to see in the news a new report about some action, and it is not just the—using the shadow fleets to evade sanctions and to conduct intelligence to monitor cables and oil pipeline locations.

The Russians are subtly challenging Norwegian sovereignty on Svalbard. That is a very important one that needs to be addressed. You are seeing military parades on May 9 on an island that is not supposed to have any military activity whatsoever. We are seeing—just the last week or so we saw a Chinese national arrested on Andoya. She had—was building a 22 ton satellite receiver that she said was for weather data.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KAVOUKJIAN. So, these are the types of activities going on, and I am going to work very closely with our Norwegian allies. I hope that this trip I plan to take right after my introductory speech

will not only give me information about what is going on and allow me to see it firsthand, but you know, traveling like that with the top officials, we will build a bond early on so we can work together very effectively, I hope.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to all of you here today. It is quite an honor to be nominated, and I hope that you all will navigate the confirmation process well.

First, I would like to start off with you, Ms. Steel. You and I have had the opportunity to meet to talk about how important the U.S.-Korea relationship is, and I would like to delve into that with you just a little bit further. It is no surprise that I view this relationship as a key alliance. South Korea is one of the countries that shares not only a deep economic partnership with America, but also a longstanding security relationship with us, and I would say this, too. My daughters are looking forward to going to the BTS concert in your home state.

[Laughter.]

Senator HAGERTY. So it really has a cultural componentry that continues to get deeper and deeper. But if I think about the strengthening ties, one of the key areas that is a great example of that is a project that is happening in my home State—Korea Zinc—and that is a project I want to make certain that you are aware of. It is highly strategic. It has to do with critical minerals. Korea Zinc is coming and making a multibillion dollar investment in my home State of Tennessee, and I would like you to be my partner, if you will, to make certain that you get fully up to speed on the project. And I look forward to you, while you are in Korea, if you are confirmed, making certain that this is a top priority, that it be taken care of well. If you will commit that to me, I would very appreciate your support of the project.

Ms. STEEL. Thank you, Senator. Yes, if I get confirmed—

Senator HAGERTY. Yes.

Ms. STEEL [continuing]. Yes, I will support.

Senator HAGERTY. And I also want to raise an issue that I hope you will be able to advocate for us with the South Korean government. It is also disturbing to me, given the depth of the relationship, that, particularly with some of our technology companies, that they seem to be discriminated against in South Korea. And I would—I think many of us know the situation with Coupang, but it is also an issue with some of the other large technology companies. So I would very much appreciate your attention to those matters as well to make certain that all U.S. companies, technology companies alike, are not treated in any way differently, not just versus South Korean companies, but for example, Chinese companies.

Ms. STEEL. Last year, in November, President Trump and President Lee, they actually set the agreement for Joint Fact Sheet. On that Joint Fact Sheet, they made it very clear that U.S. companies cannot be discriminate, nor they are going to have unnecessary barriers. So, if I get confirmed, yes, I am going to follow up with that clearly because all the Korean companies here in the United

States, they get equal treatment, and I think United States companies in South Korea has to get equal treatments with their companies, too.

Senator HAGERTY. If you are confirmed, you will be carrying the full weight of the United States in your voice, and so your advocacy is going to be absolutely critical.

Mr. Brat, I would like to turn to you and talk with you about your vision for a very important relationship. U.S.-Australia relationship has also been, I think, deepend greatly with AUKUS. It is a major undertaking. I think it is going to contribute not only to our joint national security, but it is also going to be a force multiplier for us in the Indo-Pacific. And I just would like to hear from you how you are thinking about the AUKUS relationship, how you would support it if you are confirmed.

Mr. BRAT. Yes. Thanks, Senator.

I gave remarks on AUKUS Pillar One earlier: full speed ahead, bipartisan support, trilateral nations, bringing U.K. and Europe down into the Pacific on the pivot with our national security strategy. Two billion dollars already put in by Australia just for industrial development prior to submarine development, three subs by the end of the decade, another three to be made with the U.K. down in Adeleine, Australia. So, interoperability, 2,500 Marines we have up north already in Darwin, adding probably 2,000 more coming.

