

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2025

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Steve Daines presiding.

Present: Senators Daines [presiding], Hagerty, Paul, Cruz, Scott, and Cornyn.

Senator DAINES. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order, and I want to thank you all for being here today, because today the committee will consider the nominations of Lou Rinaldi to be Ambassador to Uruguay, Arthur Fisher to be Ambassador to Austria, Roman Pipko to be Ambassador to Estonia, Stacey Feinberg to be Ambassador to Luxembourg, and Nicholas Merrick to the Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

We do have a few members here with us to introduce our nominees. I know Congressman Donalds has a conflict. He had to get somewhere here pretty quick.

So we will let you go first and get your introduction made, and then I know you will have to excuse yourself.

So Congressman Donalds, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BYRON DONALDS,
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM FLORIDA**

Representative DONALDS. Thank you, Senator. I really appreciate you giving us a little bit of deference with things going on in the House.

Senator Daines, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and also Ranking Member Murphy, it is my pleasure to introduce my good friend, Ms. Stacey Woolf Feinberg.

Ms. Feinberg has built a distinguished career, with expertise spanning business media, sports, and entertainment. Ms. Feinberg is currently the Founder of 33 Capital, where she focuses on funding and supporting female entrepreneurs. She is a frequent judge at venture capital competitions, a speaker on various industry panels, and a leader of the JRVC program, the Junior VC Program, at the Women Founders Network. Additionally, she is a co-producer of various Broadway musicals, including the female led Broadway hit, *Jagged Little Pill*. If you did not know, Ms. Feinberg has a little bit of a flair for the dramatic. They are going to love her in Luxembourg.

As a strategic advisor she is deeply committed to empowering women, helping them launch their careers and scale their businesses. Ms. Feinberg started her career at Bob Woolf Associates, her father's pioneering sports and entertainment law firm. They negotiated contracts and managed the careers of over 500 clients, including legendary figures like Larry Bird, Larry King, Joe Montana, and the New Kids on the Block.

She founded the firm's Literary Division, which developed numerous best selling autobiographies. She helped establish Champions as the first national sports bar chain, with locations in Marriotts throughout the country.

Ms. Feinberg has lectured at Harvard Law School, was featured in the Harvard Negotiation Project's Getting to Yes series, attended the Business of Entertainment, Media, and Sports Program at Harvard Business School, and received her B.S. from Northwestern University.

Ms. Feinberg's extensive career highlights her versatility across industries. With her demonstrated leadership and business acumen, she is an excellent candidate to serve as Ambassador to Luxembourg. I am confident they will appreciate her savvy, hard working, and I will tell you personally, exquisite charm as the nation's diplomat to Luxembourg.

It is my honor to introduce to the committee my friend, and you are going to love her today, Ms. Stacey Feinberg. And I yield back.

Senator DAINES. Congressman Donalds, thank you. It is good to have you over here on the Senate side. Thanks for that great introduction.

Senator Cornyn, I believe you have an introduction here this morning.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN CORNYN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS**

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Chairman Daines.

It is a pleasure to introduce Nick Merrick to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic. Nick comes, of course, with stellar credentials, as you might expect. Of course, a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Commerce at UVA, a very fine school where I happened to spend a little bit of time and fell in love with Mr. Jefferson's university a few years ago. He was also a star athlete on the football team, and I just met his son who plays at Texas A&M. He went to Harvard University for his MBA. He is a seasoned businessman with extensive experience in overseeing large scale business deals as Founder and President of Mount Vernon Investments. He served as CFO at Telco Communications Group, where he facilitated the sale of Telco to Excel Communications for \$1.2 billion.

He was pivotal also in facilitating key capital investments and President Trump's Truth Social platform after he was banned from X, of course, formerly known as Twitter.

Nick has spent a lot of time in public service to the Dallas community. He was Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Dallas Police and Fire Pension System, where worked to ensure the stability of pension funds to ensure that our police and firefighters, who serve in dangerous roles every day, are fairly compensated.

He also served as a high school teacher, lending his expertise in business and ethics to high schoolers at Cistercian Preparatory School in Dallas.

Nick's demonstrated leadership in the business world, paired with his willingness to serve his community, make him well qualified to serve our country in his role as Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am grateful to Mr. Merrick for the myriad of contributions he has made to communities across Texas and for his willingness to serve not just Texas but the United States on the world stage.

So congratulations, Nick. It is a pleasure to introduce you, and I look forward to supporting your nomination. And it is great to meet your wife and daughters and son.

Congratulations to all of you.

Senator DAINES. Senator Cornyn, thank you. Before I turn this to Senator Cruz for also introductory remarks, I will say the Daines family is very proud that last night we had a new grandbaby born in Dallas, Texas. So in front of our two Texas Senators, Nick Merrick, and many Texans here, we have got another Texas grandbaby, the Daines family does, which we are very proud of. Both mom and new grandson are doing great, and we are very thankful for that this morning.

Senator Cruz.

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

Senator CRUZ. Well, congratulations on the new baby Texan. Thrilling news.

And good morning to everyone. It is good to see several friends on this panel today, and congratulations on your nominations.

It is an honor today to introduce a great Texan and a friend, Nick Merrick. Nick has a storied history of bringing companies to great success, leading firms, and navigating the business world.

He began his career as Senior Vice President at the Robinson-Humphrey Company before moving into the telecommunications sector, where he served as CFO of Telco Communications Group. He led the company's \$1.2 billion sale to Excel Communications, where he remained as CFO and board member, helping to execute a \$3.5 billion merger with Teleglobe Incorporated.

He later expanded his expertise into health care through his work on the Investment Subcommittee of Texas Health Resources, and into wealth management as a board member of Tiedemann Advisors. He now serves as the Founder and President of Mount Vernon Investments LP, managing over \$1.6 billion in assets.

Nick also served as Chairman of the Dallas Police and Fire Pension System, where he helped stabilize the fund and secure wage adjustments for first responders.

Additionally, he has spent 13 years as a part time teacher at the Cistercian Preparatory School. Nick earned his bachelor's degree in commerce from the University of Virginia and his MBA from Harvard. Establishing a strong foundation in business, investment, co-operation, and leadership.

I have no doubt that he will bring these talents with him to the Czech Republic, and he will continue to cultivate a strong bond be-

tween our two countries. Nick is the right person to serve as Ambassador to the Czech Republic, and I encourage my colleagues to support his nomination.

Senator DAINES. Senator Cruz, thank you.

Now I am going to turn to Senator Paul for an introduction.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RAND PAUL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM KENTUCKY**

Senator PAUL. It is my honor to introduce Lou Rinaldi, the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay.

Lou is the embodiment of the American dream. Born in Italy, Lou's family moved to Uruguay when he was just 4 years old. He grew up in Uruguay and has an intimate understanding of the Nation's people, culture, and history. He would go on to emigrate to our country, to the United States, when he was just 19 years old, and worked his way up from bricklayer to launching his own successful construction company.

While in New York, Lou developed a friendship with a little known businessman—I can't believe this was ever true—a little known businessman named Donald Trump. They are good friends. Future President Trump quickly became a family friend, and in 2013, when Lou's son sadly passed away, President Trump was right there by his side.

I am confident that Lou's business acumen, his leadership skills, his fluency in Spanish, and of course his deep understanding of Uruguay and strong personal relationships with the President and leaders in the region make him eminently qualified to serve as our Ambassador to Uruguay. Lou is exactly the right person to enhance U.S.-Uruguay relations at this critical time, and I am confident he will represent America's interests honorably.

Congratulations.

Senator DAINES. Senator Paul, thank you.

I am going to turn now to Senator Hagerty.

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

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Daines, and congratulations to all of the nominees today. It is wonderful to see such an outstanding board here before us.

I want to take a particular moment, though, to introduce a good friend of mine, Mr. Arthur Fisher, who has been nominated by President Trump to be our nominee to be Ambassador to Austria.

Art is an eighth generation native of Brevard, North Carolina, a successful businessman, and certainly a patriot, a gentleman who understands the importance of hard work, leadership, and civic duty.

Art's nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Austria reflects not only his personal character and professional accomplishments but also his strong belief in the importance of public service and diplomacy that is rooted in principle.

Indeed, Art's family is no stranger to public service. His late grandfather, Dwight Moffatt, served as a medic in the European theater during World War II, and later as a County Commissioner in North Carolina.

Art is a businessman in North Carolina, built a career centered on integrity, strategic vision, and service to his community. He is the President and Broker at Fisher Realty, a family business that he has grown into a regional powerhouse. His firm is known not just for its success but also for its trustworthiness and for its civic engagement, which are very important reflections of the character of Art Fisher.

His commitment to leadership was evident from an early age. At 18, Art was named Mr. Future Business Leader of North Carolina, and one of the Top Ten Future Business Leaders in America. Art's qualities have since been recognized with board positions at United Community Bank, the North Carolina Travel and Tourism Board, and the Boys and Girls Club, as well as Brevard College.

If confirmed, Art will bring to Austria not just experience and knowledge but also the warmth and decency that define the very best of American character. Art has an acute appreciation for the vast variety of cultures and societies of the world, fostered by travel to all seven continents and over 100 countries. That global experience gives Art a cultural sensitivity and a strategic mindset that will serve him well as America's top diplomat in Vienna.

