

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2026

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. David McCormick presiding.

Present: Senators McCormick [presiding], Ricketts, Daines, Scott, Rosen, Shaheen, Kaine, Booker, and Van Hollen.

Senator MCCORMICK. Good morning. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order, and I want to thank you all for being here today, and I want to thank all of you that have put yourself forward to serve our country. Thank you for your service and willingness to serve, and thank you to your families.

Just some ground rules. As we begin the hearing today, this is the long tradition, this committee has a zero tolerance policy on any disruptions whatever.

Senator BOOKER. What about disruptions from Senators?

Senator MCCORMICK. That includes particularly Senators from New Jersey.

[Laughter.]

Senator MCCORMICK. If anyone does choose to interrupt those proceedings you will be removed promptly, and you will be barred from attending any committee hearings for the next 12 months. I appreciate all of you understanding that, and I look forward to a great hearing.

Today the committee will consider the nomination of Donald Blome to be Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Christopher Anderson to be U.S. Ambassador to Kingdom of Cambodia, Douglas Mastriano to be U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, Daniel Perez to be U.S. Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil, and Laurence Socha to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia.

I know some of my colleagues have introductions to make, and I would like to begin by introducing Doug Mastriano to serve as Ambassador of the United States of America to the Slovak Republic. I will do that briefly and then turn to my colleague, Senator Daines, for his introduction.

I could not introduce Doug without first mentioning his wife, Rebecca, known by family and friends as Rebbie, who joins him here today. Doug and Rebbie met as students at Eastern University, near Philadelphia, where Rebbie worked on Doug's campaign for

class vice president. That began with late nights at the campus snack bar and painting the school's famous Graffiti Rock, only to be chased by a determined swan. A campaign partnership became a life long love story. Through 12 moves, nearly 12 years overseas, multiple combat deployments, she served our nation alongside him.

So thank you, Rebbie. I am so glad you are here. And thank you for once again taking the call to service.

It is also a privilege to introduce Doug, not just as a highly qualified nominee but as a fellow Pennsylvanian and a member of the Pennsylvania State Senate, a fellow Army officer who has dedicated his career to serving this country. In the Army, he patrolled the East German and Czech borders during the final years of the cold war. During Operation Desert Storm, our paths crossed on the battlefield. I served with the 82nd Airborne Division while Doug served with the 2nd Armored Cavalry Division. Following the regiment's fight at the Battle of 73 Easting, Doug's regiment advanced to the Euphrates, where it was relieved by elements of my unit. I know that Doug understands the sacrifice that is required of our military families and the importance of capable allies.

Following the attacks of September 11 Doug served as a planner for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and he helped build the coalition that supported the mission from Europe. He spent 4 years in Brussels, where he led multinational intel coordination, operational planning, and strategic assessments across Europe and Turkey. Rising to the rank of colonel, he bravely deployed three times to Afghanistan, serving as Director of NATO's Joint Intelligence Center, leading personnel from 18 nations.

In addition to his service on the battlefield, Doug is a man of letters. He concluded his Army career as a Professor of Strategic Studies at the U.S. Army War College, where he taught strategy and national security to the next generation of senior military leaders. He holds a Ph.D., four master's degrees, and is author of several award winning books on military history and leadership.

Since 2019, Doug has represented the people of Pennsylvania in the 33rd Senatorial District in the Pennsylvania Senate, and he has built a reputation for supporting veterans, first responders, public safety, and strong communities.

The Slovak Republic is an important NATO ally, located at the strategic crossroads of Central Europe, and at a time when that alliance faces significant security challenges, an alliance I strongly support, this position needs a leader with strategic judgment, intimate knowledge of NATO's inner workings, and firsthand experience working alongside our allies, with an unwavering commitment to advancing America's interest. Doug brings that experience, and I am confident he will represent the United States with great professionalism and integrity. I strongly support his nomination, and I urge my fellow members of the committee to support him, support this good man for this important position.

So thank you, Senator, for your willingness to serve.

And let me, at this point, turn to my friend, Senator Daines, for his introduction of Mr. Anderson.

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

Senator DAINES. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Today I truly have the honor of introducing Christopher Anderson, President Trump's nominee for Ambassador to Cambodia. He hails from Barron, Wisconsin, a small town with a population of 3,000, where I am told there are more turkeys than people.

And Chris is a lot of things. He is the husband to Jen, who is sitting right behind him, and father of Charlotte, the 13 month old beautiful little girl in that beautiful dress. But he is also my National Security Advisor on my team. He has served in my office for over 4 years, where he has led on all things related to foreign policy, defense, intelligence, cybersecurity, export controls, sanctions, and veterans affairs.

Chris's long career in national security began in February 2009, when following graduation from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse with a degree in economics he decided to enlist in the Army. He deployed to Afghanistan, where he conducted route clearance and led men in combat environments.

Following his service in uniform, Chris moved to Washington, DC, where he got his first job here in the Senate, working for my colleague and his home State Senator, Ron Johnson. After 2 years with Senator Johnson, Chris moved over to Senator Bill Cassidy's Military Legislative Assistant, where he worked there for 3 years. Upon President Trump's election in 2017, Chris once again answered the call to serve and took a job as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the VA, where he was responsible for the Department's relationship with Congress.

Chris then pursued a master's degree in project management from Penn State University—I said this specifically for the Chairman's benefit—prior to joining my team.

I know the Chairman now understands you are an intelligent man, going to Penn State.

Chris has extensive experience dealing with foreign governments and negotiating agreements, advancing legislation, and managing personnel. He has been one of my most trusted advisors during a tumultuous period in world history, providing steady, insightful advice that has informed much of the work I have done, including here on this committee.

He has traveled extensively across the Indo-Pacific, understands the core issues facing U.S. interests in the region. He sits before us today as an Army veteran, a seasoned foreign relations expert who has a decade of experience working with foreign governments, a committed professional who has spent the last 17 years working on the front lines of U.S. national security.

Chris embodies truly the best of American public service, answering the call time and time again, who will serve in this position with honor, with integrity, and determination. His vast experience and dogged commitment to American interests make him uniquely qualified to serve in this ambassador post.

I spent a number of hours with Secretary Rubio on Monday, as we were traveling from Montana back to Washington, DC. I spoke about Chris to the Secretary, and he specifically said the important role that he will play in Cambodia, a very strategic part of our ge-

ography at the moment, with a lot of needs for the right kind of leader there on the ground.

I am certain our country will be safer, more secure, and more prosperous with him in Cambodia. And we are going to miss having him in my office, but I know my team is incredibly proud, as I am, and excited about Chris's next chapter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you, Senator.

Now, next up, Senator Scott to introduce Mr. Perez.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICK SCOTT,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Great. Thank you.

Today I am honored to introduce all of you to Daniel Anthony Perez, a very good friend of mine, a resident of our great State of Florida, and President Trump's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Danny and his beautiful wife, Stephanie, and their young children are here—nice to see you—are residents of Miami-Dade County, one of Florida's most vibrant regions and an international melting pot, our nation's gateway to South America.

Like many in Miami-Dade, Danny is an American citizen of Cuban descent. He graduated from Christopher Columbus High School, a highly regarded, all boys Catholic school. He earned his bachelor's degree from Florida State University and his law degree from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.

In 2017 Danny won a special election to fill a vacant seat in the Florida legislature. For the last 2 years, he has had the opportunity to be the Florida Speaker of the House. He has served a consequential term as Speaker. I have never seen a Florida House Speaker build deeper relationships with his members or do more to empower the people he leads. The unwavering loyalty of his House members is a testament to Speaker Perez's integrity and character.

Danny has been passionate about several issues over the years, ranging from higher education to helping the developmentally disabled. But I have been most impressed with how Danny has changed the physical conversation in Tallahassee.

In the years since my time as Governor ended, the budget of the State of Florida has grown at an alarming rate. Danny was the first major leader in Tallahassee to say "enough is enough" and insist on fiscal discipline. I have known Danny for many years. Danny is committed to doing a good job in everything he does.

Let me close by sharing the man I come to know. Danny listens when people talk. He is always excited meeting new people and learning new things. He never allows himself to be outworked, and he strives every day to do right for his family, for his community, and for his State.

Brazil is an incredibly important and strategic nation, economically and geographically, and I know Danny will do a great job and go above and beyond to make everyone on this committee and in this country proud of his service as a U.S. Ambassador. I fully encourage all of my colleagues to favorably report him.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID MCCORMICK,
U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Before we turn to my colleague, Senator Rosen, for her opening remarks I would like to just begin by again thanking all of our nominees and their families for your willingness to serve the United States in these important roles at this very challenging moment. From Washington to posts around the world, your work will be central to advancing America's priorities, strengthening our partnerships, and ensuring U.S. diplomacy produces results for the American people.

Mr. Blome, since Hamas' brutal terror attack against Israel on October 2023, the Middle East and North Africa region have undergone profound change. Iran and its network of terrorist proxies has been significantly weakened, and from Syria to Lebanon I now see a region full of unprecedented opportunities. But these opportunities also come with risk. As Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs you will play a critical role in helping this Administration navigate this complex and rapidly evolving landscape. I hope that you, in tandem with our key regional partners, can really help build a safer, more stable, more prosperous North Africa and Middle East while ensuring American national security interests remain at the very forefront of policies toward that region.

Mr. Anderson, our relationship with Cambodia is a challenging one, but I am confident that, if confirmed, you will be up to the task of managing our expanding ties with the Kingdom of Cambodia, while ensuring that we push back on China's growing and malign influence. I am curious to hear your views on how the U.S. can leverage new security and foreign assistance tools to promote lasting peace between Thailand and Cambodia, secure our interests, and counter Chinese malign influence.

Mr. Mastriano, U.S.-Slovakia cooperation is essential in advancing energy security and economic prosperity in the region. As Slovakia and its neighbors turn away from Russian energy, the U.S. is poised—Pennsylvania is poised—to be a lead partner in LNG and nuclear power, especially in the field of SMR technology, which Slovakia aims to adopt from the United States.

The U.S. must work with Slovakia to strengthen NATO's collective defense on the Eastern Flank. And as war rages across Slovakia's border with Ukraine, and Russia continues to threaten escalation against our allies, it is critical that you reinforce the United States' strong commitment to Article V and counter Russian efforts to undermine this alliance.

Mr. Perez, strong and productive bilateral relationships with Brazil are of great importance to the United States. Brazil is the second largest democracy, as you know well, in the hemisphere, is a strategic economic partner, the largest economy in Latin America, and a major non-NATO ally. Last month, the Trump administration designated two of the most violent criminal gangs in Brazil as foreign terrorist organizations. These narcoterrorists pose a direct threat to our national security and regional stability. Equally concerning is China's growing influence over strategic infrastructure in Brazil, especially ports and critical mineral projects. Your

ability to work with Brazil on these priorities will be key to our success.

And last but not least, Mr. Socha, a career member of the Foreign Service. Thank you for your service. The United States' relationship with Gambia has evolved dramatically in the past decade. And people and government of Gambia have worked to build a new future for their country while also dealing with a very painful history. I am pleased to have our nominee for United States Ambassador to the Somali Coast of Africa, The Gambia, with us here today.

With all that said, Senator Rosen, I am going to turn it over to you for your opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JACKY ROSEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, everyone.

And I want to thank all the nominees for your willingness to serve our country, that you have served, and that you are willing to go forward. I also want to thank your families, wherever they are, and I know some of them are here today—we hear that beautiful baby in the back—and we know that they are all supporting you from home.

You have each been nominated at a consequential moment for American foreign policy. Our alliances are under strain. Conflicts in multiple regions continue to threaten global stability, and this Administration has created new challenges for U.S. leadership.

At the same time, the Administration has significantly cut its communication with this committee, making oversight and consultation increasingly impossible. The lack of transparency has been especially evident when it comes to the Middle East. Despite repeated commitments from the State Department, including directly from Secretary Rubio, this committee has only received sporadic engagement and limited information on critical issues impacting our national security, U.S. national security.

Just last month, Secretary Rubio told this committee that the war with Iran had ended. Since then, the President has declared the ceasefire over. Strikes have resumed. And now we are hearing that the President wants the United States to serve as a guardian over the Strait of Hormuz.

We are in a war, with a President promising that we will police critical waterways on the other side of the world, with little to no information from the Administration. Congress and the American people deserve clear, consistent communication about U.S. objectives, our military commitments. We owe that to the men and women and their families who serve our country, and of course, our diplomatic strategy.

Ambassador Blome, I am encouraged that the Administration has nominated a distinguished career member of the Senior Foreign Service to lead the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at such a pivotal time. Having served in both Democrat and Republican administrations, you understand the value of diplomacy, institutional expertise, and congressional oversight. If confirmed, I hope you will prioritize regular, candid communication with Congress and pro-

vide the transparency needed as the United States navigates an increasingly volatile region and yet another protracted war in the Middle East.

Mr. Perez, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Socha, I hope that we can rely on each one of you to be equally committed to open communication and consultation with Congress, whether you are working to support democratic institutions with fewer resources, managing bilateral relationships amid shifting trade policies, or implementing peace agreements that prevent conflicts from escalating. Congress depends on those candid assessments and conversations and honest reporting from our embassies. That work is most effective when guided by facts, professional expertise, and America's interests, not politics.

And finally, Mr. Mastriano, I have serious concerns about your nomination. If confirmed, you would represent the United States, all Americans, to the people of Slovakia, an EU member state, while leading a diverse embassy team. Given your record, I have significant questions that I will be asking about whether you can credibly fulfill that responsibility.

You have denied the results of a free and fair U.S. election. You have supported efforts to overturn those results, used campaign funds to transport individuals to the January 6 rally, compared abortion and your own political loss to the Holocaust. You appeared in an Army War College photograph wearing a confederate uniform, and associated with known Holocaust deniers.

I find it difficult to reconcile that record with the responsibility of representing our country to a close European ally, founded on our shared democratic values. So I look forward to hearing from you how you will represent all Americans, of all faiths, and of all backgrounds, in a way that respects our diversity and democratic traditions.

I want to thank, again, all the nominees for your willingness to serve and for appearing before the committee today. I look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

We will now turn to the nominees for their opening statements, and Mr. Blome, will you begin, please, with your opening statement. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. DONALD BLOME, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Mr. BLOME. Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege of coming before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

I have spent more than 30 years in the Foreign Service, much of that in the countries covered by this bureau, and I am honored that President Trump nominated me for this position. If confirmed I commit to working closely with this committee on our country's national security interests in the Near East region.

I have with me today, my wife, Debbie, and my children, Sarah, Nicholas and Carl. They have shared with me the honor of representing our country abroad, through wars, evacuations, a pandemic, and other interesting adventures. And I want to thank them for their constant support throughout.

The Administration's goals for the Middle East and North Africa are clear: First, to seek real solutions to the region's enduring conflicts including preventing Iran from developing or otherwise obtaining nuclear weapons. Second priority is promoting U.S. economic prosperity, expanding markets for U.S. exports, and creating jobs and investment opportunities for American workers around the region.

Iran is a common thread running through the region's challenges, and absent an agreement, if confirmed, I will continue to advance maximum international pressure on Iran, denying the regime resources and support to fund terrorism and regional aggression.

We also see opportunities. I support the Administration's commitment to build on the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements, which is imperative for regional security and economic integration. Iraq, Syria, Lebanon all provide potentially transformative opportunities today that we must engage on.

We must increase U.S. competitiveness in the region, as every major commercial, technology, infrastructure, and energy projects secured by an American company strengthens U.S. influence while denying strategic opportunities to our competitors.

While we must remain clear eyed about the challenges, we must also recognize the potential for progress that advances American security, prosperity, and global leadership. If confirmed I look forward to working with you on these issues.

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

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Donald Blome

Date: 07/16/2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Blome follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Donald Blome

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the privilege of coming before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. I have spent more than 30 years in the Foreign Service, much of that in the countries covered by this bureau, and I am honored that President Trump nominated me for this position. I appreciate the confidence he and Secretary Rubio have shown in me, and if confirmed, I commit to working closely with this committee, and the U.S. Congress more broadly, on our country's national security interests in the Near East region.

I have with me today, my wife, Debbie, and children, Sarah, Nicholas and Carl. They have shared with me the honor of representing our country abroad, through wars, evacuations, a pandemic, and some interesting adventures. I want to thank them for their constant support.

The Administration's goals for the Middle East and North Africa are clear: First, to seek real solutions to the regions enduring conflicts including preventing Iran from developing or otherwise obtaining a nuclear weapon and bringing sustainable peace to end conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon.

Second, promoting U.S. economic prosperity, expanding markets for American exports, and creating jobs and investment opportunities for American workers around the region. Our relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in particular, are critical in this regard. Several have already made major investment commitments in the United States that will expand opportunities for high-paying American jobs, strengthen critical supply chains, increase U.S. manufacturing and technological leadership, and reinforce regional stability while putting the American people, industry, and security first. Iraqi Prime Minister al-Zaidi just met with President Trump where he affirmed that he is inviting partnering with U.S. companies to expand their business in Iraq, and I understand multiple U.S. companies are lined up to sign major deals with Iraq later this week.

Likewise in North Africa, we are driving energy, infrastructure, and commercial deals for U.S. companies that benefit the American economy, support American workers and exporters, while encouraging regional stability and prosperity.

A common thread running through many challenges the region faces is Iran. Operation Epic Fury achieved a significant degradation of the regime's defense industrial base, missile and UAV programs, and navy. Now, through the ongoing U.S. blockade of Iranian ports and coastline, Iran is losing hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue a day.

At the same time, Iran's illegitimate efforts to institute a regulatory regime in the Strait of Hormuz remain a real concern, one that the world cannot afford to normalize.

Absent an agreement, if confirmed, I will continue to advance this Administration's efforts to impose maximum international pressure on Iran, deny the regime resources to fund terrorism and regional aggression, and coordinate with partners to isolate Tehran diplomatically and economically.

The President has been clear in his preference for peace. Last fall, the President brokered a ceasefire in Gaza that gained strong support from the region's key leaders. By continuing to implement the President's 20-Point Peace Plan including the demilitarization of Hamas, we will create the conditions of enduring security for Israel, the Palestinian people, and our partners and allies in the region.

The President has also been clear that Hamas cannot continue as a military or governing force. He wants a better future for the Palestinian people.