But Pillar Two, just to get what you just said about the economics, Pillar Two is, Australia has a comparative advantage in quantum computing. They take great pride in that. They do cyber work, and they are big on artificial intelligence, and then on the——

Senator HAGERTY. I would also encourage on Pillar Two that it is a great opportunity to bring in other allies——

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. Like Japan——

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY [continuing]. Like South Korea, and I would encourage you to do that. We will be happy to work with you on that regard.

Mr. BRAT. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY. I am going to come to you, Mr. Kavoukjian, to talk about Norway for just a moment in closing. You know, President Trump has emphasized the fact that our European allies need to take greater responsibility for their own defense and contribute more to our collective security. And if you think about how Russia is continuing their aggression in Europe, how China continues to seek to expand its influence in the Arctic region, Norway has emerged as a strong example of the kind of capable and committed NATO ally that the United States needs. Your background with international private sector leadership, your intelligence experience, your personal ties to Norway, I think all of those speak well to strengthening our relations with an important NATO ally like Norway. And I would just like to hear your thoughts in terms of how you would particularly approach Norway in their role partnering with us in strategic areas like the Arctic and the high north regions.

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

I commented on that earlier as well. One of the first things I am going to do when I get to Norway is travel personally up to Kirkenes with the top level Norwegian officials and see firsthand what is going on. I agree with you that monitoring and countering malign Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic region is a critical concern of the United States, and that is going to be top priority for me.

Senator HAGERTY. You know, it is going to be an area of contention. It is evolving as we speak, and I very much appreciate your close attention to it.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, I just wanted to thank Ms. Steel because I know that my staff asked you about the FIRST Global International Competition that is going to be held in South Korea, and you pledged to support that effort if you are confirmed. I really appreciate that. This is an international robotics competition that has about 180 countries that participate from all over, and it actually began—was begun by inventor Dean Cayman in New Hampshire, and it does great work, so thank you and anything I can do to be helpful with that, I am certainly committed.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I will join in that, Ms. Steel.

Thank you to all of you. We appreciate your participation, your family's participation. I think the comments that have been made here that this is an outstanding panel we are looking at. We don't always see this kind of quality all in one place, and we have sure got it this time, and we appreciate that.

For the information the committee, the record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow, May 21, including for members to submit questions for the record.

We thank the committee.

This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DAVID BRAT BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. AUKUS is moving forward after the Department of Defense conducted a review last year that caused unnecessary delays and doubt among our allies. How will you work to ensure that AUKUS stays on track?

Answer. AUKUS is one of our most important security partnerships. It strengthens allied deterrence, interoperability, and burden sharing while improving our industrial base in practical ways. The President has been clear that AUKUS is moving "full steam ahead." If confirmed, I will focus on making sure it delivers on time and continues to strengthen U.S. defense capabilities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DAVID BRAT BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to exploring how you can engage Australian leaders on geothermal energy cooperation?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would ensure U.S. Mission Australia remains firmly focused on preserving America's leadership in energy technology, including exploring opportunities to cooperate with Australia on next-generation geothermal.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with the government of Australia to coordinate and enhance U.S.-Australian support for Pacific Islands countries, including to establish and defend their maritime boundaries amid sea level rise?

Answer. Australia is an essential partner in supporting Pacific Island countries. As I noted in my opening remarks, if confirmed, I intend to work with Australia to build critical infrastructure, support private sector investment and deliver security assistance to our Pacific partners. I understand Pacific Island nations are concerned about severe weather and natural disasters that strike the region with regularity. My approach would be to focus on building resilience, supporting disaster preparedness, and helping communities strengthen their infrastructure to withstand future shocks. Working with Australia, I would seek to deliver solutions that improve long-term resilience and protect livelihoods.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to reviewing the report's assessments and working with Congress to prioritize improved staffing and facilities, including to support the increased U.S. presence in Australia?

Answer. I understand that Mission Australia's current staffing and facilities are insufficient to meet the demands of our expanding Alliance activities, particularly as we deepen economic, defense, and security cooperation. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Department and Congress to review the analysis done to-date, and ensure Mission Australia has the resources needed to advance Alliance priorities and protect and promote American interests. Our investment in diplomatic infrastructure reflects our commitment to this vital partnership.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DAVID BRAT BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Government of Australia to advance U.S.-Australia collaboration on quantum technologies?