I have no doubt Art will serve our country with distinction, promoting our interests and strengthening our long standing friendship with Austria.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to introduce my friend, Art Fisher.

Senator DAINES. Senator Hagerty, thank you.

Before I start my opening remarks I would just like to clarify, the Chair will be afforded 5 minutes for opening remarks. After my remarks, we will hear from our nominees, and then each member will be allotted 5 minutes for questions.

I also want to echo Chairman Risch's leadership on this committee and remind our attendees this is not an event for audience participation, and any such interruptions will be met with swift removal.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator DAINES. Nominees, thank you for joining us here today and for stepping forward to serve our great country. When we woke up this morning, we woke up in the greatest country in the world, which we are grateful for, and that is a blessing. Also a special thank you to your families for sharing with you the burden of service to this great nation.

Under President Trump and Secretary Rubio, America is back on the world stage, and the days of the United States being pushed around are over. Secretary Rubio is playing an integral role in advancing America's interests abroad, cracking down on foreign terrorist organizations like MS-13 and Tren de Aragua, and has played a vital role in securing the NATO Secretary General's commitment to increased defense spending across Europe. The State Department is also in the middle of reform that is cutting waste, fraud, and abuse, which only strengthens the ability of our diplomats around the globe to fulfill their very important mission.

It is important to remember that the world remains a dangerous place. Enemies of the United States are working to ensure that the United States and our allies do not continue to be a beacon of hope and democracy for those who face tyranny or oppression.

Unfortunately, no city in the world is safe. So far in 2025 alone there have been over a dozen terror attacks throughout Europe. Cities such as Munich, Vienna, and Paris have all seen horrific terror attacks.

While all of you have been nominated to serve with allies of the United States, these attacks show there are challenges no matter where you are stationed around the world. The fact that you are here today shows that President Trump believes you have the diplomatic fortitude, the leadership qualities to meet the challenges that you will face ahead.

Transnational criminal organizations, foreign cyberattacks, trade negotiations, and unfortunately, wayward terrorists will all be complications of your posts. President Trump will need your expertise in advancing U.S. economic and national security interests, serving American citizens abroad, and furthering the Administration's agenda.

Through bilateral trade, investment, and defense cooperation we can increase prosperity and advance regional security far more than a singular country could do on its own, but it will not be without opposition.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the vulnerabilities of Europe's energy grid. Yet, with EU methane regulations, lack of new infrastructure, and the green hallucination, there is an absence of investment into realistic alternatives. There has been commendable progress amongst a select few countries, but there are still significant self-imposed vulnerabilities, vulnerabilities that could be addressed with bilateral investment and a bit of common sense.

Within the next 2 years there will be 16 federal elections across Europe. These are significant targets for Russian cyber operations such as hybrid threats, influence campaigns, and election interference. Cybersecurity offers a new frontier of opportunities for U.S. collaboration and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center.

It will be up to each of you to address these and other challenges while motivating our allies to meet their defense commitments.

Again, I thank you and your families for your willingness to serve, and I look forward to your testimonies.

With that I would like to recognize our nominees for their testimony. Mr. Rinaldi, we will begin with yourself.

**STATEMENT OF LUIGI RINALDI, OF NEW YORK, NOMINATED
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENI-
POTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE
ORIENTAL REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY**

Mr. RINALDI. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Members, and distinguished committee members, it is an honor to be here with you today. I am grateful to President Trump for nominating me to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay,

and to Secretary of State Marco Rubio for his support throughout this process.

I also want to thank my family for their support, including my wife of 50 years, Lorie, who is here today, my three children, Michael, Angela, and Louis, and my seven grandchildren, Ariana, Giovanna, Luca, Roman, Leo, Vincent, and Sienna. And while he is no longer with us, our beautiful son Robert, whom we lost to cancer in 2013, is here with us in spirit.

I grew up in Uruguay, and I know the culture, and I know the people well. In 1973, I walked into the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo as a teenager with almost nothing, and I was issued a visa to the United States. That building inspired me. It stood for hope and freedom. More than 50 years later, I appear before you as the nominee to return to that same building as the United States Ambassador. This is the honor of a lifetime, and I share this with you in the hope that it inspires others.

After immigrating to the United States, I was fortunate to build a successful business and start a family in a country that provided me with incredible opportunities. I am grateful for all that America has given me. I take this responsibility seriously, and I am committed to advancing America's prosperity, strength, and security in close partnership with Uruguay.

From day one, President Trump created a foreign policy vision that puts the U.S. national interest at the center of our foreign policy. It reinforces our strong commitment to reaching peace through strength while putting U.S. values, independence, and safety first.

When Secretary Marco Rubio spoke to this committee, he put this vision into action by creating a simple approach: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?

If I am confirmed, I guarantee that everything we do will advance American national interests and make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

The U.S.-Uruguay relationship is rooted in shared values, common interests, and over a 150 year history. Uruguay is a valued partner that has a large middle class, a stable democracy, and a growing high tech sector. It is the most democratic country in South America.

Uruguay has made it clear: they want to maintain close ties to the United States.

On this solid foundation, I will advance the interests of the United States by focusing on three key areas: enhancing economic ties between our two nations, improving public security in our hemisphere, and working with Uruguay to support democracy and human rights.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. The United States buys over 80 percent of Uruguay's services exports, estimated at a value of \$1.7 billion. Uruguay looks to American companies for investment and expertise. New technologies and industries are growing quickly in Uruguay, and the United States will continue to be a key partner. If I am confirmed, I will focus on cementing the important economic relationship between the United States and Uruguay and expanding commercial opportunities for American companies.

We cannot build long term economic growth for both of our countries without improvements to public security. President Trump has promised to crack down on international criminal group, something the new Orsi administration in Uruguay also supports. I will use every diplomatic tool available to help fight international criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking and money laundering.

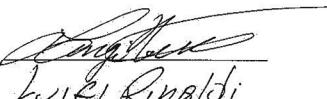
Uruguay is a strong and steady democracy that plays an important role, both in our region and around the world by speaking up for democracy and human rights. For many years, it has been a leader in protecting free elections and fair government in the Americas. If I am confirmed, I will support Uruguay in using its strong voice to stand firmly against the dictatorship in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, and to continue defending the values we share.

I recognize the responsibilities that I have to the American people, the Constitution, President Donald J. Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Congressmembers of the United States. I look forward to continuing our discussions on advancing U.S. foreign policy in Uruguay and answering any questions that you have today.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

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: Luigi Rinaldi
Date: 16-12-2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rinaldi follows:]

Prepared Statement of Luigi Rinaldi

Chairman Daines and distinguished Committee Members, it is an honor to be here with you today.

I am grateful to President Trump for nominating me to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, and to Secretary of State Marco Rubio for his support throughout this process. I also want to thank my family for their support, including my wife of 50 years, Lorie, who is here today; my three children Michael, Angela, and Louis; and my seven grandchildren Ariana, Giovanna, Luca, Roman, Leo, Vincent, and Sienna. And while he is no longer with us, our beautiful son Robert, whom we lost to cancer in 2013, is here with us in spirit.

I grew up in Uruguay and I know the culture and the people well. In 1973, I walked into the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo as a teenager with almost nothing and was issued a visa to the United States. That building inspired me—it stood for hope and freedom. More than 50 years later, I appear before you as the nominee to return to that same building as the United States Ambassador. This is the honor of a lifetime, and I share this with you in the hope that it inspires others. After immigrating to the United States, I was fortunate to build a successful business and start a family in a country that provided me with incredible opportunities. I am grateful for all that America has given me. I take this responsibility seriously and I am committed to advancing America's prosperity, strength, and security in close partnership with Uruguay.

From day one, President Trump created a foreign policy vision that puts the U.S. national interest at the center of our foreign policy. It reinforced our strong commitment to reaching peace through strength while putting U.S. values, independence, and safety first.

When Secretary Marco Rubio addressed this committee, he laid out this vision by creating a simple approach:

Does it make America safer?

Does it make America stronger?

Does it make America more prosperous?

If I am confirmed, I will help advance American national interests and make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

The U.S.-Uruguay relationship is rooted in shared values, common interests, and over a 150-year history. Uruguay is a valued partner that has a large middle class, a stable democracy, and a growing high-tech sector. Boasting some of the strongest democratic institutions in South America, Uruguay can play a regional leadership role to promote the rule of law and guard against democratic backsliding elsewhere in the region. Uruguay's new government has made clear it wants to maintain close ties to the United States. On this solid foundation, I intend to advance the interests of the United States by focusing on three key areas: enhancing economic ties between our two nations, improving public security in our hemisphere, and working with Uruguay to support democracy and human rights elsewhere in the region and around the world.

The United States is one of Uruguay's largest trading partners and an important investor. The United States buys over 80 percent of Uruguay's IT services exports, estimated at a value of \$1.7 billion. Uruguay looks to American companies for investment and expertise. A good example is Google's investment of \$850 million in a data center. New technologies and industries are growing quickly in Uruguay, and the United States will continue to be a key partner. If confirmed, I will focus on cementing the important economic relationship between the United States and Uruguay and expanding commercial opportunities for American companies.