This Administration has prioritized a process to enable Lebanon to be a fully sovereign state for the first time in decades, which will benefit the security of both Lebanon and Israel. The United States has worked diligently with both governments to find a path to peace after decades of Hizballah-driven Iran-supported violence that has robbed the people of Lebanon and Israel of the stability they deserve, and if confirmed, I will continue to support this effort. It is critical the Government of Lebanon make further progress to disarm Hizballah and implement economic reforms that are necessary to unlock a more promising future.

In the midst of these conflicts, we also see opportunities.

It was encouraging to hear Iraq's new Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi say from the White House this week that he is holding firm to a September 30 deadline for Iran-aligned terrorist militias to surrender their weapons to the Iraqi government. The success of this Iraq-led initiative is critical. To dismantle and ultimately eliminate

Iran-enabled terrorist proxies. Iran's malign influence in Iraq not only threatens our interests, but also those of our partners and Allies in the region.

I also support the Administration's commitment to building on the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements, strengthening the partnerships between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco, and the UAE, and building upon historic agreements between Israel and Jordan and Egypt. Promoting normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia and other Arab states is imperative for regional security and economic integration.

We must also increase U.S. competitiveness in the region and provide opportunities for U.S. companies to drive regional integration. Every major commercial, technology, infrastructure, and energy project secured by an American company strengthens U.S. influence while denying strategic opportunities to our competitors. Our enduring relationships in the region and strong position as the partner of choice are a bulwark against efforts by China to extend its influence. We must continue to engage partners in the public and private sectors on the dangers of employing Chinese origin technology and why joining the trusted technology ecosystem is beneficial. The United States will continue to advance the integration of U.S.-led technological, economic, and security ecosystems throughout the region, reduce dependence on Chinese technology and supply chains, and prevent a permanent Chinese security presence in the region.

There are also opportunities for U.S. businesses. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting efforts to implement and build on the historic investment pledges made by the Saudis, Qataris, and Emiratis during the President's visit to the region last year that totaled two trillion dollars in economic exchange, bringing new capital, jobs, and manufacturing opportunities to the United States. In Syria, the fall of the Assad regime and President Trump's historic decision to lift sanctions create tremendous opportunities for U.S. trade and investment. In Libya, our efforts to improve security and stability have created the conditions for ExxonMobil and Chevron to return to the country after more than a decade and sign new MOUs potentially worth billions of dollars.

While we must remain-clear-eyed about the challenges of the region—conflict, terrorism, economic integration, and Iran's continuing attempts to destabilize its neighbors—we must recognize the potential for breakthroughs that advance American security, prosperity, and global leadership. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on these issues. Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.
Mr. Anderson.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Mr. ANDERSON. Good morning.

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today. I am grateful for President Trump and Secretary Rubio's trust in me in nominating me to serve as United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

I need to start off with a big thank you to my wife, Jennifer. She is my rock, and I wouldn't be here today without her support. She is joined, or should I say was, joined by my daughter, Charlotte. I was going to make a joke about leniency on her protests, but she has already been removed.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ANDERSON. I also need to thank my parents, Craig and Ruth Anderson. Their support, investment, and encouragement has been the foundation for my personal development.

It is tough to put into words how it feels to be on this side of the hearing today. As everyone in this room is very aware, I usually spend my time back against the wall, trying not to be noticed.

The opportunity to receive this nomination, and to simply testify before you today is not something that I thought I would ever be afforded. I grew up the son of a tractor salesman and a music teacher, so at no point did I ever see an ambassador nomination in my future, though on the heels of our nation's 250th birthday it does remind me of how lucky I am to be an American.

Over the last 17 years I have worked for three Senators, President Trump's first administration, and served in the Army. I have always worked to protect America's interests, both at home and abroad. If confirmed I pledge to continue to pursue U.S. foreign relations and national security with the devotion that you all know me for. Throughout my tenure with this institution, I have worked with most if not all of your offices. I have always prided myself on free flowing and sometimes frank communication, the management of equities, and my ability to advance the mission without fanfare or publicity.

If confirmed, I plan on employing all of these virtues in service of the United States. I will advance the Administration's core priorities in Cambodia with unwavering commitment and vigor: protecting American citizens, expanding U.S. economic opportunity, and ensuring our engagement in Southeast Asia serves the American people first.

The U.S.-Cambodia relationship is fundamentally in a stronger place than it was just a few years ago—and the momentum is very real. President Trump's leadership in facilitating a ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand opened a new chapter with Hun Manet and his administration. It is an opportunity that the Trump administration is truly building on.

With that said, I will not shy away from the challenges that remain. Continued progress in the bilateral relationship depends on Cambodia taking concrete action on several fronts. My top priority would be dismantling online scams and the criminal networks behind them. These operations have stolen tens of billions of dollars from American citizens. If confirmed I will work with Cambodian counterparts and regional partners to deliver results.

Cambodia has the opportunity to be a growing partner, not a strategic vulnerability. I am ready to serve.

For the respect of the committee's time I will end my testimony there and submit the rest for the record. Thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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

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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



Printed Name: Chris Anderson

Date: 07/16/2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Anderson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Christopher Anderson

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust in nominating me to serve as United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

I need to start off with a big thank you to my wife, Jennifer. I wouldn't be here today without her support. She is joined today by our 1-year-old daughter, Charlotte. I also need to thank my parents, Craig and Ruth Anderson. Their support, investment, and encouragement has been a foundation for my personal development.

It's tough to put into words how it feels to be on this side of the hearing today. As everyone in this room is very aware, I usually spend my time back against the wall, trying not to be noticed. The opportunity of this nomination, and to simply testify before you today are not something that I thought I would ever be afforded. I grew up the son of a tractor salesman and a music teacher, so at no point did I ever see an ambassador nomination in my future. Though on the heels of our Nation's 250th birthday it does remind me how lucky I am to be an American.

Over the last 17 years I have worked for three Senators, President Trump's first administration, and served in the Army. I have always worked to protect America's interests, both at home and abroad, and if confirmed I pledge to continue to pursue U.S. foreign relations and national security with the devotion that you know me for. Throughout my tenure with this institution, I have worked with most if not all of your offices. I have always prided myself on free-flowing and sometimes frank communication, management of equities, and my ability to advance the mission without fanfare or publicity.

If confirmed, I plan on employing all these virtues in service of the United States. I will advance the Administration's core priorities in Cambodia with unwavering commitment and vigor: protecting American citizens, expanding U.S. economic opportunity, and ensuring our engagement in Southeast Asia serves the American people first.

The U.S.-Cambodia relationship is in a fundamentally stronger place than it was just a few years ago—and the momentum is real. President Trump's leadership in facilitating a ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand opened a new chapter with the Hun Manet administration. The Trump Administration is building on that opening.

The United States is Cambodia's largest export market, representing over 40 percent of its total exports. The United States' bilateral Agreement on Reciprocal Trade with Cambodia will unlock new opportunities for American companies, products, and services. In January 2026, the USS Cincinnati made the first U.S. ship visit to Ream Naval Base, marking a significant milestone in renewed military-to-military cooperation. In April, the Trump Administration signed a 5-year, \$36.1 million health memorandum of understanding under the America First Global Health Strategy—targeting infectious disease while building Cambodia's long-term health independence. These are meaningful wins, and I intend to build on every one of them.

That said, I will not shy away from the challenges that remain. Continued progress in the bilateral relationship depends on Cambodia taking concrete action on several fronts.

Dismantling online scams and the criminal networks behind them will be my top priority. These operations have stolen tens of billions of dollars from American citizens and exploited hundreds of thousands in forced criminality, a form of human trafficking. This is both a law enforcement imperative and a humanitarian one. If confirmed, I will work urgently with Cambodian counterparts and regional partners to deliver results.

The United States also remains concerned about human rights in Cambodia—including politically motivated trials and the suppression of free expression and assembly. I will press the Cambodian government to meet its obligations to its own citizens, clearly and consistently.

More broadly, Cambodia is a critical node in our wider Southeast Asia strategy. As Cambodia is the current U.S.-ASEAN Country Coordinator, I will work closely with Cambodia to advance Administration priorities through ASEAN and beyond. ASEAN cohesion and a free and open Indo-Pacific are not abstract ideals—they are the foundation of American security and prosperity. If confirmed, I will work every day to ensure Cambodia is a strong partner in that vision, not a vulnerability within it. I am ready to serve. I look forward to your questions.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Anderson.
Mr. Mastriano.

**STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS MASTRIANO, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO
BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SLOVAK RE-
PUBLIC**

Mr. MASTRIANO. Thank you, Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished members of the committee.

As Chairman of the Pennsylvania Emergency Preparedness and Veterans Affairs Committee it also feels odd being on this side of the committee, but it is an honor to be here before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am deeply grateful to the President for his confidence and for this committee considering my nomination.

I would first like to recognize my wife, Rebbie, for nearly 39 years, through an Army career of great sacrifice, starting off in the cold war and the Iron Curtain Germany, prepared to evacuate in the case of a Soviet attack, where we were told my unit would last 45 minutes, patrolling the Iron Curtain, 12 moves, 12 years overseas, service to the nation that I just cannot describe. Without her love and support I would not be here today.

I am also grateful for our son, Josiah, who cannot be here because he is preparing to deploy to Africa to support America's mission in the Horn of Africa. And he, with his wife, Maddie, and our granddaughter, Brooklyn, they continue our family's tradition of service, which started with my dad, who committed his life to a career in the Navy, two brothers in the United States Marine Corps, and many uncles who served beating back Nazis and militarism during World War II. And their legacy inspired me to commit my life to the Army.

I am also pleased to be joined today by former Legislative Director, Josh Herman, and members of my Senate staff, my Chief of Staff, Melissa, Executive Assistant, Emily, and Constituent Services and Grants Specialists, Dawn, Michelle, and Lisa. Thank you so much for sacrificing your time to be here, taking personal time off to join and support us. Rebbie and I are grateful for you guys.

For more than 30 years I had the privilege of serving our nation in the United States Army, and my assignments took me across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. I served side by side with coalition allied partners in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and even in some of the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union.

I worked closely with our NATO allies around portions of the world and across Europe. I have served in combat, planned multinational operations, helped strengthen NATO's deterrence, in Europe was called upon by the Chief of Staff of the Army to form a deterrence plan for our Baltic allies in Northern Europe, and much of that plan has been in place to help deter Russian aggression against our allies in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I deployed on six NATO exercises to the Baltic region and built friendships there that have lasted a lifetime.

And finally, I taught strategy at the U.S. Army War College.

Senator, thank you for putting the War College on the map this past week. And it has been an honor to wear the uniform in service to this nation.

And as I was fading away and was going to get a sweet Army job, no colonel left behind job we like to laugh and say, I was challenged to get into public service and not just ride off into the sunset. And it has not been easy.

For 30 years I had top secret SCI access. I was respected across the United States Army, referred to as subject matter expert. And to enter the world of politics, you are called everything but a good man.

But my experiences in the United States Army reinforced my belief in our American leadership, strong alliances, and peace through strength. If confirmed, my responsibility will be clear, to faithfully implement President Trump's foreign policy, strengthen strategic partnership between the United States and Slovakia, and advance the interests of the American people.

My priorities will be straightforward. First, I will protect American citizens, interests, and security. Second, I will strengthen our strategic partnership with Slovakia by expanding defense cooperation, enhancing military readiness, and advancing our share security objectives. Third, I will work with Slovakia to strengthen energy security by expanding cooperation in the civil nuclear energy area, reducing dependence on Russian energy—that is a big, important goal there—and creating new opportunities for American technology, investment, and business.

Slovakia is a key, essential, and important NATO ally, at the strategic crossroads, geographically, of Europe. If confirmed, I will faithfully represent the President of the United States, strengthen our alliance with Slovakia, and work every day to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Thank you for the honor of appearing here today. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

Printed Name: Douglas Mastano

Date: 07/16/2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mastriano follows:]

Prepared Statement of Douglas Mastriano

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a tremendous honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Slovakia. I am deeply humbled by the President's confidence in me, and I am grateful for the opportunity to earn your trust and approval to represent the American people in engaging with an important ally in a dynamic and evolving region of the world.

I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to my family, who is here with me today. Their unwavering support has been my foundation throughout my career, and their presence reminds me of the values that guide my service: faith, family, and a commitment to the common good.

I am especially grateful to my wife, Rebbie, who has stood beside me through more than three decades of military service, multiple deployments, years overseas, and the many demands of public service. She shared with me the uncertainties of the cold war in Germany, the challenges of military life, and the sacrifices that service to our Nation often requires of military families. I am also grateful for our son, Josiah, who is now a Lieutenant in the Pennsylvania National Guard, whose support and encouragement continue to inspire me. Any success I have achieved has been possible because of their steadfast support and faith.

Over the course of a thirty-year career in the United States Army, culminating in service as a Colonel, I served in Europe, the Middle East, and Afghanistan in positions ranging from tactical leadership to strategic planning and multinational coordination. I served with NATO allies throughout Europe, participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, helped build international coalition support for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and later served in senior intelligence and strategic positions supporting NATO and coalition operations in Afghanistan. As a professor at the U.S. Army War College, I taught strategic studies and national security affairs, while my academic work focused extensively on European history, NATO, and transatlantic security. These experiences taught me the importance of alliance management, diplomacy, clear communication, and principled leadership—lessons that I will bring with me if confirmed as Ambassador to Slovakia.

These experiences have shaped my approach to leadership and strengthened my resolve to advance American interests abroad. I feel confident my experience has prepared me for this important diplomatic opportunity to lead the U.S. mission in Slovakia. If confirmed to serve as the U.S. Ambassador, I will work closely with teams from across the government to strengthen our bilateral relationship and focus on the following key areas of our alliance.

First and foremost, I will encourage Slovak officials at all levels of government to advance American interests and to promote American values.

Security: The safety and well-being of American citizens in Slovakia will always be my top priority. Beyond that, Slovakia is a vital NATO Ally and security partner for the United States. It makes significant contributions to common security objectives such as combating terrorism, transnational crime, and weapons proliferation. Slovakia plays a critical role in regional and global security efforts, including hosting a NATO enhanced Vigilance Activities Battle Group. If confirmed, I will encourage Slovakia to take proactive steps to meet its defense spending commitment of 5 percent, while promoting regional cooperation to strengthen NATO's collective security. Together, we can ensure that sovereignty and freedom remain the cornerstones of European stability.

Economy and energy: Economic prosperity and energy security are essential pillars of our partnership. The United States supports Slovakia's efforts to diversify its energy sources, and I look forward to continuing to deliver on President Trump's energy policies, particularly through Slovakia's investments in nuclear energy. Slovakia is also home to many American companies that drive innovation and growth, creating jobs and opportunities for both nations. If confirmed, I will advocate for a stable and transparent economic environment that fosters fair competition and strengthens the ties between our business communities.

Outreach to the Slovak public: Diplomacy is not just conducted in government offices—it thrives in the hearts and minds of people. If confirmed, I will engage with Slovaks from all walks of life, sharing American values and policy priorities while listening to their perspectives. From cultural exchanges to educational partnerships, I will work to deepen the people-to-people connections that form the bedrock of our alliance.

Finally, I will lead our mission team with integrity, purpose, and a spirit of collaboration. The United States Embassy in Bratislava is a beacon of American inter-

ests and values, and I will work diligently to ensure that our team continues to advance our shared goals and deliver results that strengthen the U.S.-Slovakia relationship.

Chairman, Ranking Member, this is a pivotal moment. Slovakia is not just a NATO ally—it is a civilizational partner in renewing the values that unite the West: faith, family, freedom, and sovereignty. If confirmed, I will approach this role with humility, determination, and a deep sense of responsibility to uphold these principles and advance the interests of the American people.

Thank you for the honor of appearing before you today. I look forward to answering your questions and working together to ensure that the United States and Slovakia continue to thrive as allies, partners, and friends.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

Mr. Perez.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL PEREZ, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL

Mr. PEREZ. Thank you.

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today, and I am grateful for your time and your service to this nation.

I am deeply honored that President Trump has nominated me to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil, and I thank Secretary Rubio for his confidence and his friendship.

Senator Scott, thank you for your generous introduction and your dedication to Florida and to this country. It is a constant source of inspiration.

To my wife, my three children, and my parents that sit behind me, thank you for your continued support.

Brazil is not simply our largest trading partner in South America. It is a country of continental scale, extraordinary natural wealth, and growing strategic consequence, one whose trajectory over the coming years will shape the security, prosperity, and influence of the entire Western Hemisphere.

The stakes are high, and the opportunities are real. Brazil holds vast reserves of critical minerals essential to American economic strength and national security. It sits at the center of hemispheric trade, energy, and infrastructure. And it faces real security challenges, from transnational criminal organizations that fuel drug flows threatening American communities to the expanding footprint of outside powers competing for influence across the region. How the United States engages Brazil in the years ahead will matter enormously.

I bring to this role a deep belief in the power of relationships. Growing up and serving in Miami-Dade, one of the most vibrant multicultural communities in the world, taught me how to listen, how to find common ground, and how to build trust across different cultures. As Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, I learned that clarity, integrity, and follow through are the foundations of effective governance. I will bring those same principles to the Embassy in Brasilia.

My highest priorities, if confirmed, will be the protection of American citizens in Brazil, the advancement of our national inter-

ests in trade and investment, the disruption of narcotics trafficking and transnational crime, and the building of resilient partnerships that serve the American economy and the American worker.

I will also support Brazil's democratic institutions and press for conditions that allow free and fair elections and freedom of expression, because a stable, democratic Brazil is a better partner for the United States.

The opportunity, if confirmed, to represent the United States of America abroad is the privilege of a lifetime. I pledge to this committee that I will work tirelessly to advance our national interests, strengthen this critical partnership, and make our country proud.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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Answer: Yes

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Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

Printed Name:



Daniel Perez

Date:

07/16/2026

[The prepared statement of Mr. Perez follows:]

Prepared Statement of Daniel Perez

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The opportunity to represent the United States of America abroad is the privilege of a lifetime. I pledge to this committee that I will work tirelessly to advance our national interests, strengthen this critical partnership, and make our country proud.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

Mr. Socha.

STATEMENT OF LAURENCE SOCHA, OF ILLINOIS, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

Mr. SOCHA. Thank you.

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished members of this committee, I am grateful to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by President Trump's nomination and the confidence of Secretary Rubio to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia. If confirmed, I pledge to advance American interests, strengthen our bilateral partnership, and represent the values that define our nation.