Answer. Australia is extremely advanced in quantum. If confirmed, I would partner with colleagues from across the interagency to expand collaboration on quantum technologies with the Australian government, businesses, and universities. I would also support negotiation of a Technology Prosperity Deal, announced during Prime Minister Albanese's meeting with President Trump last October. Such a deal offers an unprecedented opportunity to expand the ambition of our collaboration with Australia to secure true quantum advantage.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to seeking a briefing on existing ties between U.S. national laboratories, quantum parks and startups and Australian entities and on how to calibrate bilateral cooperation to best advance the domestic U.S. quantum ecosystem within 90 days of presenting your credentials?

Answer. Yes. I welcome all opportunities to better understand the breadth of our high-tech collaboration with Australia and, if confirmed, will ensure Mission Australia continues to support these vital partnerships.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to engaging in ongoing dialogue with Congress to ensure bilateral quantum cooperation solidifies investments in American industries and strengthens American competitiveness?

Answer. I applaud the Committee's interest in this element of our relationship and would welcome continued dialogue on how to leverage our bilateral quantum cooperation to protect and benefit American industries and competitiveness and strengthen the U.S. and allied technological edge.

Question. If confirmed, how will you coordinate within the administration to ensure AUKUS receives bonafide follow through?

Answer. AUKUS is one of our most important security partnerships. It strengthens allied deterrence, interoperability, and burden sharing while improving our industrial base in practical ways. The President has been clear that AUKUS is moving "full steam ahead." If confirmed, I will work across the entire U.S. Government, with Administration leadership, with the U.S. Congress, and with Australia to en-

sure it delivers on time, strengthens U.S. defense capabilities, and enhances security in the Indo-Pacific.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ERIC WENDT BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Will you commit to continue providing U.S. assistance to continue further strengthen SPAK's independence and integrity as an independent judicial entity?

Answer. I understand that the United States is providing mentoring and technical support to help Albania dismantle TCOs and their financial networks, disrupt international drug smuggling, and remove organized crime influence over law enforcement agencies. The Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) is a key partner for U.S. law enforcement agencies that have led many of these efforts. If confirmed, I will regularly reinforce with SPAK the importance of maintaining SPAK's independence, integrity, and withstanding interference from politicians, organized crime, and other outside forces.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ERIC WENDT BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. If confirmed, how would you engage with the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) and the broader Albanian judicial system to address the concerning high rate of pre-trial detention in Albania?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support SPAK's efforts to reduce its use of pretrial detention. I understand that even though SPAK handles Albania's highest-level cases against the most dangerous criminals, SPAK's cases accounted for a fraction (less than 5 percent) of new pretrial detainees in Albania in 2025. If confirmed, I also would also encourage a reduction in the high levels of pre-trial detention in cases handled by prosecution offices other than SPAK.

Question. If confirmed, will you work to strengthen SPAK's independence, institutional integrity, and effectiveness as an independent judicial body?

Answer. I understand that the United States is providing mentoring and technical support to help Albania dismantle TCOs and their financial networks, disrupt international drug smuggling, and remove organized crime influence over law enforcement agencies. The Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) is a key partner for U.S. law enforcement agencies that have led many of these efforts. If confirmed, I will regularly reinforce with SPAK the importance of maintaining SPAK's independence, integrity, and withstanding interference from politicians, organized crime, and other outside forces.

Question. If confirmed, how would the U.S. partner with the Albanian government to address the judicial capacity shortages and case backlogs?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage the Albanian government to admit more qualified students to the School of Magistrates, whose graduates are essential to filling the significant number of judicial vacancies. I would also continue to support efforts to help judges decide cases more concisely and efficiently and adopt U.S.-sponsored models that help reduce backlogs.

Question. If confirmed, how would you support anti-organized crime efforts in Albania as Ambassador?