We cannot build long-term economic growth for both of our countries without improvements to public security. President Trump has promised to crack down on transnational criminal groups—something the new Orsi Administration in Uruguay also supports. If I am confirmed, I will use every diplomatic tool available to help fight transnational criminal organizations and all forms of trafficking and money laundering.

Uruguay is a strong and steady democracy that plays an important role both in our region and around the world by speaking up for democracy and human rights. For many years, it has been a leader in protecting free elections and fair government in the Americas. If I am confirmed, I will support Uruguay in using its strong voice to stand firmly against authoritarianism in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, and to continue defending the values we share.

I recognize the responsibilities that I have to the American people, the Constitution, President Donald J. Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and to the U.S.

Congress. I look forward to continuing our discussions on advancing U.S. foreign policy in Uruguay and answering any questions that you have today. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Rinaldi, thank you for your testimony.
Mr. Fisher.

STATEMENT OF ARTHUR FISHER, OF NORTH CAROLINA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

Mr. FISHER. Thank you, Senator Daines.

Chairman Risch, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Shaheen, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration to allow me to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Austria.

And thank you, Senator Hagerty, for your kind introduction and for being not only a mentor but a friend.

Serving America, whether as a United States Senator, member of the armed services, or United States Ambassador, is the greatest honor any of us could ever have.

I would like to thank President Trump for bestowing his confidence in me by nominating me to serve, and thank the American people for their many contributions in making this the greatest land on Earth.

I want to express my heartfelt condolences and love to the Austrian people and the families and loved ones of the victims of the tragic shooting in Graz. We appreciate Chancellor Stocker's leadership in going directly to visit the site and those affected, and remain a steadfast partner to our friends in Austria in condemning any acts of violence.

If confirmed, it will be a pleasure to work with Chancellor Stocker and other members of the Austrian government to further advance our important and mutually beneficial relationship.

Since inception almost 250 years ago, America has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for a multitude of people across the world. Our great nation has also been a warm blanket on a cold night to nations in need, and those aspiring to embody the virtues of democracy.

The relationship and friendship between the United States and Austria is longstanding and strong. This year marks the 77th anniversary of the signing of the Marshall Plan, which helped in the reconstruction of Europe after World War II and set the stage for a relationship between our two countries that continues to grow.

If confirmed, my top priority as Chief of Mission will always be the safety and security of our American citizens. It will be my honor to help each and every one of them, no matter the circumstance, and no matter their political persuasion.

It will also be a top priority to work with both U.S. and Austrian based companies to create additional jobs and investment between our two countries, and to strengthen our important trading partnership that has existed for decades.

Austria was the fastest growing source market for foreign direct investment into the U.S. in 2021, and the eighth fastest growing

market in 2023. As Americans, we benefit greatly from being both the second largest trading partner and export market of Austria, creating thousands of jobs in the United States.

As we approach the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and the Holocaust, may we remember the longstanding historical and cultural ties between Austria and the United States. Following the liberation of the Mauthausen and Gusen Nazi concentration camps by the U.S. Army and the U.S.'s role in Austria's transition to democracy, generations of Austrians have looked to the United States as a friend and liberator.

We celebrate that this relationship is further enhanced by Austria's commitment to combat antisemitism, a leading priority of the Trump administration. With your permission to serve, as a representative of both President Trump and America, I will work persistently to ensure that we remember the past so that it will never be repeated and to perpetuate and respect the religious freedom of every human being.

In appreciation of your service to our great country, thank you for your consideration to allow me to represent America, a nation and international brand that stands for excellence, fairness, prosperity, and hope for a brighter future for all those who believe in the power of democracy.

I welcome and look forward to taking your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes

Printed Name: Jennifer C. FisherDate: 06/12/2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fisher follows:]

Prepared Statement of Arthur Fisher

Chairman Risch, Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Shaheen, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration to allow me to serve as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Austria.

And thank you Senator Hagerty for your kind introduction, and for being not only a mentor, but a friend.

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I welcome and look forward to taking your questions.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Pipko.

STATEMENT OF ROMAN PIPKO, OF FLORIDA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

Mr. PIPKO. Thank you, Chairman Daines and distinguished members of the committee. It is an honor and privilege to appear before you today.

I am compelled to begin my testimony with a tribute to this amazing country. Only in America.

In fact, I know several other people nominated by President Trump who are immigrants to this country and feel the same way. One of them is sitting on this very panel. Each of us has a unique story, but we are all united by our love for this great country.

I came to the United States in 1981, as a poor refugee from the oppressive regime of the former Soviet Union. Now, 40 years later, I sit in front of this august body as a participant in the process mandated by the United States Constitution. Truly, only in America.

This country opened for me unimaginable opportunities, and I am grateful for this honor.

As you can tell, for me these hearings are intensely personal and very emotional, but also profoundly symbolic for what this process and this country stand for.

I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. It is the privilege of a lifetime to represent him and this country, and I am deeply humbled.

I also want to thank this committee and every Senator on the committee for giving me the opportunity to testify today. It is a true honor, and I am grateful for your time and your consideration.

I want to thank every American who helped me on my way, Republican and Democrat, male and female, Black and White. Their generosity will always stay in my heart.

I also want to thank my family, my father and my father-in-law, who I hope can see these proceedings from high above. They would have never thought that this was possible. My mother, who made heroic efforts to bring me to this country. And most importantly, my wife and my three children. They are sitting right here. Without their love and unwavering support, I would have never been here today.

And finally, I also want to thank Estonia and its many people for all they have done for my family and for me when I lived there, in order to prepare me for this improbable journey.

If confirmed by you and by the full Senate, I will be going as the American ambassador to the country of my birth, which has made tremendous strides in the last few decades. Estonia is one of the smallest member countries of the European Union and NATO, but it is a true leader in two of the most critical areas singled out by this Administration.

First, defense spending. I support President Trump for his unprecedented efforts to bring peace to Europe. Estonia has always been a reliable and steadfast ally of the United States. Its soldiers participated shoulder to shoulder with U.S. troops in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries. Estonia invests in U.S.

equipment and hosts U.S. forces on its territory. And now, in response to the request by the Trump administration, it has already committed to spend approximately 5.4 percent of its GDP annually on military expenditures. It is a historic undertaking by Estonia, and makes it a model partner of the United States, as recently recognized by the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense.

The second metric emphasized by this Administration is openness of the country's market for trade and investment. The *Wall Street Journal* and Heritage Foundation 2025 Index of Economic Freedom, which reviews 184 countries of the world, has ranked Estonia eighth in the world and fifth in Europe. These are unparalleled achievements and make Estonia an exemplary partner of the United States.

In addition, the United States and Estonia cooperate closely on cybersecurity, energy, and law enforcement. I look forward to continuing this work, together with the superb staff of the U.S. Embassy in Estonia, in order to confront global challenges and promote shared priorities.

Mr. Chairman, the relationship between the United States and Estonia is strong. If confirmed by the committee and the full Senate, I have three distinct objectives as an ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Estonia.

First, I will protect and strengthen the interests of the United States. Above all, it means that the security and well being of U.S. citizens is my paramount priority.

Second, I will promote, support, and defend the policies of President Trump and his Administration.

And finally, I will promote durable bilateral political, military, economic, and cultural relations between the United States and the Republic of Estonia.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer 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

Roman P. Piro
Printed Name: Roman P. Piro
Date: June 12, 2021

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pipko follows:]

Prepared Statement of Roman Pipko

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor and privilege to appear before you today.

I am compelled to begin my testimony with a tribute to this amazing country. Only in America.

In fact, I know that several other people nominated by President Trump are immigrants to this country and feel the same way I do. Each of us has a unique story, but we are all united by our love for this great country.

I came to the United States in 1981 as a poor refugee from the oppressive regime of the former Soviet Union. Now, forty years later, I sit in front of this august body as a participant in the process mandated by the Constitution of the United States.

This country opened unimaginable opportunities for me, and I am grateful for this honor.

As you can tell, for me these hearings are intensely personal and very emotional, but also profoundly symbolic for what this process and this country stand for.

I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. It is the privilege of a lifetime to represent him and the people of the United States. And I am deeply humbled.

I also want to thank this Committee and every Senator on the Committee for giving me the opportunity to testify in front of you today. It is a true honor, and I am grateful for your time and consideration.

I want to thank every American who helped me on my way. Republican and Democrat, male and female, Black and White. Their generosity will always stay in my heart.

I also want to thank my family. My Father, who I hope can see these proceedings from High Above—he would have never believed that this was possible. My Mother, who made heroic efforts to bring me to this country, and my wife and my three children. Without their love and unwavering support, I would not be sitting here today.

And, finally, I also want to thank Estonia and its many people for all they have done for my family and for me when I lived there to prepare me for this improbable journey.

If confirmed by you and the full Senate, I will be going as the U.S. Ambassador to the country of my birth which has made tremendous strides in the last few decades.

Estonia is one of the smallest member countries of the EU and NATO, but it is a leader in two of the most critical areas singled out by this Administration.