I am here today because of the hard work of a kid who minded his father's store in Chicopee, Massachusetts, during the Great Depression, because an Italian-American family escaped Mussolini's fascism in 1930, and because a nurse and a pharmacist fell in love at a hospital in Chicago 50 years ago. My grandparents and parents taught me the value of integrity and the importance of hard

work. Every day of their lives, they supported the dreams of my brother, sister, and me.

Together with my wife, Denice, who I am grateful said yes to me and this journey 15 years ago, I try to follow their example for our boys, Santiago and Marcelo. They are here today to watch their dad participate in the constitutional process of the country that gave the Stachowicz, the Sochas, and the Bonavitas the home we all love so much.

I have been privileged to represent the United States in 12 countries across four continents, dedicating a third of my career to strengthening U.S. relationships in Africa. I have spent most of that career sharing the American story with foreign audiences, alongside my outstanding Foreign Service colleagues and our inter-agency partners. While I am clear eyed about the security challenges I witnessed in Nigeria and Somalia, the majority of African voices I heard were positive regarding Africa's future.

The Gambia stands as an example of democratic transformation in West Africa. In 2016, after 22 years of authoritarian rule, the Gambian people courageously voted for and achieved the country's first democratic transition of power since independence. The Gambia's progress serves as a positive example of what is possible.

If confirmed, I will have no higher priority in The Gambia than the safety and security of U.S. citizens. This includes our Mission team doing extraordinary work in Banjul and the Peace Corps volunteers who serve in communities across the country. Their dedication and professionalism, alongside that of our locally employed staff, advance American interests every day.

I would also work to deepen our economic partnerships. The Gambia's strategic location on the Atlantic coast, its deep water port and river present significant opportunities for American investment. I would advocate for American businesses in The Gambia, work to remove non-tariff barriers, and promote an environment where American enterprise can create jobs and advance prosperity for both our countries.

In addition, I would prioritize American security interests. The Gambia has proven itself a reliable partner in combating transnational threats. It contributes troops to peacekeeping missions and has consistently supported U.S. positions in international fora. If confirmed I would work with The Gambia to assume an increasingly active role in advancing regional peace and security.

The challenges facing The Gambia are significant. Poverty remains widespread. Youth unemployment drives irregular migration. The Gambian government faces severe resource constraints. These challenges create vulnerabilities that our strategic competitors, particularly China, are eager to exploit. The United States supports The Gambia because we believe in the Gambian people's right to determine their own future, to live in dignity and freedom, and to build prosperity through democratic governance and economic prosperity. This, if confirmed, is the partnership I seek to advance.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes

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

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Laurence Socha

Date: 07/16/2016

[The prepared statement of Mr. Socha follows:]

Prepared Statement of Laurence Socha

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am grateful to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by President Trump's nomination and the confidence of Secretary Rubio to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia. If confirmed, I pledge to advance American interests, strengthen our bilateral partnership, and represent the values that define our nation.

I am here today because of the hard work of a kid who minded his father's store in Chicopee, Massachusetts during the Great Depression, because an Italian American family escaped Mussolini's fascism in 1930, and because a nurse and pharmacist fell in love at a hospital in Chicago 50 years ago. My grandparents and parents taught me the value of integrity and the importance of hard work. Every day of their lives, they supported the dreams of my brother, sister, and me. Together with my wife, Denice, who I am grateful said yes to this journey 15 years ago, I try to follow their example for our boys, Santiago and Marcelo. With their mom, they are here today to watch their dad participate in the constitutional process of the country that gave the Stachowicz, the Bonavitas, and the Sochas the home we all love so much.

I have been privileged to represent the United States in 12 countries across four continents, dedicating a third of my career to strengthening U.S. relationships in Africa. I have spent most of that career sharing the American story with foreign audiences, alongside outstanding members of the Foreign Service and our inter-agency colleagues. While I am clear-eyed about the security challenges I saw in Nigeria and Somalia, the majority of African voices I heard were positive regarding Africa's future.

The Gambia stands as an example of democratic transformation in West Africa. In 2016, after 22 years of authoritarian rule, the Gambian people courageously voted for change and achieved the country's first democratic transfer of power since independence. In a region often challenged by instability, violent extremism, and democratic backsliding, The Gambia's progress serves as a positive example of what is possible.

If confirmed, I will have no higher priority in The Gambia than the safety and security of U.S. citizens. This includes our Mission team doing extraordinary work in Banjul and the Peace Corps volunteers who serve in communities across the country. Their dedication and professionalism, paired with that of our talented locally employed staff, advance American interests every day.

I would also work to deepen our economic partnerships. The Gambia's strategic location on the Atlantic coast, its deep-water harbor, and river present significant opportunities for American investment. I would advocate for American businesses in The Gambia, work to remove non-tariff barriers, and promote an environment where American enterprise can flourish, create jobs, and advance prosperity for both our countries.

In addition, I would prioritize American security interests. The Gambia has proven itself a reliable partner in combating transnational threats. It contributes troops to peacekeeping missions and has consistently supported U.S. positions in international fora. If confirmed, I would work with The Gambia to strengthen its security and encourage The Gambia to assume an increasingly active role in advancing regional peace and security.

The challenges facing The Gambia are significant. Poverty remains widespread. Youth unemployment drives irregular migration to Europe and the United States. The Gambian government faces severe resource constraints. These challenges create vulnerabilities that our strategic competitors, particularly China, are eager to exploit. The United States supports The Gambia because we believe in the Gambian people's right to determine their own future, to live in dignity and freedom, and to build prosperity through democratic governance and economic opportunity. If confirmed, that is the partnership I seek to advance.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Socha.

We are now going to begin questions from the members of the committee. I am going to defer my questions for now and turn to Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Chairman McCormick, thank you.

Mr. Anderson, because of the Trump administration and ASEAN's collaboration last year, we saw a peace agreement between Thailand and Cambodia that stopped a bloody border clash. You alluded to that in your testimony.

Looking to the future, how do you see regional partnerships and forums as a platform for closer U.S. relations and regional stability across Southeast Asia?

Mr. ANDERSON. Thanks for that question, Senator, and thank you for the kind introduction.

I think that is a great question that honestly not only the U.S. but also our regional allies in the area are asking. Obviously, ASEAN is a significant regional partner, and I look forward to working with Ambassador Kim to really advance those priorities.

But as we look to a larger spectrum of the tools in the toolbox in the region, I think one of the most prominent is the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. It is a regional platform that embraces economic and natural resource cooperation amongst the five countries of the Mekong region. We are seeing that kind of blossom include some joint ventures with Japan, and leveraging that, I think, is a great opportunity to really give the region a shot in the arm right now, and capitalize on the optimism that is currently there.

Senator DAINES. Earlier this year the USS *Cincinnati* visited Cambodia's Ream Naval Base. The visit was intended to strengthen the mil to mil ties and reaffirm U.S. access to the port following its Chinese funded expansion. It was a promising moment in our military ties with a critical Southeast Asia country.

Mr. Anderson, how do you foresee the future of U.S.-Cambodia security cooperation?

Mr. ANDERSON. Again, thank you, sir, and I cannot emphasize that this is, again, a question that our allies, specifically Five Eyes countries, are asking about the region. Obviously, Hun Manet has said that Ream Naval Base is open to all friendly nations, yet most countries around the globe still question whether that is a reality.

I think the first part of answering your question is engagement, how to lean forward in the conversations with the government, and then looking forward to how to pursue those partnerships in an incremental, measured way, as we match it with productivity on increasing the U.S. bilateral ties. So seeing things move forward together, not just pushing an investment and then hoping for change on the back end.

Senator DAINES. U.S. investment in Cambodia, frankly, has been limited, especially compared to its neighbors in Vietnam and Thailand. Economic ties have been so important, such a part of driving U.S. relations in Southeast Asia. But really, we have not quite found major success yet where you are headed, if you are confirmed to Cambodia.

Mr. Anderson, can you talk a little bit about why the investment climate in Cambodia has historically been difficult as well as how you would work to bring more U.S. business investment into the country?

Mr. ANDERSON. Yes. Thank you, sir.

Top priorities for me, if confirmed, would be scam centers, economic and security cooperation, and regional frameworks. The eco-

conomic aspect that you hit on here is firmly within that second priority.

Through all of my years of service I have noticed that not just governments but private business desires stable outlooks and predictability. Cambodia historically has not had that predictable nature. I mean, that is proven by just the U.S. government to government relationship that has ebbed and flowed over the years.

The goal would be to work together, again, engagement, engagement, with Cambodia to provide a predictable outlook for the future and then leverage some of the things that President Trump has recently done. The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, the Open Skies Agreement, and other aspects are tools to propel us to encourage not only U.S. but global investment into Cambodia.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Anderson, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to start out talking a little bit about people to people programming. Given their track record of building a pathway to peace, there has long been strong bipartisan support in Congress for people to people programs between Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arab neighbors. But many of these programs have been frozen or canceled since the beginning of this Administration.

Ambassador Blome, at a moment of violence, mistrust, instability in the region, efforts to strengthen people to people engagement, particularly between Israelis and Palestinians, are more important than ever. If confirmed, will you prioritize programs designed to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace building efforts like MEPPA or MERC?

Mr. BLOME. Thank you very much for that question, Senator.

I can say that with my experience over many years, including working directly on Israeli-Palestinian issues, I understand that a strength that can come from people to people exchanges often benefits that come after many years of such programming. They can pay off in a very long run.

Senator ROSEN. Will you work to ensure that the bureau has the resources and personnel to manage these important programs, as well?

Mr. BLOME. Senator, I will within the broader parameters of our assistance programming at the Department work to look for opportunities where we can effectively deploy those kind of funding sources.

Senator ROSEN. Well, I look forward to working with you and strengthening those partnerships. I believe that creates stability on the ground.

I want to move on now to religious pluralism. Mr. Mastriano, you have spoken many times about the Christian identity of the United States, and that separation of church and state is a myth. So I just have a simple question for you, and if you could look at me when you answer this. Do you think U.S. political leaders should all be Christian?

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

So having spent more than 30 years in uniform, of leading men and women of all creeds, all races, from every corner of Pennsylvania and every corner of the United States, my record stands clear that I uphold and defend the Constitution and its values. In fact, Pennsylvania was founded by William Penn——

Senator ROSEN. I just want a simple yes or no. Do you think U.S. political leaders should be Christian? It is a simple yes or no.

Mr. MASTRIANO. I believe in the rule of law and that religious liberty applies to every American. That is why our country was founded.

Senator ROSEN. I am not sure why you will not answer the question in that way. But what I do want to say is that I do find it deeply problematic that you will not look me in the eye and say that leaders in the United States, we are a pluralistic country, do not have to be Christian.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Madam——

Senator ROSEN. And so leaders can come from any faith——

Mr. MASTRIANO. Of course.

Senator ROSEN [continuing]. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism—and if you were to be confirmed you would be in charge of an embassy, sir, that will have a diverse staff. You will be meeting with diplomatic leaders from every race and faith, from all around the world. And I just want to be sure that you will be able to reconcile your world view with responsibilities of your role. But I will move——

Mr. MASTRIANO. Senator, I will look you in the eye and repeat it in simpler language rather than constitutional phrasing.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Mr. MASTRIANO. We are absolutely a pluralistic society, and I have worked for non-Christians in the military and in government, and I have had them working for me. I have had people from Saudi Arabia——

Senator ROSEN. That was not the question. The question was do you think leaders should only be Christian. But we are going to move on to some other things with my time left.

In October 2022 your wife said, at one of your campaign events, that the two of you “probably love Israel more than a lot of Jews do.” So I have some other things I want to add, so yes or no, do you agree with that statement, you love Israel more than a lot of Jews do? Yes or no.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Both Rebbie and I have a deep love and appreciation for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

Senator ROSEN. I appreciate that. So can you confirm that you have repeatedly compared things to the Holocaust, such as abortion or your loss to Governor Shapiro? Just a yes or no, have you compared those things to the Holocaust?

Mr. MASTRIANO. I have been working closely with the Jewish community for Senate Bill 127 in Pennsylvania to institute Holocaust education across the State, and I think any use of comparisons is unwise.

Senator ROSEN. So you are saying you did not make those statements?

Mr. MASTRIANO. No. I think it diminishes, and today I would not do that.

Senator ROSEN. So you made the statements, but you are renouncing the statements.

Mr. MASTRIANO. There was a social media post that I would not post today. I think anything that uses the Holocaust to make a modern comparison is unwise.

Senator ROSEN. Well, I appreciate that because you will be representing the United States in Slovakia where nearly 69,000 Slovak Jews were murdered during the Holocaust, over 75 percent of the entire Slovak Jewish population, and so we have to be sure that you will represent this country.

We know that you have maintained a relationship with Andrew Torba, founder of extremist social platform Gab. Gab became notorious after the gunman who murdered 11 worshipers at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue posted his manifesto there. And so despite his documented history of antisemitism, the rhetoric, the Holocaust denialism, your campaign paid Gab for promotional services.

I want to finish with this for now. You can denounce your past associations with antisemites, you can point to your support of Israel, but for me I am not sure that either excuses you or erases the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Mr. Chairman, may I reply?

Senator MCCORMICK. Senator, would you like a reply?

Senator ROSEN. It is at the Chairman's discretion.

Senator MCCORMICK. Very briefly, please.

Mr. MASTRIANO. So gubernatorial campaign, I obviously campaigned on issues that run the gamut, and know that, everybody. And then when it was pointed out to me that Torba had donated \$500 for a campaign, I immediately returned that. And thereafter we cut off all advertisement on his platform, as well, so we completely severed that once his antisemitic views or support became apparent.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you for the clarification.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Nebraska is a national leader in ethanol production. By the way, this is the third committee I have gotten to talk about ethanol in. I have got one more to do.

But I related it into why it is important, just so you know. Our biorefineries—this is not a stretch; no, we are going to get there—our biorefineries produce over 2 billion gallons' worth of ethanol each year, helping secure American energy independent while generating billions of dollars to our economy and creating thousands of jobs.

Frustratingly, though, American ethanol continues to see significant market access challenges in Brazil.

So we tied it in, Mr. Chairman, just so you know.

Since 2017 Brazil has sought to have preferential treatment for their ethanol exports into the United States, while, at the same time, limiting our ethanol exports to Brazil through tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. The result is Brazilian exports—actually, our

exports to Brazil of our ethanol has dropped from about 30 percent of our overall ethanol exports down to 1 or 2 percent.

It is completely unacceptable, and that is why I applaud what the USTR did yesterday, by announcing a 25 percent tariff on Brazilian goods, including ethanol, to address this unfairness. We need to take every step possible to make sure that our corn growers and biorefineries are having a level playing field around the world.

Mr. Perez, if confirmed, what actions would you take to help restore fair access to American ethanol into Brazilian markets?

Mr. PEREZ. Thank you, Senator Ricketts, for that question.

You are absolutely right. We are upside down when it comes to ethanol. I am no expert in ethanol, but I can tell you—

Senator RICKETTS. Well, I am one so I can help you.

Mr. PEREZ. That is why I said that. It is my understanding that the Brazilians tax us at about 18 percent on ethanol, and in reverse, we are taxing them about 1.5 to 2 percent.

Senator RICKETTS. I think we are actually at zero. I do not think we had any tariffs on their ethanol until yesterday.

Mr. PEREZ. Whether it is 1 percent or 0 percent, it is significantly less than the 18 percent that they are taxing us. There is a gap there, and it is not just in ethanol. I think there is a gap across energy, across infrastructure when it comes to the Brazilian-United States relationship.

Part of that, in my opinion, has to do with exposure. If confirmed, if I am able to make it down to Brazil and get boots on the ground, the relationships between the private sector—it is not just the government—the private sector inside the United States and the Brazilian government, the Brazilian private sector, the citizens of Brazil, can be amplified. And that is one of my goals, to be able to get the boots on the ground and have those relationships so that we can start to amplify the business between Brazilians and Americans when it comes to ethanol. That is one of the gaps that I think are the largest, and hopefully soon we can make that gap shorter.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. I am heartened to hear that.

Mr. Anderson, in your remarks to Senator Daines you mentioned that your number one priority was actually scam centers in Cambodia. I am also heartened to hear that is one of your priorities. These scam centers, also known as “pig butchering” work, they bring in victims, to put their money into these fraudulent schemes, investments schemes, and last year were estimated to have cost Americans \$10 billion, \$10 billion of people’s livelihoods, their savings, their retirement funds. Some people have been completely destroyed by this.

And it also includes the people that they have working the scam centers that are often victims themselves, being forced to work under brutal and terrible conditions.

The Cambodian government has increased its effort to crack down on these scam compounds, and of course, the United States, through sanctions, asset seizures, and law enforcement operations, has also taken aggressive action. But these scam centers keep popping up.

If confirmed, how will you work with Phnom Penh to continue to aggressively combat these scam centers? You have made it your

number one priority. Tell me, how do you think you are going to tackle it?

Mr. ANDERSON. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

Obviously, it starts, one, with the optimism in the relationship that has been built over the past 2 years with Hun Manet. And the first step is the conversation of the realism of where Cambodia is on combating these scam centers and what Hun Manet is expecting to do in the future, and work with the relationship on this.

Obviously, we have seen President Trump enact a number of things over the past year. In executive order, OFAC has gone after things. We have seized a billion-plus dollars in Bitcoin.

Additionally, this committee has passed out of the committee and then passed out of the Senate the SCAM Act, which is a great tool for not only highlighting but identifying new tools in the toolbox where we can pull levers.

Sir, to bluntly answer your question, it is going to be boots on ground, getting my hands dirty, bringing in joint task force, working with a myriad of agencies—not one agency has all of the tools, so it would be State Department, Department of Justice, Department of War—and then our regional allies, to really attack the scam centers.

And then I believe if you attack the scam centers and eliminate that problem you will also see beneficial aspects on a number of other problems. It will eliminate a demand signal for human trafficking. Now, that will not solve the human trafficking issue in a singular aspect, but it will reduce the demand signal, and then we can start to work on beneficial aspects from there.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN.

Senator SHAHEEN. Welcome to our nominees, to all of your families and supporters who are here with you today.

I would like to begin with you, Mr. Mastriano, because given your military service and the leadership that you described in your opening remarks and that the Subcommittee Chair described in higher education, I am really surprised that you have made such indiscreet, impolitic, and undiplomatic comments, both publicly and on social media posts.