Answer. The Trump Administration has prioritized the eradication of Latin American drug cartels, and if confirmed, I will contribute to this effort by working closely with the Albanian government to target the Albanian transnational criminal organizations that partner closely with these cartels. These Albanian groups are a pillar of criminal support for Mexican cartels, like Sinaloa, and gangs in South America. They support these narcotraffickers by opening new drug markets and smuggling routes, laundering money, and boosting criminal revenue. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to help Albania dismantle these groups, improving our law enforcement assistance and investigative cooperation, with a focus on those Albanian TCOs that most threaten U.S. security. I will support the brave investigators, prosecutors, and judges who work on these cases in the face of threats to their own safety and that of their families.

Question. If confirmed, will you brief my office on your efforts to strengthen due process and the rule of law in Albania?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Albanian institutions to promote transparency, accountability, and credibility in all judicial proceedings. I look forward to working with this committee on this issue.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ERIC WENDT BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Government of Albania to address the problem of extended pre-trial detention and support human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support SPAK's efforts to reduce its use of pretrial detention. I understand that even though SPAK handles Albania's highest-level cases against the most dangerous criminals, SPAK's cases accounted for a fraction (less than 5 percent) of new pretrial detainees in Albania in 2025. If confirmed, I also would encourage a reduction in the high levels of pre-trial detention in cases handled by the prosecution offices other than SPAK.

Question. Given the critical role that U.S. assistance has played in establishing SPAK, how would you employ continued U.S. support to ensure that SPAK can best fulfill its anti-corruption mandate?

Answer. I understand that the United States is providing mentoring and technical support to help Albania dismantle TCOs and their financial networks, disrupt international drug smuggling, and remove organized crime influence over law enforcement agencies. The Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) is a key partner for U.S. law enforcement agencies that has led many of these efforts. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to help Albania dismantle TCOs, improving our law enforcement assistance and investigative cooperation, with a focus on those Albanian TCOs that most threaten U.S. security.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MICHELLE STEEL BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Last October, the administration announced that the United States would permit South Korea to develop a nuclear-powered submarine, to be constructed in the United States. This is an incredibly complex undertaking, and many of the details remain unresolved. What is your understanding of this arrangement, and what role will you ensure that the Embassy plays in making this into a durable agreement?

Answer. The United States will closely work with the ROK to advance requirements the ROK's future conventionally armed, nuclear-propelled submarines, including exploring avenues to source fuel. If confirmed, I will focus on executing the President's vision. At my direction, Embassy Seoul will work hand-in-hand with relevant U.S. Government stakeholders to ensure compliance with U.S. law and non-proliferation obligations and ensure that the U.S. civil nuclear industry benefits.

Question. Do you commit to keeping the Committee fully informed on the details as this agreement develops?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, working with the Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, I do.

Question. China's installations of platforms and an offshore oil rig in the Yellow Sea are concerning examples of Beijing's effort to expand its influence and foothold in strategic seas, similar to its destabilizing South China Sea activities. How will you engage with South Korean leaders as they seek to contain China's destabilizing activities in the Yellow Sea?

Answer. The United States has been consistent and clear about the threat China's assertive behavior poses to the region. If confirmed, I will work together with the ROK to ensure full alignment on the challenges and threats presented by China.

Question. What role do you see for the United States on Yellow Sea issues?

Answer. The United States will continue to counter gray-zone activities and respond to dangerous actions that undermine regional stability. If confirmed, I will

closely consult with the ROK to ensure our Alliance continues to evolve in a mutually beneficial manner to meet common threats and promote regional stability.

Question. What areas for economic cooperation do you see, particularly for mutual investments and strengthening controls on key technologies?

Answer. The 2025 U.S.-ROK Strategic Trade and Investment Deal created a strong foundation for expanded bilateral economic cooperation. I see major opportunities to build on existing Korean investments in American manufacturing and channel new Korean public and private capital into strategic sectors such as semiconductors, shipbuilding, AI, quantum, biotechnology, civil nuclear energy, and advanced manufacturing.

The President continues to champion balanced and reciprocal trade that delivers concrete benefits for American workers and businesses while deepening cooperation with a key ally. I am committed to advocating for the fair treatment of U.S. firms and reduction of non-tariff barriers.

Our partnership also hinges on protecting our collective prosperity. I believe we must continue to enhance cooperation on areas like export controls, investment screening, and trusted governance of critical and emerging technologies to safeguard our shared economic and national security interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MICHELLE STEEL BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. What do you consider to be both the successes and the opportunities for improvement in U.S. policy toward North Korea?