First, defense spending. I support President Trump for his unprecedented efforts to bring peace to Europe. Estonia has always been a reliable and steadfast Ally of the United States. Its soldiers participated shoulder to shoulder with U.S. troops in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other regions. Estonia has long been a vocal leader on the importance of NATO Allies increasing defense spending. It invests in U.S. equipment and hosts U.S. forces on its territory. And now, in response to the request by the Trump Administration, it has already committed to spend approximately 5.4 percent of its GDP annually on military expenditures. It is a historic undertaking by Estonia and makes it a model partner of the United States, as recently recognized by the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense.

The second metric emphasized by this Administration is openness of the country's market for trade and investment. The *Wall Street Journal* and Heritage Foundation 2025 index of Economic Freedom, which assesses 184 countries of the world based on their respect for property rights, judicial effectiveness, and government spending, has ranked Estonia eighth in the world and fifth in Europe. These are unparalleled accomplishments and make Estonia an exemplary partner of the United States.

In addition, the United States and Estonia cooperate closely on cyber security, energy, and law enforcement. I look forward to continuing this work in order to confront global challenges and promote shared priorities.

Mr. Chairman, the relationship between the United States and Estonia is strong. If confirmed by you and the full Senate, I have three important objectives as an ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Estonia.

First, I will protect and strengthen the interests of the United States. Above all, it means that the security and wellbeing of U.S. citizens is my paramount priority.

Next, I will promote, support, and defend the policies of President Trump and his Administration.

And finally, I will promote durable bilateral political, military, economic and cultural relations between the United States and the Republic of Estonia.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Pipko, thank you.
Ms. Feinberg.

STATEMENT OF STACEY FEINBERG, OF CALIFORNIA, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

Ms. FEINBERG. Thank you, Chairman Daines, distinguished members of the committee, and my dear friend, Congressman Byron Donalds, who with all he has on his plate honored me with his gracious introduction today. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Donald J. Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It is the greatest honor of my life to be considered for this role. I am immensely grateful for the confidence President Trump has placed in me.

If confirmed, I pledge to champion America's interests in Luxembourg and work hard to advance America's security and prosperity through an enhanced partnership with them.

First, I would like to take a moment to thank my incredible family who are truly everything to me. I am especially grateful to the person I am lucky to share my life with, Dr. Steve O'Brien, who is here with me today, offering his constant love and support. My greatest achievements are my four children, Robbie, Michael, Bailey, and Joy. Like many women, I chose to pause my career to raise them. I never missed a basketball game or a dance recital. I was the room mom, lunch lady, field trip chaperone, and I even got to read to their class weekly through sixth grade. I am still not sure if it was my dramatic story telling or the homemade brownies. It does not matter. I loved it all and I wouldn't have changed a thing. And today, all four are my best friends.

My grandparents fled the violent pogroms of Eastern Europe in search of safety and a better future. They found refuge on the shores of Portland, Maine. They would never believe that their granddaughter might 1 day become a United States Ambassador. I know they are with my wonderful parents right now in heaven, cheering me on. I will carry their strength, dreams, and profound patriotism with me every step of the way.

My mother, Anne Woolf, was the embodiment of empathy, caring, and unconditional love. My father, Bob Woolf, not only taught me how to be a savvy businesswoman but the overarching importance of integrity, ethics, and trust. As the very first sports agent who pioneered the field of sports law, he was known not only for being a master negotiator but for the manner in which he did it. His motto was "You don't have to be disagreeable to disagree." His word was his bond. He closed deals with handshakes, not pens. His last book, entitled *Friendly Persuasion*, says it all. I will conduct myself in this very same manner while representing President Trump and the American people.

From working alongside my father negotiating contracts for over 500 world famous athletes and entertainers to the world of finance supporting female entrepreneurship, I have strived to make a difference and support endeavors I am proud of. These principles will guide my efforts in strengthening the U.S.-Luxembourg trade rela-

tionship where I hope to facilitate bold new opportunities for both countries, not only in finance and steel but in the exciting industries of the future, including space, satellites, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

Our partnership with Luxembourg is built on our shared values of freedom, security, and the power of free markets. We have so much in common, and I hope to work shoulder to shoulder helping both countries maximize their opportunities. However, this can only be achieved if we are equally focused on safety and security.

Together, we can protect both our nations from China's undue influence and economic coercion. China's aggressive behavior cannot go unchecked. As a major financial center, Luxembourg can and should do more to scrutinize and constrain China's interests within Europe.

I also hope to address China's infiltration of their education system. It is unfortunate that our ally and trading partner renewed its participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2024. If confirmed, I will encourage the Luxembourg government to reexamine their relationship with China.

As a founding member of NATO, I believe the Luxembourg government will honor their commitment to meet their NATO obligations. I am confident they want to ensure our alliance remains strong by paying their fair share, and I look forward to working closely with them to get to President Trump's 5 percent goal.

In closing, if confirmed, the values that have shaped my life and career will be the foundation of my work as Ambassador to Luxembourg. I am humbled and honored that President Trump has entrusted me to advance the shared goals of our two great countries.

I have been blessed to have had a lifetime of extraordinary experiences. However, nothing, nothing compares to this opportunity to represent President Trump, Secretary Rubio, and the United States of America during this monumental time in history.

Thank you for having me today. I would be happy to answer your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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Answer: Yes
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Answer: Yes
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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

Stacey Feinberg
Printed Name: Stacey Feinberg
Date: 6/12/25

[The prepared statement of Ms. Feinberg follows:]

Prepared Statement of Stacey Feinberg

Chairman Daines and Distinguished Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Donald J Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It is the greatest honor of my life to be considered for this role. I am immensely grateful for the trust President Trump has placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to champion America's interests in Luxembourg and work hard to advance America's security and prosperity through an enhanced partnership with them.

First, I would like to take a moment to thank my incredible family who are truly everything to me. I'm especially grateful to have my husband Dr. Steve O'Brien here with me today offering his constant love and support. My greatest achievement in life are my four children Robbie, Michael, Bailey and Joy. Like many women I chose to pause my career to raise them. I never missed a basketball game or a dance recital. I was the room mom, lunch lady, field trip chaperone and even got to read to their class weekly thru 6th grade. I'm still not sure if it was my dramatic story telling or the homemade brownies Who knows? I do know I loved it all and wouldn't have changed a thing. Today, all four are my best friends!

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From working alongside my father negotiating contracts for over 500 world famous athletes and entertainers to the world of finance supporting female entrepreneurship, I've strived to make a difference and support endeavors I'm proud of. These principles will guide my efforts in strengthening the U.S.-Luxembourg trade relationship where I hope to facilitate bold new opportunities for both countries not only in finance and steel but in the exciting industries of the future including space, satellites, cyber security and Artificial intelligence.

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Together, we can protect both our nations from China's undue influence and economic coercion. China's aggressive behavior cannot go unchecked. As a major financial center, Luxembourg can and should do more to scrutinize and constrain China's interests within Europe. I also hope to address China's infiltration of their education system. It is unfortunate that our ally and trading partner renewed its participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2024. If confirmed, I will encourage the Luxembourg government to reexamine their relationship with China.

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In closing, if confirmed, the values that have shaped my life and career will be the foundation of my work as Ambassador to Luxembourg. I am humbled and honored that President Trump has entrusted me to advance the shared goals of our two great countries. I've been blessed to have had a lifetime of extraordinary experiences, however, nothing compares to this opportunity to represent President Trump, Secretary Rubio and the United States of America during this monumental time in history.

Thank you for having me today, I'd be happy to answer your questions.

Senator DAINES. Ms. Feinberg, thank you.
Mr. Merrick.

**STATEMENT OF NICHOLAS MERRICK, OF TEXAS, NOMINATED
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENI-
POTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE
CZECH REPUBLIC**

Mr. MERRICK. Thank you, Chairman Daines and distinguished members of the committee, and thank you, Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz, for the kind introduction.

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Rubio have placed in me with this nomination.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my wife of 35 years, Leslie, and to our four children, son-in-law, and grandson, many of whom are here today. I would also like to acknowledge my late mother, Dr. Judith Merrick, a history professor who instilled in me a love of learning and a deep interest in European history.

I come before you with a profound sense of duty and commitment to serve our great nation and to work to ensure that President Trump's America First agenda is carried out to the fullest. And one of its core principles and a top priority for me will always be to safeguard the lives and well being of Americans in Czechia. Also, since Czechia is both a trusted ally and a vital partner, I am eager to strengthen our bilateral relationship, enhance our mutual security, and promote shared prosperity.

My professional background is that of a businessman. My 40 year career spanned the industries of investment banking, telecommunications, and investment management. The consistent theme in all of my endeavors has been the concept of team victories, the DNA of which goes back to my days of playing college football. I have never wanted to accomplish anything alone, and my most satisfying experiences have been in playing both large and small parts in other people's success stories. That is true for me in business and in non-profit pursuits. For the last 13 years, I have been a part-time high school teacher, and for the last 7 years I have been a Trustee, and 3 year Chairman, of the pension fund serving retired Dallas police and firemen.

If confirmed, I will bring that collaborative instinct to bear in my role as Ambassador and will work with the Administration and Congress to further our partnership with the Czechs. The United States and Czechia share a long history of friendship and cooperation built on a foundation of shared values.