And I want to go to one comment from a 2018 radio interview, where you called the European Union leadership, “the political, diplomatic enemies of the United States of America.” That is a direct quote.

Now, if confirmed, you would lead the American presence in an EU country, where Russian and Chinese influence demand our full attention, and where, out of the 27 EU member states, 23 are our NATO allies, including Slovakia.

So how do you explain that, and how will you explain that to the European leadership and officials that you would have to deal with, if you are confirmed in this position?

Mr. MASTRIANO. Yes, thank you for that good question, Senator. I appreciate it.

That is 8 years ago, and the dynamics between the United States and the EU leadership has shifted quite a bit. Back then there was

considerable hostility between American interests and America First policy and the EU response. In particular, what triggered that response was hearing then the leader of the EU, and he is a spokesman from Italy, and I forget his name, basically saying that the EU won World War II and the United States and Great Britain and nothing to do with it. Nigel Farage, of course, who was still a member of the EU Parliament, stood up and corrected the record.

That was the kind of leadership we were facing at the time. There was resistance to increasing the NATO budget. There was resistance to American interests and economic aid to the region.

But my record shows that I have worked well with them across the world, that I have had no problem. In fact, I have deep connections, both today, even, in the civil leadership and the military leadership across Western, Central, and Northern Europe.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I was on this committee and in the U.S. Senate in 2018, and I did not view the leadership of Europe as political and diplomatic enemies of the United States, and I do not think that approach was helpful then. I do not think it is helpful now. And I understand that you told the staff, when you were being interviewed, that you believe the EU is a “rising rival,” I quote, comparable to China, and that it would eventually create a standing army to challenge the United States. Is that what you believe? Do you really believe that?

Mr. MASTRIANO. It is the goal of the stated leadership of the EU, and they have been desirous of building their own EU army since 2002, when I was a planner in U.S. Army Headquarters Europe.

Senator SHAHEEN. They have talked about—I have been in those discussions as well, Mr. Mastriano, and I can tell you that nobody ever suggested that would be in lieu of the United States or in lieu of NATO, and the cooperative effort that we have with our allies. And I can tell you that it was the NATO allies who came to our defense when we got attacked on 9/11, the only time Article V has been evoked.

Mr. MASTRIANO. They served in Afghanistan, side by side.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so you should know better to make those comments.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Especially lately we are hearing more arguments after the latest debate coming from the EU that they want to have capability beyond America, not to rely upon American readiness.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, and I can understand why, given some of the attacks from people like you in the United States, that you have made against the EU.

Mr. MASTRIANO. I regret that mischaracterization, because my view is we do work better together. And I have served and led on the battlefield with NATO allies for more than 30 years of my career, and I understand the importance of this alliance. But I do not want to see the most successful alliance in the history of the world, NATO, to fade away or be overshadowed by a EU army. I think that undercuts our international interests.

Senator SHAHEEN. I have not heard anybody in NATO suggesting that that is going to happen. So I think you are absolutely right. We do work better when we work together and we cooperate, and I would think somebody who served on the battlefield with those

countries would know better than to make those kinds of statements. And I can tell you, as a diplomat representing the United States of America, you should absolutely know better.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Mr. Chairman, if I could reply.

Senator SHAHEEN. If I could go on to Mr. Blome.

Lebanon is really at a critical turning point right now. I am encouraged that there are direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel. I think that has been long overdue. But one of the significant factors in ensuring that we can see peace ultimately in Lebanon, I think, is support for the Lebanese Armed Forces.

So can you talk about how important you think it is to continue to support the LAF?

Mr. BLOME. Thanks for that question, Senator.

Absolutely an important element of our negotiations, of our facilitation of the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon is that support for the LAF. The LAF has played an important role in counterterrorism and border security, with the assistance of the United States.

That is not to diminish that there are issues with the LAF that we have to address, difficult issues. But the extent to which we are able to make progress on finding a way to replace Hezbollah in Lebanon and create a new future free of foreign domination in that country runs, in some way, through the LAF, as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Perez, what are some of your top priorities when you get this job, and what does success look like at the end of your time there?

Mr. PEREZ. Thank you, Senator, for that question, and thank you for the very kind introduction and your continued friendship.

I would break them down into three different priorities. I would say first would be the security of the United States and all the Americans that live inside of the United States. But it is not just those that live here on the mainland. I would say the employees that work and that serve this country in Brazil. It is my understanding we have a little over 1,000 employees that work within the American Embassy in Brazil, and their security is just as important to me as us here, as we sit here today.

Second would be diplomacy. I think there is a huge opportunity for us to increase diplomatic relationships with Brazil. We obviously have an election in Brazil that is upcoming here, in the first week of October, and regardless of what that election shows there is an opportunity for us to bridge that gap. And I believe I have the right skill set to be able to do that, assuming I get the opportunity to serve.

And the last one would be trade. We do have a trade surplus with Brazil, but nevertheless—and Senator Ricketts alluded to this earlier—there are some industries that have a significant gap. It is not just ethanol. I would say we have a problem in energy. Agriculture is a massive problem for us, specifically the beef trade between the United States and Brazil.

And if confirmed, those are the three priorities that I will be focusing on as soon as I am able to hit the ground.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Mastriano, after the conclusion of the most recent NATO summit in Ankara, the Slovakia Prime Minister reiterated that they would not contribute to NATO's \$70 billion military aid package for Ukraine or the EU's 690 billion Euro military loan. He has requested a dialogue with Russia, but his approach completely misunderstands what negotiations actually require. It requires leverage. So the only way to create, in my opinion, real leverage over the Kremlin is to ensure Ukraine has the support it needs.

So tell me how you are going to navigate this.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Thank you, Senator, for that good question. I do appreciate it.

Slovakia is in a difficult position. I estimate, according to my research—I am not read on it anymore so maybe I am wrong—about a quarter of its energy is from Russian oil and gas. That gives continued leverage to Moscow, and I think that has painted Prime Minister Fico into a corner.

Additionally, its economy is stagnated, I think largely because of the tariff war. Of course, Slovakia is the number one per capita car producer in the world, and they rely upon exports for that, largely to the United States, and this is causing a problem.

So the point is we need Slovakia to get on board here to keep the pressure up on Russia. As a strategist and a professional soldier, it is incredible what Ukraine has done in turning the tide of the war, and we have a great opportunity here. Our friends in the Baltic region, and in Eastern Europe, are concerned, that any victory for Russia will result in their decline. So a success for us in Ukraine is a success for all the countries, including Slovakia.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Blome, in early June a ceasefire agreement was reached between Israel and Lebanon to end hostilities. Under the terms of the U.S. mediated agreement the ceasefire was contingent upon a complete cessation of Hezbollah fire and evacuation of the Hezbollah operators from southern Lebanon. Pilot zones are being created in which the Lebanese Armed Forces can take exclusive control as Israel forces withdraw.

Do you agree that Israel has a right to defend itself and so does Lebanon, and respond to Hezbollah violations of the agreement?

Mr. BLOME. Absolutely, I agree that Israel has a right to defend itself there, as well as the Lebanese government. Yes.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. So what do you think about the ceasefire? Do you think it is going to last? Do you think it is going to work?

Mr. BLOME. I think it is very important to find a way forward on Lebanon. I think it is a moment, because of Israel's military successes against Hezbollah, because of the weaker position that Iran is in and their ability to maintain its support for Hezbollah, that it is a moment we have to test and see what we can do to find a way forward in a very difficult situation. Success is far from guaranteed on that, but I fully support the engagement on it, now sixth round of talks that we have had to try to find something that

works on a very important problem that will provide security both for Israel and ultimately for Lebanon.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. I think it is a big deal. If they can get security and get rid of Hezbollah, allow Lebanese people to live a life they want to lead, along with the Israelis, without all this fighting, it would be unbelievable. So I hope you will do everything you can to make sure it succeeds.

Mr. BLOME. Thank you. I will.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this hearing.

Mr. Mastriano, I look at your nomination and I have a real sense of sadness about it, and I am going to tell you why. Your military record of service to the country and your sacrifice is really superb, and you went into that in your own statement, and I find so much to admire there, your own sacrifice and your family's sacrifice.

And then in the middle of your comments you kind of hinted, "But then I got into politics. I had been respected in the military. But then I got into politics and people called me everything but a good man." I think you need to look in the mirror a little bit.

Both of my colleagues have pointed out evidence of things that you have said and people you have associated with that are highly, highly unusual. You have associated with antisemites and Holocaust deniers. You have associated with 9/11 conspiracy theorists. You have made comments about foreign leaders that are not diplomatic in quality.

And you and I share a very special day in American history. We were both here on January 6, 2021. You engaged in repeated efforts, before that day and since, to challenge the integrity of the presidential election, and there is even some controversy about what exactly you were doing here on the Capitol that day.

But there is not any controversy about why you were here. You were here because you were urging Congress to reject the certification of the electoral results and to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power. And all of us who were here that day remember what it was like to be under attack with people who were trying to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power. I never served in the military, but I lived in a military dictatorship in Honduras when I was a missionary, and I know what dictators do, and I know what it is to undermine democratic institutions.

And to my knowledge—now, you can correct me if I am wrong—to my knowledge you have never retracted your belief that that election was somehow illegitimate.

I was on the floor later in the day, after the rioters were finally cleared, and I watched both of your State Senators at the time, Senator Casey and Senator Toomey. When a non-Pennsylvanian challenged the Pennsylvania results, I believe it was a Senator from Missouri, I watched both of your State Senators absolutely shred the argument that there was anything wrong about the Pennsylvania election results, that they were insulted that a Missouri Senator would challenge the integrity of the Pennsylvania elections. And they shredded that argument, just like courts have repeatedly shredded the argument.

Am I wrong? Have you retracted the various conspiracies that you apparently had been laboring under with respect to the 2020 election?

Mr. MASTRIANO. I mean, Senator, what do you want me to address specifically? I have never been involved in conspiracies. The one thing I did before January 6 was to be part of a hearing in Gettysburg, exercising our oversight per the U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8——

Senator KAINE. But you were here on January 6th to urge Congress to reject——

Mr. MASTRIANO. No, no. That is incorrect. I was here with my wife to hear the President of the United States speak. We did not do anything illegal. We came, we saw, we left.

Senator KAINE. OK. I think the record is going to demonstrate to the contrary.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Sir, it does not.

Senator KAINE. But how about today? Will you accept the 2020 presidential election?

Mr. MASTRIANO. Joe Biden was certified——

Senator KAINE. OK. No, I am not saying certified.

Mr. MASTRIANO [continuing]. And the question is closed.

Senator KAINE. Was Joe Biden elected the President of the United States by both——

Mr. MASTRIANO. I have not been a target or a subject of any criminal investigation or legal——

Senator KAINE. I am not asking you about your criminal record.

Mr. MASTRIANO. OK.

Senator KAINE. Just answer this question. Was Joe Biden elected President in 2020 by both the popular vote and the electoral college?

Mr. MASTRIANO. Joe Biden was certified, per the constitutional process, and I was not here to disrupt anything, Senator.

Senator KAINE. Well, I am not asking you about that.

Mr. MASTRIANO. I came to hear a President speak.

Senator KAINE. Listen, here is the point.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Yes, sir.

Senator KAINE. I have never known a conspiracy theorist who just believed in one conspiracy. Conspiracy theorists generally are gullible people. They might have master's degrees and Ph.D.s, and you have got them, and the United States invested in you to have those degrees.

But somebody who will believe a conspiracy theory about 9/11 or the Holocaust or about the January——

Mr. MASTRIANO. I do not know what you are talking about, Senator.

Senator KAINE [continuing]. The January 2020 election, they are gullible.

Mr. MASTRIANO. I do not subscribe to any of those conspiracy theories about 9/11 or the Holocaust.

Senator KAINE. You preach conspiracies about the 2020 election, guess what, that a fourth grader with common sense——

Mr. MASTRIANO. That is inaccurate, Senator.

Senator KAINE [continuing]. Would find ridiculous.

Mr. MASTRIANO. All I did is hold a hearing, per my constitutional responsibility, as the committee chair in Pennsylvania, per Article——

Senator KAINE. All I did was hold a hearing, oh, but forget that I came to the Capitol on January 6th——

Mr. MASTRIANO. To hear our President speak.

Senator KAINE [continuing]. As it was under attack, and urged people to reject a peaceful transfer.

Mr. MASTRIANO. I gave no speeches. I came to hear the President speak.

Senator KAINE. You cannot erase your record now, Mr. Mastriano.

Mr. MASTRIANO. No, sir. There is no erasing now.

Senator KAINE. Let me ask one last question.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Facts are stubborn things.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Perez, do we have a trade surplus or a trade deficit with Brazil?

Mr. PEREZ. We have a trade surplus, sir.

Senator KAINE. A massive trade surplus. Correct?

Mr. PEREZ. Yes, Senator.

Senator KAINE. So when President Trump imposed tariffs on Brazil, saying, "I'm doing this Liberation Day tariff because nations are ripping us off," we sell a lot more to Brazil than they sell to us.

Yesterday we put a 25 percent tariff on Brazil, and they say they are going to reciprocate against us. If they reciprocate at 25 percent, who loses more, the U.S. or Brazil?

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

Obviously this is a new tariff that was implemented yesterday at some point overnight while I was asleep. I did not read the articles this morning——

Senator KAINE. Yes, and you had nothing to do with it.

Mr. PEREZ [continuing]. And USTR has made their decisions. I will learn more about it over the next several weeks.

Senator KAINE. OK. Well, if we have a trade surplus with Brazil, that means we are selling more to them than they are selling to us. If we put a 25 percent tariff on them and then they put an equal tariff on us, it is the United States that has the most to lose. So we will not only see inflation go up on products coming from Brazil, but the tariff put on U.S. manufacturers because we sell more to Brazil than others is going to hurt our own businesses more than Brazil's businesses will be hurt. I yield back.

Senator ROSEN [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

And let me just say at the outset that I share all the concerns expressed, Mr. Mastriano, by my colleagues, about your past record and conduct.

I am going to focus my questions here to Ambassador Blome, and I appreciate the chance to get together with you yesterday. And I want to start today with the issue I started with yesterday, which is Syria. I think, Mr. Ambassador, we both agree that the current moment holds promise, but it is also very precarious. Is that a quick summary of where we are?

Mr. BLOME. That is accurate, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And I was glad to see the Administration lift the state sponsor of terrorism recently, as part of the NATO summit. And as you know, Senator Shaheen and many of us worked to lift the sanctions on Syria here, and I assume you support all of those actions.

Mr. BLOME. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And I will say that when we lifted those sanctions we included report language, making clear that we believe that success in Syria requires that the government include elements from all parts of Syrian society—Alawites, Kurds, Druze, Christians. You would agree that the success of the future of Syria depends on making sure all those groups are included in its governance, would you not?

Mr. BLOME. Absolutely, Senator. It is a multiethnic society.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I will say, you know, the late Senator Graham and I spent a lot of time together making sure that the United States did not abandon our commitment to the Syrian Kurds, the SDF, because they have been the tip of the spear with us in the fight against ISIS. Isn't that right?

Mr. BLOME. That is correct.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So one of the concerns that was raised in this sort of shaky moment was the continued presence of Israeli forces in Syria, and I think that there has been a sense within the Administration and elsewhere that that is not a productive thing to happen, to continue that presence in southern Syria. Is that a fair statement of the Administration's concerns?

Mr. BLOME. I think that is certainly one of the concerns that we have to address going forward, yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And is it not the case, just within the last 24 hours, President Trump asked Prime Minister Netanyahu to remove Israeli forces from Syria?

Mr. BLOME. I will let President Trump's statements speak for himself, but I think it is an issue on which we have been engaged diplomatically, and we will continue to be engaged diplomatically.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, I am just reading from an article here, where it is reporting that the President said to Prime Minister Netanyahu, "You should redeploy out of Syria." Do you have any reason to dispute this article?

Mr. BLOME. Absolutely not.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK.

Let me ask you about the situation in the West Bank, because we have seen a continued rise in settler violence against the Palestinians, working to push Palestinians off their lands. With this very extremist Netanyahu government we have seen the complicity of the IDF, in certain cases, in pushing Palestinians off their land.

What I want to ask you about specifically is nine American citizens—nine American citizens—who have been killed on the West Bank, either by settler violence or Israeli Security Forces just in the last 4 years.

And I would, Madam Chair, like to just put into the record that 31 Senators sent to Secretary Rubio on March 5 on this topic.

Senator ROSEN. Without objection.

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

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Are you aware of these deaths, killings of American citizens, on the West Bank?

Mr. BLOME. Yes, Senator, I am aware of these cases.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Are you aware of the fact that there has been no accountability in any of these cases?

Mr. BLOME. Senator, I believe that while we have to condemn any kind of acts of criminal violence in the West Bank, from any party, we have a special obligation to follow up and ensure accountability and transparency in the case of American citizens. And if confirmed, it will certainly be a priority for me.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that, because the letter we received back from Secretary Rubio, on behalf of Secretary Rubio, said the same thing, that the number one priority of U.S. representation overseas is to protect U.S. citizens. But we have had no accountability with respect to these cases.

And finally, I just want to raise with you a case that I mentioned yesterday. As we speak, we have an American citizens, Sama Safi, a 20 year old student, being imprisoned in Israel, an American citizen. Are you aware of her case?

Mr. BLOME. Senator, I am not aware of the specifics of that case.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. Well, she has spoken about the abuse she has experienced. This is trumped up political charges against her. And I hope the U.S. Government will work really hard to get her released, and I hope that happens between the time of this hearing and the time we consider these nominations on the Senate floor.

Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

I want to follow up on Senator Van Hollen's questions about Syria and agree to applaud the commitment to lift the state sponsored terrorism sanction against Syria. That has not yet happened, though the Administration has indicated that they intend to do that. Is that correct?

Mr. BLOME. That is correct.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you have any idea what the timeline to do that will be?

Mr. BLOME. I believe from the date of the notification there is a 45 day period required before it takes effect.

Senator SHAHEEN. OK. So we should see that happen sometime in the next month or so.

Mr. BLOME. Yes, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciated your comments and Senator Van Hollen's about the importance of power sharing in Syria with the various members of Syria's ethnic groups, with women in that country. There has been progress made, but clearly there is more that needs to be done.