Answer. One major success of U.S. policy has been the development and maintenance of a robust set of tools to enforce existing sanctions and designate new targets, including targets in areas such as cryptocurrency-related crimes and IT worker fraud that victimize Americans. These sanctions tools deny the DPRK funding for its unlawful weapons programs. To improve upon this success and continue to deny the DPRK revenue, the United States should continue to identify new targets and work with third countries to enforce sanctions to protect American citizens and businesses. If confirmed, I will work closely with all U.S. Government stakeholders to do so.

Question. What is your assessment of the U.S. pursuit of complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program?

Answer. The DPRK continues to advance its WMD and ballistic missile programs in violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. The United States continues to pursue the complete denuclearization of the DPRK. Robust U.S. and U.N. sanctions on the DPRK continue to deny revenue and technology to the DPRK that would otherwise be used to advance its unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Question. What steps do you believe the United States can take to tangibly reduce the risk of military escalation and nuclear use on the Korean Peninsula, given the dramatic increase in North Korean nuclear weapons capability?

Answer. The U.S.-ROK combined force posture has successfully deterred the DPRK from large-scale armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula for more than 70 years. We must continue to consult closely with the ROK and Japan to deter DPRK aggression. The United States is fully committed to the defense of the ROK, backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, including nuclear deterrence. As the President and President Lee Jae Myung affirmed, the United States and the ROK will enhance U.S. conventional deterrence posture against all regional threats to the Alliance, including the DPRK.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. MICHELLE STEEL BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. I am concerned by how you spoke to me about perceived uncertainty in the United States-Republic of Korea (ROK) relationship and would like to give you an opportunity to clarify here. Do you believe the ROK should be nervous about United States commitments to the U.S.-ROK alliance?

Answer. No. President Trump has been clear that the United States' commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea remains ironclad, backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, including nuclear deterrence. The U.S.-ROK Alliance has successfully deterred large-scale conflict on the Korean Peninsula for more than 70 years and remains the linchpin of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific. Our Alliance continues to modernize and adapt to evolving threats, and under President Trump's leadership, we are strengthening both deterrence and economic cooperation to ensure the Alliance remains strong for decades to come.

Question. If confirmed, how will you reassure ROK officials of enduring U.S. commitments to South Korea and South Korean security?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage closely and consistently with Republic of Korea officials to reinforce that the United States remains fully committed to the U.S.-ROK Alliance and to the defense of the ROK, backed by the full range of U.S. capabilities, including nuclear deterrence. I will work to strengthen combined readiness, deepen trilateral cooperation with Japan, and expand our economic and technology partnership so that the Alliance remains strong, modern, and prepared to meet evolving regional challenges. Most importantly, I will emphasize that the U.S.-ROK Alliance has preserved peace and deterred large-scale conflict on the Peninsula for more than 70 years, and that this Administration is committed to maintaining that stability and deterrence.

Question. If confirmed, what are the top areas you would prioritize in expanding shipbuilding cooperation with the ROK?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my top priorities would be expanding cooperation with the Republic of Korea on both commercial and naval shipbuilding to help strengthen U.S. maritime capacity and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. I would work closely across the interagency—including with the Departments of War, Commerce, Transportation, Labor, and the National Security Council staff—on workforce development, maintenance, repair, and overhaul cooperation, and resilient maritime supply chains. I also see significant opportunities to deepen collaboration on next-generation shipbuilding technologies and to increase Korean investment in U.S. shipyards, consistent with President Trump's priority of rebuilding America's maritime industrial base and ensuring the United States maintains the capacity needed to compete and deter adversaries.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to working with me to expand collaboration with the ROK on military auxiliary shipbuilding and maintenance?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What concrete steps do you believe the U.S. should take to strengthen cooperation via the U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral?