Indeed, 80 years ago, General Patton and his Third Army helped liberate the city of Pilsen in what is now western Czechia, shedding American blood on Czech soil for the sake of freedom. Today, the U.S.-Czech partnership is stronger than ever, and if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that our relationship continues to thrive.

There are many decisions Czechia has made that I admire, and that closely align with U.S. interests. Most notably, since 2022, Czechia has migrated from near complete reliance on Russian nat-

ural gas to almost total Western sourcing, including U.S. procured LNG. The United States has a long history of showing up, supporting our partners, and backing up our rhetoric with actions and resources, and Czechia has demonstrated that in many ways it shares this same genetic code.

If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to enhance the mutual security of the United States and Czechia. Czechia is a steadfast member of NATO, an outsized supporter of Ukraine, and a crucial player in the Alliance's efforts to maintain stability in Europe. I will work to strengthen our defense cooperation, to boost Czechia's NATO defense contributions, and to support Czechia's efforts to modernize their armed forces, such as their recent decision to purchase Lockheed Martin F-35 aircraft in a \$5 billion transaction.

I will also focus on expanding our economic and commercial ties. My career in investment management has given me experience with every investable asset class and many early stage businesses. Today, President Trump's policies, underpinned by the principles of free markets and morally grounded capitalism, are enabling a rare opportunity for expanded wealth creation and truly shared prosperity. My goal is to bring that opportunity to bear for the benefit of America first, and also for our economic partners in Czechia.

Czechia is a dynamic and innovative economy with significant potential for growth, and I will work for the United States' participation in that growth by advocating for balanced trade policies, including right sizing our existing trade deficit, and by facilitating specific opportunities for U.S. businesses.

In conclusion, I am deeply honored to be considered for United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. If confirmed, I will advance U.S. national interests, strengthen our bilateral relationship, and promote American values. And I am confident that we and our Czech partners, as good teammates with like minded principles, can build a safer, stronger, and more prosperous future for both of our nations.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering 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?
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Answer: Yes
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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

Nicholas A. Merrick
Printed Name: Nicholas A. Merrick
Date: 6/12/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Merrick follows:]

Prepared Statement of Nicholas Merrick

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary Rubio have placed in me with this nomination.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my wife of 35 years, Leslie, and to our four children, son-in-law, and grandson—many of whom are here today. I would also like to acknowledge my late mother—Dr. Judith Merrick—a history professor who instilled in me a love of learning and a deep interest in European history.

I come before you with a profound sense of duty and commitment to serve our great nation and to work to ensure that President Trump's America First agenda is carried out to the fullest. And one of its core principles and a top priority for me will always be to safeguard the lives and well-being of Americans in Czechia. Also, since Czechia is both a trusted NATO ally and a vital partner, I am eager to strengthen our bilateral relationship, enhance our mutual security, and promote shared prosperity.

My professional background is that of a businessman. My 40-year career spanned the industries of investment banking, telecommunications and investment management. The consistent theme in all of my endeavors has been the concept of team victories—the DNA of which goes back to my days of playing college football. I've never wanted to accomplish anything alone and my most satisfying experiences have been in playing both large and small parts in other people's success stories. That's true for me in business and in non-profit pursuits. For the last 13 years, I have been a part time high school teacher, and for the last 7 years I have been a Trustee—and 3-year Chairman—of the pension fund serving retired Dallas police and firemen.

If confirmed, I will bring that collaborative instinct to bear in my role as Ambassador and will work with the Administration and Congress to further our partnership with the Czechs. The United States and Czechia share a long history of friendship and cooperation built on a foundation of shared values. Indeed, 80 years ago, General Patton and his Third Army helped liberate the city of Pilsen in what is now western Czechia, shedding American blood on Czech soil for the sake of freedom. Today, the U.S.-Czech partnership is stronger than ever, and, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that our relationship continues to thrive.

There are many decisions Czechia has made that I admire—and that closely align with U.S. interests. Most notably, since 2022, Czechia has migrated from near complete reliance on Russian natural gas to almost total western sourcing, including U.S.-procured LNG. The United States has a long history of showing up, supporting our partners and backing up our rhetoric with actions and resources, and Czechia has demonstrated that in many ways it shares this same genetic code.

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Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Merrick, thank you.

And before I start my questions, an observation. I am very proud of the President in nominating truly five outstanding candidates here to be Ambassadors. Each of you are uniquely qualified to represent our great country in where you will soon be headed, if confirmed. So thank you to the President and thanks to you for saying yes to consider this important responsibility.

I am going to start with Mr. Pipko. Estonia is on the front lines of Russian aggression. In fact, just a few weeks ago, a Russian fighter jet violated Estonian airspace while protecting an illicit oil shipment transiting the Baltic. Two Estonian politicians were also recently arrested after they tried to set up a Russian backed militia in the country. Estonia has banned the import of Russian natural gas and oil products, and sources all of its energy either domestically or from more reliable partners.

Last, they plan to spend over 5 percent of GDP on defense by the end of the decade.

My question, Mr. Pipko, is how can you, as an ambassador, work with Estonia and your fellow diplomats to ensure that the other European nations follow Estonia's example and embrace the reality of the threat that Russia poses?

Mr. PIPKO. Senator, thank you for that question. I understand that you have visited Estonia and Ukraine, so you clearly know all of those issues firsthand.

It has been a strong priority of this Administration to make sure that every member of NATO increases its respective spending on defense, and I fully support that effort.

As you have just said, Estonia not only committed its own resources to defense spending, but it has also been a clear voice within NATO in supporting American call for the increased spending. In fact, some people have called Estonia a megaphone for American requests.

In light of recent demands by Russia, it seems to me that most members of NATO now understand that the very mission of NATO is now being questioned by Russia. I think those issues are going to be addressed at the upcoming summit of NATO at the end of this month.

If confirmed, by this committee and by the Senate, I would certainly make it my priority to work with Estonian government and other members of NATO to make sure that the decisions that are made in the Hague at the end of the month, at the NATO summit, are effectively implemented.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

Mr. Merrick, as you may know, energy security is national security. Recently, after months of legal review, the Czech government is moving forward with construction of two nuclear reactors. Mr. Merrick, how is this a change from Czech's historical energy posture, and is there an opportunity for advancing U.S. investment in European nuclear energy production?

Mr. MERRICK. Senator, thank you for that question. As I mentioned in my remarks, Czechia has migrated completely away from Russian natural gas to U.S. largely procured LNG. And they have

always had nuclear power, so they were not a European country that did not into nuclear or turned away from it. They had nuclear power. They are now building some new plants, and there is also some discussion about some of the small SMR plants going forward.

I would like to point out that an American company, Westinghouse, it is my understanding, is going to play a role in this new reactor, the two that are being built, and also that American companies will also participate in replacing Russian companies in terms of providing nuclear fuel to the existing nuclear plants.

So I completely agree with your remarks about energy security, and I think Czechia has done a great job in that area and in many other areas.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Merrick.

I am going to turn now to Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Chairman Daines.

I want to assure all the nominees that the fact that there is not a lot of filled seats here is a good sign, not a bad sign. I assure you that if any of your nominations were controversial it would be jam packed, so that is great. And congratulations.

There are just a couple of things I want to touch on, and Mr. Merrick, you talked about General Patton, which reminded me, my dad was a B-17 pilot in the Army Air Corps and flew 26 missions over Germany before he was shot down and captured as a POW. And I know he and what Tom Brokaw called “the Greatest Generation” thought that would be the last time the United States would be involved in a land war or a world war, certainly a land war in Europe.

But we see the importance of America’s role in that, but I want to agree with several of you who talked about the importance of NATO members’ investments in their own self-defense. The treaty, in fact, of course, is an agreement for collective self-defense, but it also includes a section, Section 5, which says if one member of NATO is attacked, the others will come to its defense, including the United States.

So this is a very precarious situation. I do not think we have seen a more dangerous time since World War II in the world. And of course, the United States has responsibilities not just in Europe but responsibilities around the world, and most emphatically, in the Indo-Pacific, which could be an existential threat to the United States and our way of life.

Mr. Pipko, I was intrigued by, of course, the fact you are an immigrant, and Mr. Rinaldi. To me it is something we should celebrate in America. And both of you alluded to this—the American dream is still alive, and I think we need to be constantly reminded of that today.

But you also have had a fair amount of experience dealing in Russia. You were born in Estonia during the time of the Soviet Union. And I think one of the things that most Americans maybe do not fully understand is sort of the cultural and historical mindset of the Russian leadership.

President Trump is doing exactly what we would all hope he would do by trying to bring peace to the conflict between Ukraine

and Russia, because they are approaching a million casualties already. And as he said, the dying must stop.

But unfortunately it takes more than one person, one party, to try to negotiate that. Is there anything that maybe you could share with us, based upon your experience in Estonia and dealing in Russia over the years, that could help inform us about how best to think about this potential resolution of the conflict? I am not going to ask you to read Putin's state of mind. That is a very inscrutable thing to ask. But anything you would like to share with us on that topic?

Mr. PIPKO. Thank you, Senator, for your kind words. American dream is clearly well, clearly alive, and hopefully will be that way for at least another 250 years. That is what we are all working for.