And one of the things that is important as we think about the lifting of sanctions is how to see more economic development in the

country. Can you just talk about what the impact would be if the Development Finance Corporation or the Export-Import Bank would decide to back a project in Syria? What effect would that have on the confidence of other investors?

Mr. BLOME. I think it would be very important. I think, you know, look, the biggest challenge, of the many, many challenges in front of Syria, is to find an economic path forward to give people hope that this transition will result in better lives. The economy contracted 84 percent between 2012 and 2026 in Syria. It has been a devastating period for the country.

So I think we have to do everything we can to try to bring economic opportunity to Syria as quickly as possible, and if confirmed, I would look for any tools that we have available to us to try to promote that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good. Well, hopefully we will see something break in terms of that investment soon.

Mr. Socha, in 2024, The Gambia formalized a special tribunal that was tasked with prosecuting human rights violations during the reign of President Jammeh. That tribunal was supposed to receive \$60 million in U.S. assistance until the funding cuts by the Trump administration last year.

So can you talk about, if confirmed, how you would work to support the efforts by that tribunal and to replace the resources that they have lost because the United States has reneged on our agreement?

Mr. SOCHA. Thank you for the question, Senator. I think the Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission has really set the stage for the continued democratic development in The Gambia. It is an issue that I will focus on so that Gambia's democracy can continue to flourish.

I do believe that any foreign aid directed toward The Gambia needs to be efficient and effective, and if confirmed, that is the priority that I intend to take up.

Senator SHAHEEN. And have you spoken to anyone in the country about how they expect to replace those resources that they were looking for in order to see that tribunal finish its work?

Mr. SOCHA. Unfortunately, Senator, pending this committee's decision and the vote to the Senate, I have not spoken to anyone in the country. But as I believe, in my career, one of the chief roles of a diplomat is to listen, I look forward to arriving to The Gambia and having those conversations.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator MCCORMICK [presiding]. Thank you.

I had to return from a quick vote, so I will take my chance with some questions here.

Mr. Mastriano, I am going to start with you. And I know you had some questions asked and ran out of time at the end. So is there anything you would like to, I will give you some time to answer any questions that you do not think you fully answered.

Mr. MASTRIANO. Senator, I will defer to you on Slovakia. I think I have been on the other side too long. Thank you.

Senator MCCORMICK. Good. OK. Very good. So let me ask you then a question about Slovakia—

Mr. MASTRIANO. Sure.

Senator MCCORMICK [continuing]. Within the context of Europe and some of the questions about leadership in the European Union. How will you participate in concert with our NATO allies to ensure that there is a strong European response to Russian aggression?

Mr. MASTRIANO. Thank you, Senator, for that, and since the 1980s I have worked on Russia in some category, whether during the cold war, based in Soviets in the 8th Guards Tank Army, or Putin today. And I have to say, first off, I am astounded at the turn of the war in Ukraine. We are see a revolution in military affairs happening in Ukraine, and I do not see how long Russia, despite its power and size, can endure.

But be that in mind, we need a unified front from NATO allies, especially Slovakia, and one key step in that, Senator, I think, is finding a better way to get fuel and energy to Slovakia, rather than them relying heavily on Russian oil and gas. I think one step—and you and I would love this—Pennsylvania LNG going through the Krk Terminal in Croatia and then shipping it up to Slovakia might be one way.

As far as oil, it is a problem. I understand that refineries are Soviet era or designed to refine Russian oil, which is not as high grade as Pennsylvania or Texan or Louisiana, and they may need some upgrades in that regard.

But I remember when I was in the Baltics trying to get the three Baltic nations off there 100 percent 10 years ago, on Russian oil and gas, and they built a ship that the Lithuanians called the Independence, in honor of their link with Pennsylvania. And they are now independently off of Russian oil and gas. I want to see the same success for Slovakia, and I think I have what it takes in experience to make that happen with them.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Mr. Anderson, we talked about Chinese aggression and expansionist tendencies. If confirmed, how would you expect to engage with Cambodian leadership to preserve, number one, Cambodia's autonomy, and to ensure the Ream Naval Base does not become a platform for expanding China's military power in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. ANDERSON. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

Extremely valuable question. It can really be approached from almost everything in the spectrum of Cambodia, whether it is scam centers, economic activity, security cooperation. But most importantly, regional partnerships, when you get into the importance of ASEAN and what they do in the region.

Additionally it will rely on face to face conversations with the Cambodian government, and if confirmed, it will rely on me to sit down and have frank conversations of the reality of Ream Naval Base, and if it truly is, as Hun Manet says, open to all friendly nations. If so, I think it is worth exploring the options of more annual visits from U.S. naval vessels.

But additionally, as I said earlier, if we see advancement in U.S. bilateral relations, that means that we can explore additional tools in the toolbox, based on that working relationship, and if confirmed I not only would be happy to do that, but work with this com-

mittee, having come from this institution, work with this committee to really identify what we can advance.

Senator MCCORMICK. Very good. Thank you.

And Mr. Blome, Senator Rosen and I chair the Subcommittee on the Middle East, and we often talk about Phase 2 of the Abraham Accords and our hopes and aspirations for the region.

Given your potential remit, how would you think about the next stage of opportunities for expanding the Abraham Accord countries, and who do you see as the most likely of candidates?

Mr. BLOME. Well, thanks. It is an important question.

As we have been discussing here, it is a moment, while the region is gripped with crisis in many ways, it also presents a number of opportunities through a lot of active lines of diplomacy right now.

I think one of the things we have to do is to make sure the expansion of that regional integration is part of those discussions and is linked to progress on these things. So I think there are opportunities.

I am not sure which country exactly is the next candidate——

Senator MCCORMICK. And if you did you might not want to say it, I am imagining.

Mr. BLOME. That is quite possible, Senator. Thank you. But I do think there are opportunities, and I absolutely am committed to exploring that, including with this committee.

Senator MCCORMICK. Very good. We look forward to hopefully having that conversation with you together. That is a common goal for the both of us.

Well, listen, to all of our nominees I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank the families. Thank you for providing us with the benefit of your testimony and your answers.

Before closing I would like to add any letters of support the committee has received to the record, and I will also note, for information for all of you, that the record will remain open until noon on Friday, July 17. If there are any clarifications you would like to make to your testimony or answers you would like to provide to this committee, those would be most welcome up until that time.

With the thanks of the committee, with Senator Rosen and myself, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD BLOME BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Question. Sanctions Against Israeli Jews in Judea and Samaria: In February 2024 the Biden administration issued Executive Order (EO) 14115, imposing crippling sanctions “on persons undermining peace, security, and stability in the West Bank.” The administration utilized that EO to impose crippling sanctions on Israeli Jews living in Judea and Samaria. Biden administration officials refused to make public the basis for those sanctions, though critics have linked many of the public allegations leveled by the Biden administration to anti-Israel NGOs.

Can you commit to providing the Committee with transparency into the basis for those sanctions?

Answer. Yes. I commit to working with Congress, through the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to accommodate oversight information requests, within the accommodations process, including requests related to Executive Order 14115.

Question. Are you aware of any NGOs that provided material used by the Biden administration to sanction Jews in Judea and Samaria?

Answer. I am not aware as the Trump Administration rescinded Executive Order 14115 before I began my consultations for this role.

Israeli Sovereignty

Question. If confirmed, you would be responsible for implementing American policy regarding the territories Israel took control of in June 1967. In 2015 the Obama administration maneuvered the United Nations Security Council to pass Resolution 2334, which called on member states “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the state of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.” The phrase “territories occupied since 1967” refers to the Golan Heights and Judea and Samaria, including parts of Jerusalem. The first Trump administration systematically worked to hollow out and render UNSCR 2334 null and void. They did so, including by recognizing Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights, by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, by moving our embassy to Jerusalem, by seeking to end discriminatory approaches that distinguished legally and for the purposes of aid and trade between different Israeli communities, and by taking several other steps.

Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over the Western Wall?

Answer. The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government, while continuing to take no position on final status issues. When the President recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he also stated that the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem are subject to final status negotiations between the parties, and that the United States was not taking a position on boundaries or borders. This stance dates to the December 6, 2017 proclamation by President Trump and has remained consistent. In that proclamation, United States indicated its support for the status quo at Jerusalem’s holy sites and stated that the Western Wall must remain a place where Jews pray.

Question. Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem?

Answer. When the President recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he also stated that the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem are subject to final status negotiations between the parties, and that the United States was not taking a position on boundaries or borders. This stance dates to the December 6, 2017, proclamation by President Trump and has remained consistent. The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government, while continuing to take no position on final status issues.

Question. Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem?

Answer. The Administration supports Israel’s current civil administration of the Old City of Jerusalem. The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government, while continuing to take no position on final status issues. When the President recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6, 2017, and directed the relocation of the Embassy to Jerusalem, he also stated that the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem are subject to final status negotiations between the parties, and that the United States was not taking a position on boundaries or borders.

Question. Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over the entire Israeli Golan Heights, including the Sheba Farms?

Answer. President Trump issued a Presidential Proclamation on March 25, 2019, declaring the United States recognized the Golan Heights as part of Israel’s territory. The State Department’s website, publicly available maps and data, and the geographic Guidance Bulletin show the Golan Heights as part of Israel. U.S. policy on the Golan Heights, including the Shebaa Farms, has not changed.

Attempts to Expel Israel from the U.N. General Assembly

Question. The United States considers the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to be a terrorist organization. Meanwhile the United Nations has steadily elevated the status of the PLO across its organizations and even in the General Assembly. Last September Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas declared that the PLO would seek to expel Israel from the General Assembly. In November 2024,

I led a letter joined by several members of this Committee, including the now Secretary of State, saying we would move to fundamentally reevaluate our relationship with the U.N. and the Palestinian Authority if Israel was expelled from the General Assembly. That would include limiting American participation and funding across the U.N. and its bodies, whether the PLO participates in those bodies or not.

Do you assess that the PLO is a terrorist organization?

Answer. I share the Administration's serious concerns of the PLO due to their history of support for incitement to violence and terrorism, including through prisoner and martyr payments to terrorists and their families; and glorification of attackers in media and education, which directly undermines commitments to renounce terrorism. The Administration continues to engage the PA on these issues.

I understand the PLO is not an officially designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and is not otherwise designated as a terrorist organization under any U.S. sanctions program; however, certain factions of the PLO are designated FTOs and/or Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs), including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), PFLP General Command (GC), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). These organizations were so designated primarily because they engaged in numerous terrorist acts, including airplane hijackings, suicide bombings, shootings, assassinations, and other attacks targeting civilians.

Additionally, the 1987 Anti-Terrorism Act, which included a "determination" by Congress that the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization, imposes restrictions including on the PLO operating an office in Washington, until there is a certification that the PLO, its agents and its constituent groups no longer practice or support terrorist actions.

Question. Do you assess that enhancing the status of the PLO in international organizations undermines American national security and interests?

Answer. Yes. I believe enhancing the status of the PLO in international organizations, outside of direct negotiations with Israel, would be detrimental to U.S. goals. Additionally, enhancing the status of the PLO in international organizations, in the absence of a more serious commitment by the PLO and PA to reform would also be detrimental. United States' policy is to engage with Israel and the Palestinians in the interest of promoting peace and stability. This includes reinforcing American support for compliance by the PLO with respect to certain commitments made by them, including renunciation of the use of terrorism and all other acts of violence.

Question. Palestinian Pay for Slay Programs: The Palestinian Authority (PA) provides hundreds of millions of dollars annually in payments, salaries, and benefits to terrorists through its infamous "pay for slay" program. This program is institutionalized through policies, laws, and regulations to ensure that the government offers martyr payments to injured or imprisoned terrorists and the family members of deceased terrorists for attacking Israel and supporting other terrorist activities in the region. The PA continues to prioritize paying terrorists and their families more than ever and even pays civil servants in its own government involved in terrorist acts.

In recent years Congress has passed a range of legislation limiting assistance to the PA and for activities that benefit the PA, e.g. the Taylor Force Act (TFA) (Title X of P.L. 115-141), which limits funding for activities that "directly benefit" the PA. TFA included certification language regarding a range of concerns related to PA policies and governance, including "payments for acts of terrorism against Israeli citizens and United States citizens." Part of the policy rationale for TFA's restrictions is that money is fungible: any aid that directly benefits the PA indirectly supports the PA's payments for acts of terrorism.

During the Biden administration, officials suggested that regardless of restrictions imposed by Congress the administration intends to pursue projects and increase assistance that "benefit[] ... ordinary Palestinians," implicitly in contrast to programs that would directly benefit the PA and therefore be noncompliant with TFA.

Please describe your understanding of restrictions imposed by Congress on aid to the PA, especially your understanding of the distinction between aid that "directly benefits" the PA and other forms of aid.

Answer. I understand that the Taylor Force Act (TFA) prohibits the use of funds made available for assistance for the West Bank and Gaza under the Economic Support Fund authority that directly benefits the Palestinian Authority (PA) unless the Secretary certifies to Congress that certain conditions are met.

The TFA's built-in exceptions (22 U.S.C. § 2378c-1(b)) exempt from its restrictions payments to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, wastewater projects, and child vaccination programs, subject to 15-day prior congressional notification. If con-

firmed, I will support the Administration's efforts to continue to fully implement the TFA and only provide assistance consistent with applicable U.S. law.

Question. Can you commit that, if confirmed, you will ensure that the U.S. will not engage in projects or provide assistance for projects that directly benefit the PA?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit that all U.S. foreign assistance under my purview will strictly comply with the Taylor Force Act and all other applicable statutory requirements. The Department will not obligate or expend any funds to directly benefit the Palestinian Authority in violation of these laws. U.S. diplomatic engagement and security assistance will continue to be calibrated strictly to protect American national security, maintain regional financial and security stability, and advance U.S. strategic objectives.

Question. Can you commit that, if confirmed, you will ensure that the U.S. will not engage in projects or provide assistance for projects that are the same as, materially similar to, or successor projects to foreign assistance projects that were suspended pursuant to TFA?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit that all U.S. foreign assistance will strictly comply with the Taylor Force Act and all other applicable laws. The Department will evaluate all projects based on their strict compliance with statutory requirements, including the Taylor Force Act's explicit congressional exemptions for humanitarian and stabilization activities. If confirmed, I will ensure that any assistance provided in the region is legally compliant, fully audited, and directly advances U.S. national security and regional stability.

Palestinian Authority Security Forces

Question. The Palestinian Authority has a longstanding record of corruption, incitement, and failure to prevent terrorism, and elements of the PASF have been repeatedly accused of turning a blind eye to, or actively cooperating with, terrorist activity targeting Israelis.

To what degree do you assess that PASF forces have been infiltrated by Hamas or other terrorist organizations?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing all available intelligence to make this assessment and ensure we understand any infiltration risk. As reported to Congress in "Steps Taken by the Palestinian Authority to Counter Incitement of Violence against Israelis and to Promote Peace and Coexistence with Israel, Section 7041(h)(6) of the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026," the PA has worked with Israel to counter Iran and its proxies in the West Bank since October 7, 2023, through PASF counterterrorism operations.

Question. Do you assess the U.S. should continue assisting the PASF if they have been significantly infiltrated by Hamas or other terrorist organizations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure credible evidence of infiltration triggers immediate review and suspension of assistance to that unit. I would also work to strengthen vetting so support can continue to reliable, non-compromised PASF elements, given their role as a counterweight to Hamas. The IDF and the PASF continue to partner primarily through intelligence sharing, arrests, and operational deconfliction to counter threats to Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Question. Assess the effectiveness of the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority (USSC).

Answer. The USSC has been a consistent, cost-effective tool for advancing Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation since 2005, historically operating on a modest annual budget while serving as a critical—at times the only—channel of communication between Israeli and Palestinian security forces during periods of heightened tension. The three-star rank of the position enables direct engagement with senior officials in Washington, Jerusalem, and Ramallah. LtGen Sean Salene began his assignment as USSC in May 2026. As former Deputy Commander for CENTCOM and J5 for Strategic Policy and Plans, LtGen Salene led CENTCOM's planning efforts for Operation Epic Fury and the post-conflict Gaza response, giving him direct, first-hand knowledge of the operational and security landscape he now oversees. His tenure at CENTCOM also built close working relationships with Admiral Cooper and many regional Chiefs of Defense, including strong relationships with senior Israeli Defense Force leadership that uniquely position him to coordinate between Israeli counterparts, the Palestinian Authority, and the Departments of State and War at this critical juncture.

Question. Do you support maintaining a U.S. military three-star general as the USSC?

Answer. Yes. Three-star seniority gives the USSC the stature needed to engage effectively with senior IDF and PA officials. If confirmed, I would support maintaining this rank absent a compelling rationale for change and would consult with the Department of War and Congress before supporting any modification.

Question. USAID OIG Reporting on UNRWA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has for decades provided material support for Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, including personnel, facilities, and physical materials that have been used to further their terrorist activity. The Biden administration funneled hundreds of billions of dollars into the Gaza Strip largely through UNRWA. Hamas diverted much of this funding to build the infrastructure necessary for carrying out the October 7 terrorist attacks, and after the war started significantly more evidence emerged linking UNRWA to terrorism. Congress prohibited the Biden administration from funding UNRWA, but administration officials circumvented that prohibition by using UNRWA infrastructure.

Now under the Trump Administration, the State Department's USAID Office of Inspector General is investigating these practices, including reports that as many as 1,500 UNRWA employees may have ties to Hamas. These allegations raise serious questions about whether UNRWA has itself become a terrorist organization.

Do you assess that UNRWA has provided support for terrorists, including Hamas?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure no funding gets into the hands of terrorists, including Hamas. I support the President's position that UNRWA has been infiltrated by members of groups designated as foreign terrorist organizations, and that there were UNRWA employees involved in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. In addition, the Department has seen Hamas weaponize the suffering of Palestinians by using civilian infrastructure, like schools and hospitals, including U.N. facilities, to store caches of weapons, house fighters, and coordinate attacks.

Question. Describe how you intend to approach the relationship between the United States and UNRWA.

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to supporting and implementing the President's Executive Order 14199 withdrawing the United States from and ending funding to certain U.N. organizations, including UNRWA, in consultation with Department leadership.