Answer. The United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan share a critical interest in maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. I believe we should continue taking practical, results-oriented steps to strengthen trilateral cooperation. These steps include expanding information sharing and combined military exercises, improving coordination on missile defense and maritime security, and deepening cooperation on economic security, supply chains, and critical and emerging technologies. I also believe our trilateral relationship should continue building on recent progress institutionalizing regular leader-level, diplomatic, and defense engagements so that our cooperation remains durable and capable of responding quickly to regional threats.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to seeking a briefing on the ROK's adherence and responsiveness to Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty (MLAT) requests?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work to ensure that our Korean allies are meeting our shared commitments under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and other agreements, and I look forward to being briefed further by the Department's experts in Washington and at Embassy Seoul.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to keep the ROK's MLAT compliance on your bilateral agenda?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that both the United States and our Korean allies are meeting our shared commitments under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and other agreements, including through close communication and coordination with the U.S. Department of Justice, and as appropriate, direct engagement with senior ROK government officials.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BROCK DAHL BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. What is the legal standard for determining when a non-international armed conflict exists?

Answer. There are a range of views on what constitutes a non-international armed conflict. An oft-cited international tribunal decision identifies the intensity of the conflict and the organization of the parties as key criteria distinguishing non-international armed conflict from internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence, and other acts of a similar nature. The Supreme Court has separately recognized non-international armed conflicts as involving a non-state actor and a state party to the Geneva Conventions, as distinct from international armed conflicts that involve only state parties to the Geneva Conventions.

Question. Does a military blockade constitute a “threat or use of force,” i.e., an act of war, for purposes of U.N. Charter Article 2(4)?

Answer. As a matter of international law, a military blockade constitutes a use of force for the purposes of U.N. Charter Article 2(4). However, not every blockade will rise to the level of hostilities under U.S. law.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BROCK DAHL BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Independence of Legal Advice

Given the broad mandate and close engagement with senior policymakers, the Legal Advisor's ability to provide independent and objective legal analysis grounded in U.S. and international law is essential to ensuring that U.S. foreign policy is conducted in accordance with legal obligations and the rule of law.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing candid, objective, and independent legal advice, even when such advice may be inconvenient to the administration's policy objectives or time-sensitive diplomatic priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to providing candid, objective, and independent legal advice, working with colleagues in the Office of the Legal Adviser and across the inter-agency.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to protect the institutional independence and professional integrity of the Office of the Legal Adviser, ensuring that legal analysis serves as a guiding framework on Department decisionmaking rather than being used post hoc to justify decisions already made?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with colleagues in the Office of the Legal Adviser and across the inter-agency to provide candid, objective, and independent legal advice, working with colleagues in the Office of the Legal Adviser and across the inter-agency.

Question. Do you affirm that the Constitution provides Congress the sole authority to declare war?

Answer. Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution reserves to Congress the authority to “declare War” as well as the authority to fund military operations. The President has broad authority under Article II of the Constitution to use military force to protect the United States and its citizens.

Question. Do you affirm that the Constitution, backed by U.S. law, provides Congress the sole authority to authorize the use of military force absent an imminent threat to the United States, its persons, or its property?

Answer. Congress is given the authority to declare war under Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution. The President is also granted broad authority under Article II of the Constitution to use military force to protect the United States and its citizens. If confirmed, I will work to faithfully uphold these constitutional provisions governing military action.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BROCK DAHL BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. Will you commit to making personnel from the Office of the Legal Adviser (L) available to brief Congress when L makes a legal determination regarding the implementation of a provision of law that runs counter to congressional intent as stated by the cognizant Members or their staff?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to responding to requests for briefings and information from the Committee and its designated staff, in coordination with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs and consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and the Constitution.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BROCK DAHL BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Section 620I (22 U.S.C. §2378–1) of the Foreign Assistance Act, also known as the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, is a law that prohibits the United States from providing security assistance or arms sales to any country that restrict humanitarian aid. Specifically, the law states that, “No assistance shall be furnished under this Act or the Arms Export Control Act to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.”

Question. Do you commit to following all U.S. laws?

Answer. Yes, I commit to following all U.S. law.

Question. Do you commit to following Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act, noted above?

Answer. Yes, I commit to following section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act.

Question. In your role as Legal Advisor, do you commit to sharing with Congress how Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act will be applied?