I would say two things in response to your question. Number one, I would actually quote the Foreign Minister of Estonia, who, in my mind, said just a few weeks ago, an incredible thing. He said, "We in Europe, were awakened by President Trump, not by President Putin." I think that statement says it all. I think Europe now recognizes that President Trump was right. He managed to change the narrative of the conflict, and I certainly support his efforts to bring peace to the continent. I think it is incredibly important.

The second thing that I will say, which I think echoes a little what Tulsi Gabbard said a few days ago, but I will put it a little bit differently. I am probably one of the few people here who knew personally, very well actually, high level individuals who were negotiating during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I knew the person in the United States who was President Kennedy's advisor, and I knew—I see my time is running out—the person who had the same position in Russia. All I can say, based on my discussions with them, we have to stand firm, very firm, but we have to be creative in order to avoid another crisis.

Senator CORNYN. Well, I appreciate that, and I agree with you that President Trump's call to greater vigilance by our NATO partners, which means not only a financial contribution but a contribution to reestablish deterrence, to me is one of the most important things that we have seen during his tenure as President of the United States. And his reminder that peace only comes through strength, and that weakness is a provocation to authoritarian figures like Mr. Putin and others.

So thank you all. I appreciate it.

Senator DAINES. Senator Cornyn, thank you.

Ms. Feinberg let's talk about Luxembourg. Luxembourg has prioritized its tech sector and encouraged development of AI and other advanced technologies. The country also offers a favorable tax and a regulatory environment, so there are many large companies very happy to invest in Luxembourg.

That being said, Luxembourg also has closely partnered with China on tech development despite the U.S. Government's concerns regarding data security.

Ms. Feinberg, how can you, as an ambassador, encourage high tech innovation and cooperation between the United States and Luxembourg while at the same time maintaining data and IP security?

Ms. FEINBERG. Thank you, Senator Daines, and thank you for that question, and thank you for the time that you gave me yesterday. I appreciate that.

Yes, China is a bad actor. Their intentions are nefarious. Lucifer does not show up looking like the devil. It is difficult to be able to often tell friend from foe. But let me just tell you, the corporate espionage and the deception that they are causing throughout Europe is extraordinary. And honestly, much of Europe, and Luxembourg in particular, I feel—and I say this with humility—are not educated like we are on actually what they are doing. They do not come in the front door. They come in in the crawl spaces. They have things that are very considered innocuous, like their Confucius Institute, which are not really for higher learning. They are for propaganda. Or the Chinese Student Scholars Association. Again, it sounds lovely, but they are educating spies to take the IP and bring it back to China.

We have to work with Luxembourg to help them with investment screening, particularly by the Chinese. The proliferation of Chinese banks is overwhelming. The second largest bank in Luxembourg, that Banque Internationale of Luxembourg, is 90 percent owned by the Chinese. I think if we looked at some others we would see that, as well.

Other things that happened, Nuctech is a Chinese screening company. They are registered in Poland so that they can bid on contracts throughout Europe, including in Luxembourg, and they do all the scanning at ports, plane and train stations. The TSA, of course, here has made them ineligible. That is scary. And again, I do not believe they really understand yet what is going on. And I humbly would like to educate them. It is like watching a movie, and you see the video but not the audio. You do not really get the whole picture.

So I applaud them for filing a criminal suit against Spacety, the Chinese satellite company that was sharing satellite information of Ukraine to the Russians. They shut them down. They are trying their best.

We are the best partner for Luxembourg, for artificial intelligence, for cybersecurity, for space, for all things going forward, because like Luxembourg, we share a stable financial system, a stable government, and we have so much in common. And I believe that we also will be able to help them uncouple from China and also to help enforce the anti-bullying laws that the EU has stipulated, and offer our protection when the Chinese will make it difficult to uncouple. And I will do my best to help accomplish this.

Senator DAINES. Ms. Feinberg, thank you.

Mr. Fisher, of course, as you know, Austria is not a member of NATO, but they can be a good partner, and are a good partner, of the United States on mutual security concerns. Austria and the United States formalized a defense cooperation system through the National Guard State Partnership Program, which creates opportunities for expanded partnerships.

Mr. Fisher, how can the United States work to establish closer defense cooperation with Austria while, at the same time, respecting the nation's longstanding policy of neutrality, and hence not being a member of NATO?

Mr. FISHER. Thank you, Chairman Daines, and I also would like to say thank you to Senator Cornyn for referencing and honoring the Greatest Generation. When we think about it, it is because of the Greatest Generation that we are a free country, that Europe is free, and they essentially saved western democracy, so we honor that.

It is a very important relationship that we have with Austria, very long standing, and we will always respect their neutrality, but they have always been a trustworthy and reliable security partner. We were very happy to see the relationship that was established with the Vermont National Guard in 2021, and we look forward to increasing the relationship as we move forward.

Our goals are in unity with the strength and stability of Europe, not just in Austria but in Europe and the United States, and will certainly, if confirmed, look forward to being a big part of that conversation.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Fisher, thank you.

Mr. Rinaldi, I am from Montana, so I have got to talk about cows here a little bit. In my great State, we have a million people and about 3 million cows. This is an important topic.

But looking at Uruguay's ranchers, farmers, their overall cattle industry, they suffered a collapse due to the \$350 million cow bond scam. In fact, earlier this year, I visited Argentina. I had the opportunity to see the flourishing partnership actually between Montana and Argentine beef ranchers. Who knew that some of these great, beautiful, black Angus I was looking at in Argentina originated in Montana, in terms of their genetics?

Do you think there is an opportunity for Uruguay to establish such a partnership with U.S. ranchers given their cow bond scam they had as a way to rebuild and create a thriving cattle industry?

Mr. RINALDI. Yes. Uruguay is a great partner of the United States, so I think they have a great system with a great relationship with the United States. They mostly have cattle, and they have a culture industry in Uruguay. They had an economy collapse in 2003, and they had some kind of scam going on in Uruguay, some corporate. What information I have is not clear, but I just heard some about this situation.

When I am at post I will look into it. I think we can do some kind of agreement with the United States and the rancher in Uruguay. They are willing to do anything, to work with the United States. They are a very loyal ally to the United States, so they will really work with the United States, and I will encourage them to do that.

Senator DAINES. One more follow up question. This is regarding BRICS. This July, Rio de Janeiro is going to host the annual BRICS Summit, and Brazil and Colombia are both pressuring Uruguay to attend, if not outright join BRICS. Do you perceive BRICS as well as China's Belt and Road Initiative as a concerning partnership for our allies in South America?

Mr. RINALDI. I read something about the China influence in Brazil, government railroad line or some kind of thing, but I do not think Uruguay will appreciate that too much, because Uruguay mostly a United States ally. And China offered them, Uruguay, some military equipment, and they rejected. They bought it from

Brazil and Spain, some fighter jets that Brazilians, they have a lot of American parts in it. So it is supporting America instead of China.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Rinaldi, thank you.

Well, I want to thank you all for providing us with the benefit of your testimony as well as your responses.

Before closing I would like to ask unanimous consent to add any letters of support the committee has received be added to the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE—The information referred to was not received at press time.]

Senator DAINES. I will also note, for the information of members, that the record will remain open from this hearing until close of business tomorrow, June 13, including for members to submit questions for the record.

And with the thanks of the committee and staff here, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:39 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO LUIGI RINALDI BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What measures would you prioritize to effectively rollback Chinese malign influence in Uruguay and the South Atlantic?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain intense focus on how to position the United States strategically to uphold American safety, strength, and prosperity. I understand that Uruguay has a trade relationship with China as an export market. However, I will push back against the malign influence of China to defend American core national security interests and press Uruguayan counterparts to protect strategic sectors from malign influence.

To complement this approach, I will work to offer to our Uruguayan partners compelling alternatives that include items related to security, defense, agriculture, trade, investment, and countering illegal immigration as well as high-level meetings with the U.S. government.

Question. If confirmed, how can the U.S. work with Uruguay to improve law enforcement capacity at the Port of Montevideo?

Answer. Counternarcotics will be an important element of my strategy in Uruguay. President Trump has taken many steps to address the threat of drug-traffickers in the Western Hemisphere. The Port of Montevideo is an important transit point for the global economy but also a point of concern for stemming the flow of drugs. I will work with my interagency partners, leverage State Department programs, and engage with local law enforcement partners to protect the United States from drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations.

Improving Uruguay's capacity to scan cargo is an important area of collaboration. Last October, Uruguay launched a \$42 million investment in U.S.-made Rapiscanners that will improve local capacity to scan cargo. This is an example of both promoting U.S. business and improving law enforcement capacity—an approach I will adopt if confirmed.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO LUIGI RINALDI BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. How is the U.S. supposed to compete with the PRC for stronger economic relations with Uruguay, given President Trump's tariff policies?

Answer. If confirmed, I will maintain intense focus on how to position the United States strategically to uphold American safety, strength, and prosperity, and

outcompete China. I understand that Uruguay has a close trade relationship with China as an export market. However, I will push back against the malign influence of China to defend American core national security interests and press Uruguayan counterparts to protect strategic sectors from malign influence.