Question. The U.S. has invested hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with the expectation that it would eliminate the Hezbollah terrorist threat in southern Lebanon and extend the Lebanese state's authority. While the Administration has worked to support implementation of the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire, it is still concerning that the LAF has not met its obligations to disarm Hezbollah and extend effective state authority throughout southern Lebanon, forcing Israel to shoulder the burden of degrading Hezbollah's military infrastructure.

Assess the effectiveness of the LAF.

Answer. Hizballah is Iran's prize proxy and has caused misery and destruction in Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and further afield. It must be disarmed and dismantled, and this is a priority for the Trump Administration. Doing this will require significant whole of government effort on the part of Lebanon, and Lebanon will require support and encouragement from us and partners to do this. While the LAF remains Lebanon's principal national institution, its performance in disarming Hizballah throughout southern Lebanon or elsewhere in the country has not been sufficient. Especially in view of the Administration's recent focus on Lebanon, the Administration expects the Lebanese government to live up to its commitment in the Trilateral Framework to verifiably disarm Hizballah's terrorist infrastructure and to demonstrate sustained progress in doing so. U.S. assistance should reinforce—not substitute for—Lebanese action and will continue to be evaluated based on concrete results in advancing Hizballah's comprehensive disarmament and extending the Lebanese state's authority.

Question. To what degree do you assess that LAF forces have been infiltrated by Hezbollah or other terrorist organizations?

Answer. Hizballah attempts to exert influence over the LAF as it does across all Lebanese institutions. While the United States continues to assess that the LAF institutionally operates independently under legitimate civilian leadership, robust safeguards remain critical. In May 2026, the United States imposed historic sanctions including on active-duty security officials for shielding Hizballah. The Lebanese government must live up to its commitments, and the United States will con-

tinue to utilize all tools available to address those who stand in the way of those efforts. The United States has also imposed strict end-use monitoring and vetting mechanisms to ensure U.S. military assistance is used appropriately and does not benefit Hizballah.

Question. Do you assess the U.S. should continue assisting the LAF if they have been significantly infiltrated by Hezbollah or other terrorist organizations?

Answer. If credible information demonstrated significant infiltration of the LAF by Hizballah or another terrorist organization, to the extent that its command and control is compromised, the United States should immediately reassess its assistance and suspend support to an appropriate level and take any additional steps necessary to protect U.S. equipment, and taxpayer funds.

As Secretary Rubio has said, the United States supports security assistance to the LAF only insofar as it advances implementation of the Trilateral Framework and supports measurable progress toward Hizballah's comprehensive disarmament and the extension of Lebanese state authority.

Question. Do you support calibrating assistance to the LAF on the degree to which the LAF serves as a check against Hezbollah?

Answer. Yes. U.S. assistance should be calibrated based on measurable progress toward advancing U.S. objectives, including the LAF's willingness and ability to constrain and ultimately disarm Hizballah, secure Lebanon's borders, and extend the Lebanese state's exclusive security authority throughout the country. The Trilateral Framework clearly spells out our expectations of the Government of Lebanon moving forward.

As Secretary Rubio has said, the United States fully supports Israel and Lebanon as they work to implement this Framework, including through security assistance to the LAF, so long as they continue to fulfill the terms of the Framework and work toward Hizballah's comprehensive disarmament.

Question. Assess the threat that the Muslim Brotherhood poses to U.S. national security.

Answer. Violent Muslim Brotherhood chapters are of grave concern to the entire U.S. national security interagency. The Muslim Brotherhood has inspired, nurtured, and funded terrorist groups like Hamas, that are direct threats to the safety and security of the American people and our allies. To date, the terrorist designations of the Lebanese, Egyptian, Sudanese, and Jordanian chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood are just the first steps in support of the President's commitment to eliminate the capabilities and operations of Muslim Brotherhood chapters that pose a threat to the United States as outlined in Executive Order 14362. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues to remain focused on disrupting the threats posed by violent Muslim Brotherhood chapters.

Question. Please describe your understanding of the Trump administration's strategy to designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, either pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act or Executive Order 13224.

Answer. The President's executive order sets in motion a process by which certain chapters or other subdivisions of the Muslim Brotherhood shall be considered for designation as terrorist groups. Terrorist designations of the Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Sudanese chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood reflect the ongoing, sustained effort to address violence and destabilization by Muslim Brotherhood chapters wherever it occurs, including through additional terrorist designations pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act or E.O. 13224, if appropriate.

Question. Do you assess that the Senate has the authority to mandate that Article 2 officials impose and enforce terrorism designations?

Answer. The Department is fully committed to taking appropriate action against foreign groups engaging in terrorist activity. We will continue to use all tools at our disposal, including imposing and enforcing terrorist designations, to further advance President Trump's policy priorities and keep Americans safe. The Department also reaffirms its commitment to faithfully executing and enforcing laws passed by Congress.

Question. Can you commit that, if confirmed, you will work with members of this Committee to impose and enforce anti-terrorism measures against the Muslim Brotherhood and its branches?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to faithfully imposing and enforcing measures enshrined in law, and I commit to working closely with the distinguished members of this Committee to address the threats posed by violent chapters, affiliates, and sub-

divisions of the Muslim Brotherhood, using the rigorous, case-by-case evidentiary standards established under Executive Order 14362.

Question. Do you assess that the Polisario Front poses a threat to U.S. interests, and how so?

Answer. We are constantly assessing threats to U.S. citizens, the homeland, and American interests abroad—and we will use every tool and authority available to protect and defend them. Since the UN-brokered 1991 ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front unraveled in 2020, there have been instances of sporadic, low-level kinetic activity between the Polisario Front and Morocco. If confirmed, I will continue efforts already underway to resolve this now 50-year-old dispute to strengthen regional security, protect American interests, and unlock opportunities for U.S. businesses.

Question. Assess the prospect of increased Iranian influence or support for the Polisario Front.

Answer. The Administration has consistently and unequivocally demonstrated its commitment to taking any and all necessary actions to weaken the Iranian regime and disrupt its support for malign and destabilizing actors worldwide.

If confirmed, I will work with the interagency to deploy all available tools, as directed by the President, to neutralize Iran's network of proxies and its campaign of aggression and deny the IRGC's access to the resources that sustain its ability to project influence globally.

RESPONSES TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DONALD BLOME BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

In 1987 Congress determined "that the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization and a threat to the interests of the United States, its allies, and to international law" (P.L. 100-204, 101 Stat. 1406). The language is found in U.S. Code in Title 22, Chapter 61, Section 5201(b).

Under the Biden administration, the State Department agreed with that congressional determination and confirmed it in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. On May 31, 2023, I asked then-Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf whether she "agree[d] with Congress's assessment that the PLO is a terrorist organization" as "written in the United States law, 22 U.S. Code Chapter 61." She answered "yes," without caveats.

President Trump and Trump administration officials have taken the same position. In March 2025, in written testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in response to a question I asked, now-Ambassador to Israel Huckabee said that "President Trump and I agree with the position of Congress and previous administrations. Of course the PLO is a terrorist organization" and "The administration's position has not changed. The PLO is a terrorist organization."

In a previous Question for the Record, I asked you if "you assess that the PLO is a terrorist organization?" You answered that "I understand the PLO is not an officially designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and is not otherwise designated as a terrorist organization under any U.S. sanctions program; however, certain factions of the PLO are designated FTOs and/or Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) ... the 1987 Anti-Terrorism Act, which included a 'determination' by Congress that the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization, imposes restrictions including on the PLO operating an office in Washington, until there is a certification that the PLO, its agents and its constituent groups no longer practice or support terrorist actions."

This answer stops short of acknowledging the correctness of the congressional determination, which had been the policy under the Biden administration, and had been reaffirmed by Trump administration officials. Please answer the following—

Question. Do you agree with Congress's assessment that the PLO is a terrorist organization?

Answer. President Trump and I agree with the position of Congress and previous administrations. The PLO is a terrorist organization.

Question. Is it your understanding that the policy of the State Department has shifted from what it was under the Biden administration, i.e., that the State Department no longer agrees with the congressional determination that the PLO is a terrorist organization?

Answer. The administration's position has not changed. The PLO is a terrorist organization.

Israeli Sovereignty

On December 6, 2017, President Trump issued a statement that "we finally acknowledge the obvious: that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. This is nothing more, or less, than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do." He subsequently implemented directives throughout his first and second terms reinforcing that recognition, and on December 6, 2025, he said, "In recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving our embassy to that beautiful city, we acknowledged the rightful capital that stands at the heart of Israel's traditions, government, and heritage."

Those decisions have been broadly reinforced by Trump administration officials, and specifically in the context of Israeli sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter and Old City of Jerusalem. In March 2025, in written testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in response to questions I asked, now-Ambassador to Israel Huckabee said that "Israel presently has sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. Given that Israel is the Jewish state, it should maintain sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter" and "The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government and Israel has controlled the Old City of Jerusalem since 1967."

In a previous Questions for the Record, I asked whether you understood the policy of the U.S. to be that Israel has sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter or the Old City of Jerusalem. You replied that the U.S. was "continuing to take no position on final status issues" and "was not taking a position on boundaries or borders." That understanding is impossible to align with President Trump's position or the positions of top Trump administration officials.

Please answer the following—

Question. Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem?

Answer. The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government. Israel presently has sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. Given that Israel is the Jewish state, it should maintain sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter.

Question. Do you understand the policy of the United States to be that Israel has sovereignty over Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem?

Answer. The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and its seat of government and Israel has controlled the Old City of Jerusalem since 1967.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO HON. DONALD BLOME BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) role in supporting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) with arms and logistical support has been well documented. This support allows the RSF to continue its campaign of genocide and destruction in Sudan and prolong the horrific humanitarian crisis resulting from the civil war. If confirmed, how will you work to curb the flow of money and weapons from the UAE to the RSF?

Answer. The war in Sudan is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, and external support to the warring parties is fueling the fighting and prolonging the suffering of the Sudanese people. If confirmed, I will continue working with international partners bilaterally, including the UAE, to push for peace. I will work through the multilateral negotiations mechanisms for Sudan to collectively press the parties for a humanitarian truce, expanded humanitarian access, and support a transition to civilian-led governance.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions will you take to encourage the end of ongoing hostilities in Gaza?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and the ceasefire it produced. I will support the work of the

Board of Peace and the Office of the High Representative to press Hamas toward full demilitarization—a step Hamas agreed to when it accepted the Plan. I will further support the Board of Peace, the Office of the High Representative, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, the International Stabilization Force, and our missions overseas, including Embassy Jerusalem, to consolidate the ceasefire's gains and advance durable peace, security, and stability.

Question. How will you ensure the rapid and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support the implementation of the President's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict to continue creating conditions that allow for security, stability, and a lasting resolution to the conflict including Hamas disarmament. The USG-led Civil Military Coordination Center (CMCC) has served as the central hub for coordinating humanitarian assistance into Gaza. The Board of Peace and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza are working to increase humanitarian aid delivery, restore public services, rebuild civil institutions, and lay the groundwork for long-term governance and economic opportunity for people in Gaza.

Question. Do you believe international journalists should have unfettered access to Gaza to provide independent, first-hand reports on the war?

Answer. Decisions on entry into Gaza remain within Israel's sovereign authority, and we continue to encourage facilitation of legitimate journalist access consistent with safety and security considerations.

Question. The State Department's annual human rights reports show that many countries covered by the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs have persistent and significant human rights violations, including, but not limited to restrictions on freedom of expression, women's rights, and religious freedom; cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment; arbitrary and unlawful killings; transnational repression; forced labor and unfair treatment of migrant labor. How do you plan to engage host governments across the region on these issues?

Answer. The Department calibrates its engagement with each government to that country's specific circumstances and our bilateral relationship, raising concerns directly through diplomatic channels on an array of issues. Promoting and defending religious freedom remains a particular priority for the Trump Administration, consistent with the 2025 National Security Strategy's affirmation that "the rights of free speech, freedom of religion and of conscience, and the right to choose and steer our common government are core rights that must never be infringed. Regarding countries that share, or say they share, these principles, the United States will advocate strongly that they be upheld in letter and spirit."

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Assistant Secretary.

Answer. I have been a foreign service officer for 33 years and was previously confirmed twice by the U.S. Senate to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia and subsequently to Pakistan. I have spent the majority of my career in the NEA region. I have led four U.S. Missions in the field, and I take a field-oriented approach to diplomacy. I look forward to the opportunity to put this experience to work if confirmed.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. In the NEA context, this means to seek real solutions to the region's enduring conflicts and promoting U.S. economic prosperity, expanding markets for American exports, and creating jobs and investment opportunities for American workers around the region. It also means protecting the safety and security of American citizens both at home and abroad.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs?

Answer. America First foreign policy puts U.S. interests first. If confirmed, I will focus on advancing U.S. interests, including promoting U.S. commercial diplomacy, countering malign actors that threaten U.S. security, and fostering regional integration.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee to advance the President's policy priorities while also following applicable statutory and legal requirements.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the Department's Near Eastern Affairs bureau implements appropriated funds consistent with all applicable laws.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries?

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

Question. What do you consider a reasonable timeframe for response?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs to provide a timely response.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. I believe foreign assistance, including humanitarian assistance, is a key tool in furthering the national security, foreign policy, and economic strength of the United States. Our responsibilities and opportunities are not mutually exclusive: foreign assistance enables the United States to support our allies and partners in the region while ensuring the United States advances economic, security, and diplomatic priorities through these relationships. If confirmed, I am committed to using the full extent of tools at the Department's disposal, including foreign assistance, to establish strong diplomatic and economic relations to achieve America First objectives in the region.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. For the Department, the advantage of working through multilateral processes (such as pooled funding or global awards to implementing organizations) is the ability to also drive reforms to overhaul multilateral foreign assistance, advocate with donor states to increase their contributions, and to streamline and rapidly scale up a common humanitarian assistance package across several humanitarian crises. This reduces the potential for duplication, helps minimize administrative costs, and requires fewer U.S. management resources and staff. More tailored bilateral assistance can complement and fill gaps for a more specialized, or context-specific humanitarian assistance need, and allow us to act quickly when a new disaster occurs in a country where a multilateral mechanism has not been stood up.

Question. What should be the determining factors on whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. The Department provides humanitarian assistance when the following criteria are met: (1) there is evidence of significant unmet need; (2) U.S. disaster assistance will save the lives of disaster-affected people; (3) the affected country requests or will accept international assistance; and (4) responding supports explicit U.S. foreign policy objectives. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring clear connection between demonstrated need and U.S. national security priorities in the provision of humanitarian assistance in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. Declarations of Humanitarian Need are issued by the Chief of Mission. Additional assistance may be provided at the discretion of Department leadership in response to humanitarian need and/or foreign policy priorities, in coordination with the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom.

Question. Do you commit to only fulfilling the role you've been nominated for, which is Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, if confirmed?

Answer. Yes, I do.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than "political purity" tests?

Answer. Yes, I do.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DONALD BLOME BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to drastically increase the volume of humanitarian assistance delivered into Gaza?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response (DHR) to identify opportunities to increase the flow of assistance, consistent with all applicable law, while engaging with the Government of Israel and like-minded regional partners to address the threats to peace and security posed by Hamas and its regional supporters.

Question. What actions has the State Department taken to urge the Government of Israel to allow sufficient and unimpeded humanitarian assistance into Gaza?

Answer. The Department is committed to improving humanitarian conditions in Gaza. The Department deployed a Gaza Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to Israel on October 14 to embed at the International Gaza Support Center (IGSC), formerly known as the Civil-Military Coordination Center. Through the IGSC, the DART elevates potential solutions for key issues like dual-use commodity restrictions, visas for medical professionals, medical evacuations, prioritization of humanitarian cargo into Gaza, and border crossings and efficiencies in the supply corridors.

Question. What actions will you take if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response (DHR) to engage the Government of Israel on ensuring sufficient levels of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, consistent with all applicable law and UNSCR 2803.

Question. If confirmed, do you anticipate working closely with the Board of Peace?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to implement President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, including with the Board of Peace as needed.

Question. How much funding does the Board of Peace currently have?

Answer. I defer to the Board of Peace.

Question. Are all funds currently held in a JP Morgan account?

Answer. Contributions flow to a World Bank-administered account governed by World Bank practices, then transfer to the Board of Peace account. This structure ensures transparency and accountability in fund management. For additional questions I defer to the Board of Peace.

Question. Who has access to this account?

Answer. I defer to the Board of Peace.

Question. Which countries have contributed funds to the Board of Peace?

Answer. I defer to the Board of Peace.

Question. How many staff are employed by the Board of Peace?

Answer. I defer to the Board of Peace.

Question. Will Donald Trump, as the Chair of the Board of Peace, be compensated while serving as President?

Answer. I defer to the White House.

Question. Will Donald Trump, as the Chair of the Board of Peace, be compensated after he is no longer serving as President?

Answer. I defer to the White House.

Question. Will members of the Board of Peace Executive Board be compensated?

Answer. I defer to the Board of Peace.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. DONALD BLOME BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

Question. The Board of Peace was created to oversee the implementation of the 20-point plan to end the war in Gaza, manage Gaza's reconstruction, and orchestrate a post-war governance framework. With such a sweeping mandate in such a critical region, there should be robust mechanisms for congressional engagement and oversight.

While I understand the Board of Peace is not at the State Department, it is clear there is a relationship between the two institutions.

If confirmed, do you commit to providing this committee with regular updates, briefings, and other relevant information about the State Department's role in working with or funding the Board of Peace?

Answer. The Administration will notify Congress of any intent to use U.S. funds to support the Board of Peace or International Stabilization Force through normal processes, consistent with applicable law, and will be prepared to address further questions via that process. I commit to remaining in close touch with the committee on this subject.

Question. Given the Board's sweeping mandate, what role do you think NEA should play in supporting Gaza's reconstruction and post-war governance?

Answer. The Administration, including the Department and the NEA Bureau, will continue to work closely with the Board of Peace to provide technical advice and coordinate on solutions that will reverse decades of policies crafted around the world that claimed to support civilians in Gaza, yet did the opposite. This includes increasing the flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza while eliminating aid diversion, increasing medical evacuations from Gaza, and addressing widespread water and sanitation concerns.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. If confirmed, what is your plan to tackle scam center activity in Cambodia, and do you commit to regularly report to Congress on your efforts?