Answer. If confirmed as Legal Adviser, I would welcome the opportunity to engage with Congress on issues related to section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act, working with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

Question. The INA states that noncitizens should not be excluded from entry or deported based solely on their “past, current, or expected beliefs, statements, or associations if such beliefs, statements, or associations would be lawful within the United States.” What measures do you plan to take to ensure the State Department is adhering to these First Amendment principles when making determinations about the immigration status of noncitizens?

Answer. Sections 212(a)(3)(C)(ii) and 237(a)(4)(C)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) generally prohibit denying entry to or deporting foreign government officials or candidates solely on the basis of their “past, current, or expected beliefs, statements, or associations, if such beliefs, statements, or associations would be lawful within the United States.” However, under sections 212(a)(3)(C)(iii) and 237(a)(4)(C)(ii) of the INA, others may be denied entry or deported on the basis of their “past, current, or expected beliefs, statements, or associations, if such beliefs, statements, or associations would be lawful within the United States” when the Secretary personally determines that their admission, or presence in the United States would compromise a compelling United States foreign policy interest. I anticipate that the application of these authorities will depend on the circumstances. If confirmed, I would endeavor to provide the best legal advice possible to guide policy-makers in the Department and to implement Secretary Rubio’s policy directives in a manner consistent with U.S. law.

Question. The foreign policy exception under the INA gives the Secretary of State the authority to exclude anyone whose presence in the U.S. he or she believes would have “potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences” or would “compromise a compelling United States foreign policy interest.” These overly broad foreign policy exceptions had been only rarely invoked prior to March 2025 over the course of numerous administrations of both parties, but their use has dramatically increased in the past year. Will you work with the Secretary’s office to provide a breakdown of the nationality, immigration status and specific bases for which the foreign policy exception was invoked?

Answer. If confirmed as Legal Adviser, I would welcome the opportunity to engage with Congress on these issues, working with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

Question. As the State Department's chief legal advisor, what steps will you take to ensure there are guardrails that prevent abuse of this foreign policy exception and the Secretary of State's authority so that it does not, as Judge Maryanne Trump Barry warned, "serve as the talisman behind which Congress may abdicate its responsibility to pass only sufficiently clear and definite laws" that may be enforced against an individual? *Massieu v. Reno*, 915 F. Supp. 681, 702 (D.N.J. 1996).

Answer. If confirmed, I would endeavor to provide the best legal advice possible to guide policymakers in the Department and to implement Secretary Rubio's policy directives in a manner consistent with U.S. law.

Question. Can you describe a scenario in which an invocation of the foreign policy exception would be beyond the Secretary of State's legal authority? Would you agree to provide greater transparency to Congress and the public regarding this authority of the Secretary of State through regular audits and publicly available reports?

Answer. As a nominee, I am not in a position to provide legal advice on potential future situations. If confirmed as Legal Adviser, I would welcome the opportunity to engage with Congress on these issues, working with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

Question. U.S. citizens are not able to enjoy the full extent of their First Amendment rights when they are deprived of the opportunity to be exposed to differing and varied viewpoints. How will you ensure that decisions to exclude or revoke status from someone on the INA's foreign policy grounds are not curtailing the First Amendment rights of U.S. citizens as well?

Answer. The First Amendment provides strong protections against government interference with free speech but does not protect incitement to imminent violence and true threats, for example. If confirmed, I would provide Department policymakers with accurate legal advice regarding the First Amendment and the scope of its relevant protections.

Question. Judge William Young, in *AAUP v. Rubio*, noted that "[t]he Plaintiffs' noncitizen members"—members of the American Association of University Professors and the Middle East Studies Association—"have all been made to understand that there are certain things it may be gravely dangerous for them to say or do, but have not been told precisely what those things are (or are not)." (pp. 136–137) What type of guidance will you give to Members of Congress and the public, or ensure that the Secretary's office provides, to ensure sufficient notice under the Constitution as to what might constitute "a compelling United States foreign policy interest"?

Answer. As a nominee, I am not in a position to provide legal advice on potential future cases.