To outcompete China, I will work to offer to our Uruguayan partners compelling alternatives that include items related to security, defense, agriculture, trade, investment, and migration management as well as high-level meetings with the U.S. government.

Question. Do you support, as bipartisan members of this committee have in the past, efforts to negotiate a U.S. free trade deal with Uruguay?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with USTR as our lead trade agency to implement President Trump's trade agenda. The United States and Uruguay already have a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and hosted TIFA meetings to improve bilateral trade. The United States enjoys a \$420.2 million goods trade surplus with Uruguay in 2024. According to USTR figures, U.S. total goods trade with Uruguay was \$2.9 billion in 2024.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ARTHUR FISHER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Mr. Fisher, while Austria has committed to eliminating its dependence on Russian gas, it still has a ways to go. How will you engage the government of Austria to get off Russian gas and adopt long term policies that bolster European security?

Answer. Austria's parastatal oil and gas company OMV terminated its natural gas import contract with Russia's Gazprom in November 2024. Direct flows of Russian gas to Austria were further disrupted by Ukraine's decision to not renew Russian gas transit. To compensate for the loss of Russian gas, Austria has purchased liquified natural gas (LNG) and piped gas via Germany. OMV has also signed a long-term LNG supply contract with U.S.-based Cheniere Energy. Furthermore, Austria is building a pipeline expansion to increase the capacity of its gas link to Germany and its access to non-Russian sources. As Ambassador, I will engage the Austrian government and industry to solidify Austria's long-term energy security, especially by promoting U.S. LNG as a reliable and affordable source of energy.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ARTHUR FISHER BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. On June 12, 2025, the Department of State issued a statement congratulating the Russian people on Russia Day. The statement did not acknowledge that the Russian Federation continues its unprovoked war against a democratic Ukraine and did not call for the release of American citizens who remain wrongfully detained by Russia. Do you believe the Russian Federation is an adversary of the United States?

Answer. Secretary Rubio's statement on June 12 expressed U.S. commitment to constructive engagement with the Russian People to end the Russia-Ukraine war and bring durable peace. As President Trump and Secretary Rubio have made clear, there is no military solution to the Russia-Ukraine war. A diplomatic solution is necessary to end the war. In addition to tireless efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war, the Trump Administration has prioritized—above and beyond prior administrations—bringing home Americans unjustly detained in Russia and in other countries.

Question. Will you commit to working with the government of Austria to address Russian aggression in all its forms?

Answer. President Trump has sought peace in the Russia-Ukraine war since day one of his Presidency. The President has stated clearly that he has a range of measures available if Russia is not serious about negotiating to end the war. Austria has been consistently clear in its condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the need for an immediate ceasefire. If confirmed, I will encourage close cooperation with Austria to advance the President's goal of peace. I will take further policy direction from the President.

Question. What specific steps can the United States pursue with the government of Austria to respond to and deter Russian aggression?

Answer. Austria cooperates with NATO through the Partnership for Peace program and facilitates NATO and U.S. military transits. Its government has been clear in its condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine despite its military neutrality. As Ambassador to Austria, I would work to build on this common ground.

Question. What is your understanding of whether the U.S. intends to contribute funds to the OSCE moving forward?

Answer. As Ambassador to Austria, I will not have the policy lead on OSCE as the U.S. Mission to the OSCE has its own Ambassador and team. I understand that the Administration is engaged in a review of U.S. participation in international organizations, conventions, and treaties, as directed in Executive Order 14199, and would defer to decisions made as a result of that process.

Question. Do you see value in the OSCE's work?

Answer. As Ambassador to Austria, I will not have the policy lead on OSCE as the U.S. Mission to the OSCE has its own Ambassador and team. I understand that the Administration is engaged in a review of U.S. participation in international organizations, conventions, and treaties, as directed in Executive Order 14199, and would defer to decisions made as a result of that process.

Question. How will you respond to Austrian concerns about cuts to our foreign assistance and support for peacekeeping?

Answer. I understand that the Administration is engaged in a review of U.S. participation in international organizations, conventions, and treaties, as directed in Executive Order 14199 to best advance American interests through our foreign policy. I would defer to decisions made as a result of that process.

Question. What is your understanding of the IAEA's work and its value?

Answer. As Ambassador to Austria, I will not have the policy lead on the IAEA as the U.S. Mission to U.N. Organizations has its own Ambassador and team. I understand that the Administration is engaged in a review of U.S. participation in international organizations, conventions, and treaties, as directed in Executive Order 14199, and would defer to decisions made as a result of that process.

Question. What precautions should the United States take from your view in intelligence sharing and defense cooperation with Austria?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Embassy enjoys excellent cooperation with Austrian law enforcement authorities. Austria cooperates with NATO through the Partnership for Peace program and has a robust State Partnership Program with the Vermont National Guard. As Ambassador to Austria, I will work to ensure continued cooperation in line with our priorities to consistently safeguarding U.S. interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ROMAN PIPKO BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Estonia is punching above its weight in its efforts in the Gulf to deter and respond to the Shadow Fleet, which Russia they use to evade Western sanctions and keep oil revenues high to fund their illegal war in Ukraine. Recently, a Russian Su-35 fighter jet buzzed an Estonian vessel attempting to interdict a Shadow Fleet vessel in the Gulf of Finland. How can the U.S. better support Estonia and other countries attempting to stymie the Russian Shadow Fleet?

Answer. Estonia is an important partner in protecting U.S. interests in the Baltic Sea. Estonia is also an important contributor to NATO's Baltic Sentry naval deployments in the Baltic Sea, which improve Allies' ability to respond to destabilizing acts by the shadow fleet. Estonia has also implemented full customs control at key land crossing points to prevent Russian sanctions evasion and bolster security.

If confirmed, I will continue the United States' partnership with Estonia to support NATO Allies' ability to counter these acts, consistent with the policies of the Administration.

Question. Mr. Pipko, Estonia is a model member of NATO and understands the true threat that Russia poses to the alliance. How will you work with Estonia to improve NATO readiness on the Eastern Flank?

Answer. Sharing a 200-mile-long border and a long history with Russia, Estonia has developed a whole-of-society resilience and focus on national defense against military, hybrid, and cyber threats—illustrating preparedness for the full spectrum

of modern conflict. Estonia is a top contributor at NATO and an active participant in NATO missions, including hosting Baltic Air Policing missions and participating in Baltic Sentry in the Baltic Sea. If confirmed, I will work with Estonia to ensure it remains and grows as a full-spectrum defense and security partner, maintains interoperability with U.S. forces, and continues to participate in the full range of NATO missions consistent with the policies of the Administration.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ROMAN PIPKO BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Russia Day

Question. On June 12, 2025, the Department of State issued a statement congratulating the Russian people on Russia Day. The statement did not acknowledge that the Russian Federation continues its unprovoked war against a democratic Ukraine and did not call for the release of American citizens who remain wrongfully detained by Russia. Do you believe the Russian Federation is an adversary of the United States?

Answer. Secretary Rubio's statement on June 12 expressed U.S. commitment to constructive engagement with the Russian People to end the Russia-Ukraine war and bring durable peace. As President Trump and Secretary Rubio have made clear, there is no military solution to the Russia-Ukraine war. A diplomatic solution is necessary to end the war. In addition to tireless efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war, the Trump Administration has prioritized—above and beyond prior administrations—bringing home Americans unjustly detained in Russia and in other countries.

Question. Will you commit to working with the government of Estonia to address Russian aggression in all its forms?

Answer. We must continue to deter potential hostile actors, reinforce our collective defense and safeguard shared interests. If confirmed, I will work with Estonia in confronting these challenges.

Question. What specific steps can the United States pursue with the government of Estonia to respond to and deter Russian aggression?

Answer. The United States and Estonia have a strong security and diplomatic relationship, including as NATO Allies. Estonia provides excellent host nation support to NATO forces, including for approximately 700 U.S. troops, which Estonia views as the cornerstone of Allied deterrence. If confirmed, I will work closely with Estonia to increase investments in defense infrastructure, including in cyber, address threats to critical undersea infrastructure, and support Estonia's participation in NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission to deter threats to Baltic airspace consistent with the policies of this Administration.

Security and Defense

Question. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, in particular, have expressed trepidation about rumored changes in U.S. force posture on NATO's eastern flank. What do you see as the value in having US forces on NATO's eastern flank?

Answer. As Ambassador to Estonia, I will not have the policy lead on U.S. force posture as that is led by the Department of Defense. I will work to ensure continued cooperation in line with the Administration's priorities to consistently safeguarding U.S. interests.

Question. Will you commit to sharing Estonia's views on U.S. force posture with senior State Department leadership, the White House, and Congress?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will communicate Estonia's views on U.S. force posture with senior State Department leadership, the White House, and Congress.

Question. As Estonia stays the course on support for Ukraine, if confirmed, will you advocate within the interagency for their ability to support Ukraine?

Answer. Since February 2022, Estonia has provided more support to Ukraine, as a percentage of GDP, than any other country, sending more than \$550 million in military and humanitarian support, representing 1.4 percent of Estonia's GDP. Estonia has committed to providing at least 0.25 percent of GDP to support Ukraine through 2027. If confirmed, I will work closely with Estonia in support of President Trump's efforts to end the war and bring a durable peace to the region.