Answer. Countering online scams that defraud American citizens out of billions of dollars is a top priority for the Administration and will be a top priority of mine, if confirmed. As U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, I will prioritize working closely with the Cambodian government to dismantle these operations, leveraging the Scam Center Strike Force, targeting sanctions against individuals and entities operating these compounds, and coordinating law enforcement action with the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Treasury. I will also continue to press Cambodian authorities to hold accountable those responsible for these forced-labor scam operations and to strengthen regional cooperation through existing mechanisms. I am committed to keeping Congress informed of our progress on this critical issue and will work with my team to ensure appropriate and regular updates are provided.

Question. How would you assess the effectiveness of sanctions imposed by the U.S. on individuals and entities linked to scam compounds in Cambodia, and what additional tools should the United States consider if meaningful progress is not made?

Answer. While I do not have access to the information about the exact impact of this action and earlier actions, I understand that U.S. pressure, including a series of U.S. sanctions with the latest tranche in June, has been a major factor prompting Cambodian authorities to crack down on scam centers through Operation XXL. A number of U.S. allies and partners whose nationals were also targeted by Cambodia-based scam groups—including the U.K., Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan—joined U.S. efforts, increasing the effectiveness of our sanctions and other actions to dismantle scam networks. If confirmed, I commit to using all available tools—including expanded sanctions, enhanced law enforcement cooperation, and deeper regional coordination via ASEAN mechanisms—to protect Americans from these threats.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. The People's Republic of China regularly uses its influence over the Cambodian government to promote Chinese interests within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). How should the United States counter the PRC's influence over Cambodian interactions within ASEAN?

Answer. ASEAN does not want to be dominated by any one power; nor does the Cambodian government, which has publicly committed to protecting its own sovereignty. U.S. engagement provides alternatives and partnership based on shared interests. The United States supports ASEAN's efforts to strengthen regional sta-

bility and prosperity while maintaining its independent voice. If confirmed, I will leverage U.S.-Cambodia bilateral engagement, including but not limited to military-military cooperation and trade ties, as well as coordinate with my counterpart at the U.S. Mission to ASEAN to counter influence within ASEAN from adversaries like China.

Question. How do you plan to support U.S. government-funded efforts to remove unexploded ordnance and Agent Orange contamination in Cambodia as part of the United States' broader commitment to war-legacy programs?

Answer. The United States is proud of its long and successful history partnering with the Cambodian government to address landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). Since 1993, the United States has provided more than \$220 million to locate and remove explosive hazards throughout Cambodia. In 2025, the United States provided \$13 million and intends to provide an additional \$13 million in 2026 to make the land safer for Cambodian families through demining efforts. This is also helping drive economic development, agriculture, and tourism across the country by opening up newly cleared land for these activities. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in Washington and with members of the Committee support the continuance of these programs in Cambodia.

Question. Do you believe the United States should be doing more to support war-legacy programs in Southeast Asia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the U.S. government's successful war-legacy efforts in Cambodia and around the region.

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. Over the past 17 years I have advised three Senators, a Cabinet Secretary, and led soldiers in a combat environment. I have worked and negotiated with countries on every continent except Antarctica and traveled extensively throughout Asia. Additionally, I have first-hand experience leading executive branch personnel and managing the bureaucratic requirements of the Federal work environment.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in our bilateral relationship with Cambodia?

Answer. The most pressing challenge in the U.S.-Cambodia relationship is combatting the proliferation of online scams targeting American citizens, requiring continued sanctions, law enforcement cooperation, and pressure on the Cambodian government to dismantle these networks. A second key challenge is Cambodia's strategic alignment with Beijing, including China's expanded military presence at Ream Naval Base, which demands sustained U.S. engagement to preserve Cambodian sovereignty and mitigate the threat that China's growing military presence poses to regional stability. A third challenge is addressing human rights challenges—including politically motivated trials and media restrictions—along with the need to use targeted, strategic foreign assistance to support sustainable, locally led solutions so Cambodia can take full, transparent ownership over time. Finally, if confirmed, I will tackle the challenge of improving Cambodia's business climate and making it a more attractive location for U.S. business investment, which requires implementing the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade and addressing the other issues noted in this response.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Cambodia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will address work with the Cambodian government to dismantle scam center operations defrauding Americans, leveraging sanctions, the Scam Center Strike Force, and law enforcement cooperation, and seek to counter Chinese influence in Cambodia, particularly on security issues. On the economic front, I will pursue expanded bilateral trade and investment opportunities and support Cambodian efforts to reform its economy, including those efforts that are mandated by our Agreement on Reciprocal Trade. Throughout, I will balance firm engagement on these threats with efforts to deepen mutual confidence and strengthen the overall U.S.-Cambodia partnership.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. America First foreign policy is the strategic decision to weigh the considerations of the U.S. Government and citizens with priority above other variables within the calculus for determining foreign policy decisions and solutions.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Cambodia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize the following key America First policy priorities in Cambodia: promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region, countering malign influence and anti-American propaganda, advancing commercial diplomacy, and combating transnational crime and illegal immigration, including by working with—and as necessary putting pressure on—Prime Minister Hun Manet and his administration, while also ensuring we are holding Cambodia to account for scam centers and other issues that impact the life and livelihood of Americans.

Question. In Cambodia, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. The United States is countering Chinese and Russian influence in Cambodia by deepening U.S.-Cambodia ties through renewed military-to-military cooperation, expanded trade and investment engagement, increased American influence through cultivating third-party voices including USG alumni, and a landmark 5-year, \$30.8 million health cooperation Memorandum of Understanding signed in April 2026 under the America First Global Health Strategy. The President's intervention in the 2025 Cambodia-Thailand border conflict has created significant goodwill among a Cambodian government that recognizes the United States stepped up and prevented further civilian casualties while China largely remained on the sidelines. The United States is also encouraging Cambodia to strengthen its governance and international standing by dismantling online scam operations and is working to increase transparency and bolster Cambodia's sovereignty at the Ream Naval Base.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to PRC or Russian influence operations or infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes, and the United States is leveraging the positive momentum in the bilateral relationship and presenting better alternatives to our adversaries and competitors each day, especially in the commercial sector. Through the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, for example, Cambodia committed to buying more high-quality American goods; this resulted in Air Cambodia's signing of a \$3.24 billion deal with Boeing to purchase ten 737-8 aircraft, with the option to purchase ten more. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation also approved a \$100 million deal to refinance the new Techo International Airport in Phnom Penh, which will open up new opportunities for U.S. businesses.

The United States is offering better alternatives, and the Cambodians are taking them. If confirmed, I will work with Congress and my State Department colleagues in Washington to identify opportunities that strengthen our position in Cambodia in relation to our adversaries and competitors.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with all branches of the U.S. Government to ensure that America's best interests are represented and protected in Cambodia.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the State Department's budget and foreign assistance leads to obligate all appropriate funds.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries?

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

Question. What do you consider a reasonable timeframe for response?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs to get an answer to the Committee as soon as possible, and endeavor to completely fulfill requests within weeks of receiving them.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Cambodia?

Answer. Promoting democracy and respect for human rights in Cambodia will be a key focus of mine if confirmed. A stable, economically open, transparent country with a strong rule of law benefits the U.S. economy and businesses, American citizens when they visit abroad, and the U.S.'s ability to help combat transnational crime.

On human rights, the U.S. remains concerned by actions taken to restrict freedom of expression and assembly. Allowing closed independent media to reopen and operate without fear of retaliation would strengthen both Cambodia and U.S. interests through increased information publicly available to counter state-sponsored propaganda and disinformation, combat online scams and promote a more business-friendly investment climate. The United States also continues to call on the Cambodian government for meaningful signs of progress in the judicial appeal of dual Cambodian American citizen and human rights activist Seng Theary.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Cambodian government to advance rights for the Cambodian people and protect the rights of American citizens.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. The United States has a responsibility to be the world's foremost provider of life-saving assistance, but an equal responsibility to ensure every taxpayer dollar reaches those in need rather than being consumed by bureaucracy and overhead. The America First approach is extremely effective, as it further emphasizes rapid deployment and getting aid moving within 24 hours by partnering with trusted, vetted organizations while cutting out middlemen and layers of administrative cost that historically diverted resources away from frontline impact.

There is real opportunity in strengthening accountability mechanisms and in calling on other donor nations to share the burden through pooled funding rather than leaving the United States to shoulder disproportionate costs. In Cambodia specifically, I will, if confirmed, apply this same philosophy: responsive, needs-driven assistance delivered through trusted partners, paired with a clear expectation that our support strengthens Cambodia's own capacity and accountability, ensuring American generosity translates into lasting results for the Cambodian people and reinforces the United States as a reliable, transparent partner in the region.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. Bilateral humanitarian aid offers the advantage of direct U.S. visibility, greater control over resource allocation, and more ability to tailor assistance to specific strategic partnerships. Multilateral processes allow for greater burden-sharing, and access to greater pooled resources and expertise. The most effective approach typically blends both: using bilateral channels to advance specific strategic priorities and multilateral platforms to leverage collective action and shared costs on broader humanitarian challenges.

Question. What should be the determining factors on whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. In addition to prioritizing a focus on the greatest humanitarian needs around the world, the determining factors for employing humanitarian aid as a national security tool should include whether the assistance directly advances core U.S. strategic interests, such as countering adversarial influence, stabilizing regions prone to extremism or conflict, and strengthening partnerships with like-minded governments. Decision-makers should also weigh the sustainability and accountability of the assistance, ensuring it produces measurable outcomes owned by partner nations rather than creating long-term dependency or vulnerability to misuse. Finally, aid should be calibrated against the risk that withholding or reducing it could leave a vacuum for adversaries and strategic competitors like China or Russia to fill, undermining broader U.S. security objectives.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. President Trump and Secretary Rubio ultimately make these decisions in the best interest of the American people.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than "political purity" tests?

Answer. Yes, I do.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. Cambodia's relationship with the PRC has deepened through significant Chinese investment, infrastructure financing, military cooperation, and reported access to Cambodia's Ream Naval Base. Expanded PRC access to the base could provide China with a strategic military foothold and enhance its power projection capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, in recent years, the U.S. and Cambodia have discussed rebuilding defense ties after years of strained relations, including the potential resumption of military exchanges and exercises. Given China's growing influence in Cambodia and concerns regarding Ream Naval Base, what would you advise U.S. policymakers and INDOPACOM to adopt in terms of diplomatic and security engagement with Cambodia to maintain situational awareness, strengthen regional partnerships, and protect U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advise U.S. policymakers and PACOM to capitalize on the momentum and goodwill President Trump has created with Prime Minister Hun Manet and his government to advance our shared vision of a free, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific. Cambodia has offered some support for U.S. strategic interests such as investment climate improvement, law enforcement cooperation to combat transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and online scams that target Americans, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and demining programs, DPRK sanctions enforcement, POW/MIA accounting for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War era, and global health security. But I will also underscore that Cambodia will not reach its full potential until it addresses democracy and human rights concerns and reassesses its strategic alignment with China, which poses a threat to regional stability and security.

Question. If confirmed, how would you balance efforts to strengthen U.S.-Cambodia relations with the need to address concerns regarding Chinese military access, transparency at Ream Naval Base, and Cambodia's strategic alignment with Beijing?

Answer. If confirmed, I will build on the momentum of more than 75 years of U.S.-Cambodia relations by leveraging our military-military cooperation and economic engagement to counter Chinese influence, including urging the Cambodian government to preserve its sovereignty at military facilities, including Ream Naval Base, where China's military presence threatens regional stability. I will continue pressing for greater transparency on concerning Chinese activities at Ream, emphasizing that such openness benefits the Cambodian people, neighboring countries, ASEAN, and the broader region. Ultimately, I will balance these concerns by fostering mutual confidence through expanded security and trade cooperation, positioning the United States as a reliable partner that respects Cambodian sovereignty while remaining clear-eyed about strategic competition with Beijing.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you use to evaluate whether expanded U.S.-Cambodia military engagement advances U.S. strategic interests rather than legitimizes actions that could undermine regional security?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to evaluating whether expanded U.S.-Cambodia military engagement advances U.S. strategic interests, particularly on countering Chinese influence in Cambodia. I will also assess whether our engagement produces concrete, verifiable outcomes such as reciprocal access, interoperability gains, and respect for Cambodian sovereignty, rather than merely symbolic gestures that Beijing could exploit. Finally, I will weigh whether cooperation strengthens the U.S. position in the broader Indo-Pacific security architecture, ensuring any engagement advances U.S. strategic interests without inadvertently legitimizing actions that undermine regional security.

Question. The U.S. has historically provided assistance to Cambodia in areas including health, education, food security, civil society, human rights, and demining. Recent changes to U.S. foreign assistance programs have reduced or restructured foreign assistance initiatives. If reductions or restructuring of U.S. assistance are found to create gaps in areas important to U.S. interests, what key steps would you take as Ambassador to mitigate those risks, avoid strategic setbacks, and prevent adversaries from filling the resulting gaps?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with State Department foreign assistance leads to prioritize targeted, high-impact assistance that ensures U.S. investment in health, food security, and demining continue to yield sustainable, Cambodian-owned results, which also advance U.S. interests. I will closely monitor sectors most vulnerable to restructuring gaps and advocate for reprogramming or part-

ner burden-sharing to sustain U.S. visibility and influence where strategic interests are at stake. Finally, I will leverage strengthened bilateral engagement, including but not limited to deeper military-military cooperation and trade ties, to reinforce Cambodia's confidence in the United States as a reliable partner, thereby reducing space for adversaries like China to fill resulting gaps.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DOUGLAS MASTRIANO BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. As the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor plans to make grants in Central Europe, including potentially in Slovakia, what types of organizations and what types of priorities would you recommend making grants to?

Answer. Any grants made in Slovakia should clearly advance U.S. interests and produce results. For Washington-led funding initiatives, if confirmed, I would ensure that the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava recommends potential grantees that are qualified to address the priorities described in the request for proposals so that the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor can run a transparent, competitive process to award the funds to the best candidates. I would also prioritize organizations with capacity for implementation. American taxpayer dollars should achieve concrete results that make Slovakia a stronger, more capable, and more reliable ally.

Question. If the State Department makes any Democracy Fund or Public Diplomacy grants in Slovakia, do you commit to informing the Slovak government on the objectives of those grants, and consulting with and informing this Committee both of the objectives of the grants and of the relevant implementing partners?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will do so.

Question. Following the Slovak Prime Minister's letter to Elon Musk in February 2025 requesting information on grants provided to "non-government organizations (NGOs), media and individual journalists, who were and are active on the territory of the Slovak Republic," would you commit to protecting the Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of all current and former U.S. partners, including both U.S. citizens and host country nationals from the Slovak government and other non-U.S. government inquires?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will protect private information in accordance with U.S. laws and regulations.

Question. January 6th: Who won the 2020 election?

Answer. The certified results of the 2020 Presidential election reflected that Joseph R. Biden Jr. received a majority of the electoral votes. Those electoral votes were counted and certified by Congress on January 7, 2021, in accordance with the Constitution and applicable Federal law. Joseph R. Biden Jr. was inaugurated as President of the United States on January 20, 2021, and served until January 20, 2025.

Question. Do you condemn the insurrection on January 6th?

Answer. Yes. I condemn the violence and unlawful acts that occurred at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Political violence has no place in our constitutional system. The peaceful transfer of power and the rule of law are fundamental principles of our Republic.

Question. Campaign Committee: Your questionnaire states that your campaign committee "will remain in place". Do you plan to keep your campaign committee open and if yes, why?

Answer. Consistent with my ethics agreement in coordination with the Office of Government Ethics and discussions with the Office of Government Ethics, my campaign committee will remain in what they labeled a dormant administrative status for the purpose of satisfying remaining legal, financial, fiduciary, administrative, regulatory, and compliance obligations in accordance with applicable Federal and State law.

The committee will not engage in campaign activity, fundraising, political communications, political expenditures, or any other campaign operations. Any disbursements made by the committee would be limited to those reasonably necessary to satisfy lawful administrative obligations and to ensure compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements. Such disbursements may include expenses associated with required financial reporting, accounting, record retention, professional services,

compliance activities, and other obligations incurred in the ordinary administration and eventual orderly wind-down of the committee, as permitted by law.

If confirmed, I will continue to comply fully with my ethics agreement, all applicable Federal and State campaign finance laws, and all ethics requirements and restrictions applicable to my service as ambassador.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DOUGLAS MASTRIANO BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Do you believe the January 6th rioters were justified in their assault on the Capitol?

Answer. No. The violence at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, was wrong. I unequivocally condemn political violence.

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. My professional career has been devoted to building, leading, and strengthening international alliances in support of American interests. During more than 30 years on active duty in the U.S. Army, I lived overseas for 12 years and served throughout Europe, the Middle East, Canada, and Asia alongside allied civilian and military leaders.

My international experience began during the cold war, serving along the inner-German and Czechoslovakian borders. In those assignments, my unit worked closely with our German allies in defending NATO's front line against the Warsaw Pact, gaining firsthand experience in alliance cooperation, interoperability, and the enduring value of strong partnerships among sovereign nations.

As my career progressed, I was entrusted with increasingly senior multinational planning and coalition leadership responsibilities. I helped build the multinational coalition of more than 40 nations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, working with military planners in Warsaw, Poland, London, and the United States to integrate coalition partners into operational planning. Throughout my career, I planned, led, or participated in major multinational exercises and engagements across Europe—including Germany, Poland, Norway, the Baltic states, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Turkey—as well as missions in the Balkans and the Middle East. These efforts required close coordination with both civilian and military leaders to strengthen NATO cooperation, improve interoperability, and advance shared security objectives. I served as the senior intelligence officer (G2) in NATO Land Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, leading a multinational element, where I coordinated the integration of intelligence from across the alliance to support our unit's mission. I was selected by the Chief of Staff of the Army to lead two major strategic research initiatives—Project 1704 and Project 1721—examining the future of land power in the Baltic region.

These multinational studies brought together military officers, civilian officials, and defense experts from approximately a dozen allied nations to develop recommendations for strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense posture. As part of this work, I personally conducted on-the-ground assessments throughout Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, meeting with senior civilian and military leaders to evaluate the region's security environment and incorporate their perspectives into our recommendations. Leading these projects required building consensus among allied partners, integrating diverse viewpoints, and delivering strategic recommendations to the Army's senior leadership.