Question. Secretary Rubio determined that the presence of certain non-citizen researchers and advocates in the United States poses "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States." The State Department has also reportedly directed consular officers to presumptively deny visas to individuals who have engaged in content moderation, fact-checking, and misinformation and disinformation research and reporting. As underscored in a recent Supreme Court decision, these activities are themselves protected by the First Amendment. If confirmed, how would you square these foreign policy determinations and the related visa policy, which purport to "combat . . . censorship," with the burdens they place on First Amendment-protected activities?

Answer. As I understand, this is currently the subject of ongoing litigation in Federal court. Under these circumstances, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this matter.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BROCK DAHL BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Question. If confirmed, will you commit that all legal advice you present to the President, Secretary of State and other executive branch officials on behalf of the Office of the Legal Adviser will be conducted by your office's employees, not outside agencies or entities?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit that the advice provided by the Office of the Legal Adviser will be determined by the Office's lawyers, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the views of counterparts at other U.S. Government agencies.

Question. Does the United States Constitution require a congressional declaration of war before a blockade may be proclaimed? Please explain your legal reasoning.

Answer. Congress is given the authority to declare war under Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution. The President is also granted authority under Article II of the Constitution to use military force to protect the United States and its citizens. If confirmed, I will work to faithfully uphold these constitutional provisions governing military action.

Question. Does narcotics-trafficking amount to an armed attack against the United States? Please explain your legal reasoning.

Answer. Violent drug-trafficking cartels threaten U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, including the safety and security of American citizens, both within and outside the country. If confirmed as Legal Adviser, I welcome the opportunity to engage with Congress, working with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to combat non-traditional threats to our interests and citizens.

Question. Does designation as a foreign terrorist organization authorize the use of military force?

Answer. The President has broad authority under Article II to defend the United States and its citizens, whether the threat emanates from a foreign terrorist organization or other actor. If confirmed, I will work faithfully to ensure the use of military force is conducted consistent with the constitution and applicable law.

Question. In its March 14, 2025, guidance for implementing the Alien Enemies Act, the Department of Justice wrote that immigrants targeted as alien enemies "shall be ineligible for any relief or protection from removal." Do you interpret the Alien Enemies Act as a tool for bypassing U.S. obligations under the Convention Against Torture and that treaty's implementing legislation, both of which prohibit the removal of individuals to countries where they risk being subjected to torture?

Answer. I understand that, as of April 2025, there are over 20 cases pending in Federal court that raise specific challenges to the Alien Enemies Act proclamation and its implementation. The Supreme Court held in one of these cases that individuals subject to removal under the Alien Enemies Act have a right to notice and opportunity to be heard prior to removal in a manner that will allow them to seek habeas relief. As many of these cases continue to be litigation, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further. However, in evaluating the Alien Enemies Act, I would advise the Department to comply with relevant decisions and orders of U.S. courts regarding the interpretation of the Act.

Question. If yes to Question 5, under what circumstances, if any, would you advise this administration deport an immigrant to a country in which they are likely to face torture?

Answer. To the extent the Department has involvement in decisionmaking concerning such a deportation, I would advise it to act in accordance with applicable U.S. and international law, including with respect to the Convention Against Torture, as implemented in relevant part in U.S. law, and related statutes and regulations.

Question. On March 15, 2025, this administration removed approximately 300 Venezuelan and Salvadoran immigrants to El Salvador, on the understanding that these immigrants would be immediately transferred to that country's Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT). Since then, independent investigators have found that many of the immigrants deported to CECOT faced beatings, psychological abuse, forced nudity, sexual violence, punitive solitary confinement and other forms of mistreatment. Do you consider the above-listed treatment to be torture?

Answer. I understand that the U.S. interpretation of treatment constituting torture is reflected in the statutes and regulations implementing the Convention Against Torture. To the extent that any such allegations are credible in light of the objective facts, and if called upon to opine on the legality of the conduct of foreign officials, I would evaluate any allegations consistent with domestic and international law.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you advise the administration take to confirm the independent investigators' findings regarding CECOT and ensure future compliance with U.S. and international laws prohibiting the removal of individuals to countries where they risk being subjected to torture?

Answer. I understand that the United States obtained assurances from the government of El Salvador regarding the treatment of individuals transferred to El Salvador from the United States and that the Department of Justice disputes any allegations of torture. Because these matters remain the subject of active litigation, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