Question. Would your advocacy include supporting approval for U.S. origin security assistance exports by Estonia, as needed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Estonia to support President Trump's efforts to end the war and ensure continued adherence to the well-established review process for requests to export U.S. origin security assistance.

Question. Historically, Estonia has been on the front lines of Russian threats, especially hybrid ones including cyberattacks and disinformation. The country's resilience and experience are critical to transatlantic democratic defense. As technological aggression continues to evolve, how will you strengthen U.S. engagement with the NATO Center for Excellence and ensure interagency participation in exercises?

Answer. The United States is a founding member of the Center of Excellence and, if confirmed, I will continue to support the Center and its 35 other members (every NATO Ally and EU Member State) to accomplish its important and deeply practical work consistent with the policies of the Administration. The Center's research, training, and exercise programs enable NATO Allies and EU members to counter the increasingly reckless hybrid campaigns that threaten our collective security, including technological threats.

Question. If requested, would you facilitate U.S. cooperation to safeguard critical infrastructure?

Answer. Estonia is an important partner in promoting efforts and best practices to protect critical infrastructure, particularly critical undersea infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. Estonia has endorsed the New York Principles concerning the protection of undersea cables and is an important contributor to NATO's Baltic Sentry. Baltic Sentry is a good example of our NATO Allies providing for their own security. If confirmed, I will continue the United States' partnership with Estonia to share best practices for safeguarding critical infrastructure and support NATO Allies' ability to deter and counter destabilizing acts consistent with the policies of the Administration.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO STACEY FEINBERG BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. How will you engage the government of Luxembourg on fulfilling their NATO defense spending commitments?

Answer. If I am confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Luxembourg's leaders and pressing for far more investment to reach the 5 percent commitment. I will urge them to acquire state-of-the-art defense equipment from the United States to strengthen their capabilities. I will look at areas where Luxembourg defense spending can best contribute to NATO needs. There is a lot we can do with our Allies in Luxembourg, and I look forward to the opportunity.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO STACEY FEINBERG BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Russia Day

Question. On June 12, 2025, the Department of State issued a statement congratulating the Russian people on Russia Day. The statement did not acknowledge that the Russian Federation continues its unprovoked war against a democratic Ukraine and did not call for the release of American citizens who remain wrongfully detained by Russia.

Do you believe the Russian Federation is an adversary of the United States?

Answer. Secretary Rubio's statement on June 12 expressed U.S. commitment to constructive engagement with the Russian people to end the Russia-Ukraine war and bring durable peace. As President Trump and the Secretary have made clear, there is no military solution to the Russia-Ukraine war. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary's commitment to a durable peace that will end the bloodshed. In addition to its tireless efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war, the Trump Administration has prioritized bringing home Americans unjustly detained overseas above and beyond prior administrations.

Question. Will you commit to working with the government of Luxembourg to address Russian aggression in all its forms?

Answer. President Trump has sought peace in the Russia-Ukraine war since day one of his Presidency. The President has stated clearly that he has a range of measures available if Russia is not serious about negotiating to end the war. If confirmed, I will encourage close cooperation with Luxembourg to advance the President's goal of peace. I will take further policy direction from the President.

Question. What specific steps can the United States pursue with the government of Luxembourg to respond to and deter Russian aggression?

Answer. Luxembourg has already taken steps against Russia, applying EU sanctions against Russian capital in the country before the Russia-Ukraine war, freezing approximately \$6.5 billion in Russian assets. Luxembourg committed \$87.64 million in military aid to Ukraine for 2025 and actively participates in Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) meetings. If confirmed, I will support U.S. efforts to work with Luxembourg to continue our efforts to foster an end to the Russia-Ukraine war.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NICHOLAS MERRICK BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. How will you work with the Czech government to advance broader efforts to counter Chinese influence in Central and Eastern Europe?

Answer. Due to the nature of its economic model and aggressive actions, China poses a risk to European markets. Czechia's National Security Strategy identified China as a "systemic challenge" with "adverse implications" to Czech interests, security, and values. The Czech government has taken a firm approach to China and has called out Beijing's support for Russia's defense industrial base. As Ambassador, I will work with the Czech government to advance U.S.-China policy in Czechia and, when relevant to my duties, in the region.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NICHOLAS MERRICK BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. On June 12, 2025, the Department of State issued a statement congratulating the Russian people on Russia Day. The statement did not acknowledge that the Russian Federation continues its unprovoked war against a democratic Ukraine and did not call for the release of American citizens who remain wrongfully detained by Russia. Do you believe the Russian Federation is an adversary of the United States?

Answer. Secretary Rubio's June 12 statement expressed the U.S. government's commitment to constructive engagement with Moscow to end the Russia-Ukraine war and bring about a durable peace. As President Trump and Secretary Rubio have made clear, there is no military solution to the Russia-Ukraine war. A diplomatic solution is necessary to end the war. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary's commitment to a durable peace that will end the bloodshed. In addition to its tireless efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war, the Trump Administration has prioritized bringing home Americans unjustly detained overseas above and beyond prior administrations.

Question. Will you commit to working with the government of the Czech Republic to address Russian aggression in all its forms?

Answer. President Trump has sought peace in the Russia-Ukraine war since day one of his Presidency. The President has stated clearly that he has a range of measures available if Russia is not serious about negotiating to end the war. If confirmed, I will encourage close cooperation with Czechia to advance the President's goal of peace. I will take further policy direction from the President.

Question. What specific steps can the United States pursue with the government of the Czech Republic to respond to and deter Russian aggression?

Answer. In the early days of Russia's invasion, Prague was the first to supply Kyiv with heavy weapons, including tanks, attack helicopters, and air defense systems. Czechia also leads a successful effort to source large-caliber artillery shells with funding predominantly from partner nations, and it has provided battalion-level training in Czechia to roughly 7,000 Ukrainian soldiers. Czechia supports greater European integration for Ukraine and is focused on reconstruction, including rebuilding energy and transportation infrastructure. Czechia hosts the largest

per capita number of Ukrainian refugees in the EU. If confirmed, I will encourage close cooperation with Czechia to advance the President's goal of peace.

Question. Will you support the U.S. facilitating Czech support for Ukraine if confirmed, including through the approval of transfers of US origin security assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the transfer of U.S.-origin security assistance consistent with U.S. law and Administration priorities.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to visiting the Prague Civil Society Center to learn what the organization does?

Answer. If confirmed, I will endeavor to engage with all relevant elements of Czech society—government, civil society, and private enterprise to strengthen our bilateral relationship and pursue Administration priorities.

Question. Do you see value in supporting independent media and civil society in authoritarian countries including Russia and Belarus?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador to Czechia, I will not have the policy lead on Russia or Belarus, as Missions Russia and Belarus have their own teams. The United States stands for free societies, free expression, and free people.

Question. Will you play a personal role in reviewing and making recommendations on foreign assistance programs that involve Czech partners if confirmed?

Answer. The U.S. government process for determining the viability and suitability of foreign assistance programs is housed in multiple agencies and offices within those agencies. If confirmed, I will provide my best judgment from the field on which programs and tools will most effectively advance U.S. policy objectives in Czechia.

Question. Do you see value in the work that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty does?

Answer. Czechia hosts Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) headquarters and broadcast operations in Prague. RFE/RL moved from Munich to Prague in 1995 at the invitation of then-President Václav Havel. Despite this, if confirmed, I will not have the policy lead on RFE/RL, as the organization has its own board and leadership structure. Funding determinations for RFE/RL are made by the U.S. Congress, and RFE/RL is overseen by the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

Question. Will you commit to sharing the Czech government's views on RFE/RL both with the broader Administration and Congress whenever they raise the US supported independent media outlet?

Answer. If confirmed, I will provide my best judgment from the field on which programs and tools will most effectively advance U.S. policy in Czechia. These views and my counsel will be informed by broad engagement with the Czech government and society.

Question. Will you commit to emphasizing China's support for Russia's war in Ukraine in your engagements with the Czech government?

Answer. Due to the nature of its economic model and aggressive actions, China poses many risks in European markets. In line with NATO's Strategic Concept, Czechia's National Security Strategy identified China as a "systemic challenge" with "adverse implications" to Czech interests, security, and values. The Czech government has taken a firm approach to China and has called out Beijing's support for Russia's defense industrial base. I would, if confirmed, coordinate with the Czech government on matters related to China.

Question. If the People's Republic of China economically retaliates against the Czech Republic, as it did in Lithuania, will you commit to advocating for a forceful U.S. response?

Answer. If confirmed Ambassador to Czechia, I will not direct U.S. policy toward China. While those decisions ultimately rest with the White House and interagency leadership positions, I will provide my views and counsel—as informed by broad engagement with the Czech government and the people of Czechia.

Question. Do you support making the Czech Republic eligible for E-1 visas?

Answer. On February 6, 2025, House and Senate bills were re-introduced to add Czechia to the list of E-1 countries. Should the legislation be enacted, the Department will take all necessary steps to begin issuing E-1 visas to nationals of Czechia.