In Afghanistan, I served as Director of NATO's Joint Intelligence Center for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), where I led a multinational organization composed of civilian and military professionals from 18 different nations. Working daily with coalition partners, allied intelligence services, and the broader U.S. Intelligence Community, I unified diverse organizations into a single intelligence enterprise supporting combat operations across Afghanistan. Success depended not only on technical expertise, but on earning trust, fostering mutual respect, communicating clearly, and leading people from different cultures, languages, and national perspectives toward a common mission. I served in positions that worked in and with multinational organizations, coalition planning efforts, strategic alliance initiatives, and complex international missions. Those experiences taught me that successful partnerships are built on credibility, integrity, respect, clear communication, and the ability to build consensus while faithfully advancing American interests.

As a Pennsylvania State Senator, I continued to strengthen international relationships through engagement with foreign delegations and allied civilian and military leaders. As Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I have provided legislative oversight of Pennsylvania's National Guard State Partnership Program with Lithuania, facilitating engagement with Lithuania's senior civilian and military leadership and supporting one of our nation's longest standing and most successful State partnerships. These experiences have reinforced my belief that enduring alliances are sustained through consistent engagement, mutual respect, and shared strategic interests.

My career has not been one of observing alliances from the outside, it has been one of building them, strengthening them, and leading them in times of peace and war. If confirmed, I will bring more than three decades of firsthand experience building alliances, leading multinational organizations, and working alongside foreign civilian and military leaders to strengthen the partnership between the United States and Slovakia. I will faithfully represent the President, advance the foreign policy of the United States, and work every day to deepen one of America's most important alliances in Central Europe.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in our bilateral relationship with Slovakia?

Answer. The United States has no greater priority than the protection of American citizens—from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers abroad to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation. Slovakia is a valued NATO ally and, if confirmed, I will work to build Slovakia's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening regional and global security and stability. If confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment by increasing opportunities for U.S. companies in the Slovak market and for Slovak companies that want to invest in the United States. I will promote U.S. exports, fight for transparency and the rule of law as Slovakia improves its business environment, and press for greater energy diversity and efficiency that will further Slovak and European energy security. If confirmed, I will also focus on actively engaging the Slovak public to build support to advance our mutual national interests.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Slovakia?

Answer. The principal security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Slovakia stem from strategic competitors seeking to undermine U.S. interests, energy dependence that creates economic and political vulnerabilities, and the need for increased investment in and planning for defense capabilities. If confirmed, I will work to mitigate foreign malign influence and economic coercion in Slovakia. I will prioritize helping Slovakia diversify its energy supplies away from Russia, expand opportunities for U.S. businesses and investors, and advance major commercial projects that support U.S. economic interests. I will also encourage Slovakia to meet its NATO defense spending commitments and ensure those resources are directed toward capabilities that strengthen deterrence and collective defense. More broadly, I will leverage the embassy's political, economic, public diplomacy, and security cooperation tools to advance U.S. interests while reinforcing Slovakia's role as a strong and reliable ally.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. America First foreign policy means putting the interests of the American people at the center of every foreign policy decision. It means protecting the security of the United States, promoting American prosperity, defending our national sovereignty, and preserving peace through strength. It recognizes that strong alliances are essential when they advance America's security and economic interests and are built on mutual respect, shared responsibility, and reciprocity. America First means engaging confidently with allies, encouraging them to contribute more to our common defense, and pursuing partnerships that make both the United States and its allies stronger, more secure, and more prosperous.

If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the President's foreign policy and work to strengthen the partnership between the United States and Slovakia in a manner that advances America's interests while reinforcing our shared security and prosperity.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Slovakia?

Answer. If confirmed, I would implement an America First foreign policy by ensuring our relationship with Slovakia delivers tangible benefits to the American people.

ple. I would work to expand opportunities for U.S. businesses, workers, and investors by promoting U.S. exports, reducing barriers to trade and investment, and supporting major commercial opportunities for U.S. firms. Slovakia's planned investment in a new nuclear power plant presents a significant opportunity. Second, I would encourage Slovakia to meet its NATO defense spending commitments because an America First foreign policy means ensuring our allies contribute their fair share to collective security. Third, I would support efforts to wean Europe from adversarial energy suppliers and expand opportunities for U.S. companies.

Question. In Slovakia, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. The United States is working closely with Slovakia to strengthen its resilience to foreign malign influence, economic coercion, and cyber threats. The United States and Slovakia cooperate closely through NATO and the bilateral security relationship to support Slovakia's efforts to build modern defense capabilities and strengthen critical infrastructure. Economically, the U.S. Government supports opportunities for U.S. companies in sectors like energy, defense, and technology and raises concerns if Slovakia is considering allowing Chinese investment in critical areas. The United States is also working to diversify Slovakia's energy sources to reduce its vulnerability to economic leverage. In addition, the U.S. Government supports educational exchanges and other public diplomacy programs that foster an informed public that is resilient and clear-eyed about Chinese and Russian influence and position the United States as Slovakia's most important partner. If confirmed, I would continue these important efforts.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to PRC or Russian influence operations or infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes. Slovakia's planned construction of a new nuclear power plant is one of the most significant commercial opportunities in Central Europe. Historically, Slovakia has relied on Russian technology and cooperation for the development and operation of its six existing nuclear reactors. There are also opportunities to encourage trusted, secure investments in technology and critical infrastructure including cybersecurity, telecommunications, and digital infrastructure. Finally, continued defense modernization offers opportunities for U.S. suppliers while strengthening NATO interoperability and enhancing collective defense.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States. This includes working closely with Congress on foreign policy.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under my management.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries, in conjunction with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

Question. What do you consider a reasonable timeframe for response?

Answer. Having served as a Pennsylvania State Senator with significant legislative oversight responsibilities, I understand firsthand the importance of receiving timely, accurate, and complete information from executive agencies. Congressional inquiries are an essential part of constitutional oversight and will receive prompt attention.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that Embassy Bratislava responds to congressional requests as expeditiously as possible while providing complete and accurate information consistent with applicable law and Department policy.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Slovakia?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advance human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in a manner that is respectful of Slovakia's sovereignty while remaining clear about America's values and interests. I believe that the United States is most persuasive when we lead through partnership rather than public criticism. I

would engage regularly with Slovak government officials, members of parliament, businesses, and religious leaders to better understand developments on the ground. I will also encourage the Slovak government to protect freedom of speech from misguided and burdensome European Union initiatives.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. While the United States does not provide humanitarian aid to Slovakia, I believe that such aid is best used when both helping people in dire need and advancing U.S. interests.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. The United States does not provide humanitarian aid to Slovakia. If confirmed, I will work with all appropriate institutions to advance U.S. interests in Slovakia and more generally.

Question. What should be the determining factors on whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. While the United States does not provide humanitarian aid to Slovakia, I believe that such aid is best used when both helping people in dire need and advancing U.S. interests.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. The President and his Cabinet and advisors, in consultation with Congress, are best placed to determine whether and when to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than “political purity” tests?

Answer. Yes. For more than 30 years as a U.S. Army officer, I served in a profession where promotions, evaluations, and leadership responsibilities were based on merit, performance, character, and mission accomplishment—not political affiliation or ideology. During my career, I led soldiers and civilians from every region of our country and from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, as well as multinational organizations composed of personnel from allied nations. As a professional military officer, I served administrations of both political parties.

If confirmed, I will bring that same commitment to Embassy Bratislava. Personnel decisions will be based on merit, professionalism, integrity, performance, and an individual’s ability to advance the mission of the Embassy and faithfully implement the foreign policy of the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DOUGLAS MASTRIANO BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. If confirmed, what will your five top priorities be as Ambassador to Slovakia?

Answer. First, the United States has no greater priority than the protection of American citizens—from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers, to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

Second, I would lead an embassy that delivers results for the American people. If confirmed, I will ensure our embassy team provides outstanding services to U.S. citizens, supports American businesses, effectively manages taxpayer resources, and advances the President’s foreign policy priorities through a disciplined, high-performing mission with strong morale.

Third, I would advance American energy security and commercial interests. I would promote U.S. investment and technology—including civil nuclear energy and other strategic sectors—that enhance Slovakia’s energy security, reduce dependence on adversarial suppliers, and create opportunities for U.S. companies. I would also work to advance commercial diplomacy and expand bilateral trade and investment. I would seek to remove barriers to commerce and strengthen economic ties that benefit workers and companies in both countries.

Fourth, I would ensure that our educational exchanges, professional partnerships, and public diplomacy programs advance U.S. interests by connecting with future Slovak leaders, expanding opportunities for American businesses and universities, and reinforcing the long-term partnership between our two countries.

Finally, we must strengthen our defense and security partnership. Slovakia is a NATO ally on the alliance's eastern flank. I would work to deepen defense cooperation, support Slovakia's military modernization efforts, increase interoperability with U.S. forces, and strengthen NATO's collective defense.

Embassy Morale and Workplace Environment

Question. You have previously been accused of creating a hostile work environment and engaging in age and racial discrimination by a former staffer. The complaint was settled in 2025 for \$133,000. If confirmed, do you commit to not engaging in age or race discrimination?

Answer. Yes. Absolutely. My record over more than 30 years of military service demonstrates my commitment to leading diverse organizations with fairness, dignity, and respect. Throughout my career, I led soldiers and civilians of every race, ethnicity, religion, and background from every corner of America. I also served and led in multinational organizations across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, working alongside allies from 18 nations with different cultures, languages, religions, and national perspectives. Mission success depended on earning trust, treating people fairly, and bringing diverse teams together to accomplish a common purpose. Those are the leadership principles I have practiced throughout my career, and they are the principles I will bring to the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava.

I will fully uphold the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity policies and ensure every member of the embassy team is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your strategy for lifting morale at the Embassy and ensuring a positive and productive work environment?

Answer. Strong embassies are built on trust. My first priority will be to listen—to our Foreign Service Officers, Civil Service professionals, locally employed staff, and family members. I believe leaders should be visible, accessible, and decisive. People perform at their best when expectations are clear, good work is recognized, concerns are heard, and leaders lead by example. Those are principles that served me throughout three decades in uniform, and they will guide me as Chief of Mission.

Media Freedom and Public Diplomacy

Question. Prime Minister Fico has curtailed access for media organizations his government considers unfriendly. During your 2022 gubernatorial campaign, your campaign also restricted access for many mainstream news organizations, contributing to what was widely characterized as a contentious relationship with the press.

Given your own record of limiting press access, please describe how you would ensure that the U.S. Embassy promotes transparency, press freedom, and regular engagement with a broad range of Slovak media, including outlets that are critical of U.S. policy or your own views.

Answer. The United States has long stood for a free and independent press, and I fully support that principle. If confirmed, I will ensure the embassy engages professionally and respectfully with the broad spectrum of Slovak media. Journalists are free to ask difficult questions, and public officials are free to answer them. That is how democracy works, and our embassy should reflect those values.

Many U.S. priorities in Slovakia and the broader region—including sanctions, trade, energy security, support for Ukraine, and countering Russian influence—require close coordination with EU institutions and member states. Given your past criticism of the European Union, please describe how you would reconcile those views with the responsibilities of representing U.S. interests in Slovakia and maintaining effective working relations with Slovak officials, EU institutions, and other European partners.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you distinguish between legitimate criticism of the press and civil society and actions by Slovak public officials that undermine democratic accountability and an independent information environment?

Answer. There is an important distinction between criticizing the press and using government authority to silence it. Democracies welcome disagreement. They do not use state power to intimidate journalists or suppress lawful speech. If confirmed, I will support the principles of free expression and democratic accountability while maintaining respectful relationships with Slovak officials.

Question. European Union: In a 2018 radio interview, you described leaders of the European Union (EU) as the “political, diplomatic enemies of the United States.” Slovakia's foreign, economic, and security policies are closely integrated with the

European Union, and the EU has raised concerns about democratic backsliding, media freedom, and the rule of law under Prime Minister Fico's government.

Many U.S. priorities in Slovakia and the broader region—including sanctions, trade, energy security, support for Ukraine, and countering Russian influence—require close coordination with EU institutions and member states. Given your past criticism of the European Union, please describe how you would reconcile those views with the responsibilities of representing U.S. interests in Slovakia and maintaining effective working relations with Slovak officials, EU institutions, and other European partners.

Answer. My responsibility, if confirmed, is to faithfully represent the foreign policy of the President of the United States. Throughout more than 30 years in the U.S. Army, I worked closely with our European allies and NATO partners. I spent over a decade living in Europe, served in Germany, Bosnia, Kosovo, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. I led multinational organizations where success depended upon building trust and cooperation among allied governments and militaries. Those experiences taught me that strong alliances are built on mutual respect, honest dialogue, and a shared commitment to common objectives. Slovakia is an important member of both NATO and the European Union, and advancing American interests requires close cooperation with both. If confirmed, I will work constructively with Slovak officials, EU institutions, and our European partners to strengthen our alliance, advance U.S. interests, and faithfully implement the foreign policy of the President of the United States.

Question. Given your critical views on both the European Union and mainstream media organizations, please describe how you would approach building trust with the EU and its member states to credibly advocate for an open information environment, independent media, and democratic institutions in Slovakia.

Answer. Trust is earned through honesty, competence, and results. Throughout more than 30 years in uniform, I spent much of my career building and leading international coalitions. I served alongside allies across Europe and beyond, led multinational organizations, and worked daily with military and civilian leaders from numerous NATO and partner nations in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Those experiences taught me that successful partnerships are built on mutual respect, credibility, and keeping your word. If confirmed, I will bring those same principles to building strong relationships with Slovakia, the European Union, civil society, and the media. I will engage professionally with all stakeholders while faithfully advancing the policies and interests of the United States.

Question. Ukraine and Prior Statements: You have publicly referred to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a “spoiled little brat” and argued that “the war cannot end without Russia annexing Donetsk and Luhansk.” Slovakia remains deeply divided over Russia’s war against Ukraine, with Prime Minister Fico pursuing closer ties with Moscow while Slovakia remains a NATO ally and an important security partner.

Is it still your position that the war between Ukraine and Russia “cannot end without Russia annexing Donetsk and Luhansk,” territory internationally recognized as being part of Ukraine?

Answer. No. That reflected my strategic assessment at a point in the war, when the battlefield reached a stalemate. Since then, the strategic environment has changed dramatically. Ukraine has fundamentally altered the character of the war through its innovative use of unmanned systems, long-range precision strikes, and other emerging technologies. Those developments have disrupted Russian operations, challenged Russia’s position in the Black Sea, struck strategic military assets and infrastructure deep inside Russia, and demonstrated that the battlefield continues to change in ways few anticipated.

As a result, I no longer believe the assumptions underlying my earlier assessment apply. If confirmed, however, my responsibility will not be to offer my personal military assessments. It will be to faithfully represent and implement the foreign policy of the President of the United States and the Secretary of State regarding Ukraine, Slovakia, NATO, and European security.

Question. If confirmed, how would you navigate divisions among Slovak leaders over Ukraine and build the trust necessary to engage effectively with officials across the political spectrum?

Answer. Slovakia’s leaders and citizens hold a range of views regarding the war in neighboring Ukraine. If confirmed, I would approach those differences with respect, candor, and a clear understanding that my responsibility is to represent the President and advance the interests of the United States.

I would begin by listening. I would meet regularly not only with the government, but also with politicians from across the spectrum and local officials. I would be direct about American priorities. U.S. goals are to end the war, stop the killing, and achieve a durable peace that strengthens American and allied security. I would look for areas of practical cooperation, including securing NATO's eastern flank, encouraging greater European responsibility for Europe's defense, supporting humanitarian needs, protecting critical infrastructure, and advancing a lasting peace. I would not insert the embassy into domestic political disputes. My objective would be to identify areas where American and Slovak interests align and turn that common ground into concrete results.

Question. Russian Influence and Democratic Resilience: Slovakia remains one of NATO's allies most susceptible to pro-Russian narratives, with Russian malign influence operations seeking to exploit societal divisions, undermine trust in democratic institutions, and weaken support for the transatlantic alliance. What role should the U.S. Embassy play in countering Russian malign influence in Slovakia?

Answer. As in many countries in Europe and the West more broadly, Russia and other actors conduct foreign malign influence activities in Slovakia, generally through popular websites, media, and social media channels. The Slovak government has made efforts to combat foreign adversarial propaganda through strategic communication, capacity building programs, and legislation. If confirmed, I and my team will support the people of Slovakia in their fight against foreign malign influence and propaganda.

Question. What role should the U.S. Embassy play in strengthening democratic resilience in Slovakia to protect public trust in democratic processes?

Answer. If confirmed, I believe that the primary role of the U.S. Embassy is to represent the United States, strengthen the bilateral relationship, and faithfully implement the President's foreign policy agenda. The embassy's credibility depends on engaging constructively with the government and civic institutions.

Question. Given Russian malign influence efforts in Slovakia and the region, what public diplomacy initiatives would you prioritize to strengthen Slovak confidence in the United States and the transatlantic partnership?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen Slovak confidence in the United States by demonstrating and highlighting U.S. excellence and the positive impact of U.S. business, military, and academic cooperation in Slovakia. If confirmed, I would work to facilitate Slovak participation in exchange programs like Fulbright and the International Visitor Leadership Program that bring together American and Slovak leaders. I would also seek to facilitate the travel of U.S. expert speakers to Slovakia. These public diplomacy programs are a key part of strengthening the U.S.-Slovakia relationship.

Question. Other Previous Statements: In 2022, you stated that Islam is "not compatible" with the U.S. Constitution. What did you mean by that?

Answer. I believe my record is the best answer to that question. During more than 30 years in uniform, I served alongside Muslim allies, defended Muslim nations and populations, partnered with Muslim military and civilian leaders, and led humanitarian missions that benefited Muslim communities. Those are not the actions of someone who judges people because of their religion. Throughout my career, I judged people by their character, conduct, and commitment to the mission. The Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion to every American, and if confirmed, I will faithfully uphold that principle while representing the United States with fairness, dignity, and respect toward people of every faith.

Question. Do you still believe that Islam is "not compatible" with the U.S. Constitution?

Answer. My record over more than 30 years of military service answers that question. I served alongside Muslim allies, defended Muslim nations and populations, partnered with Muslim leaders, and led humanitarian missions that benefited Muslim communities. Those are not the actions of someone who judges people by their religion. Throughout my career, I judged people by their character, conduct, and commitment to the mission. The Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion to every American, and I fully support that guarantee. If confirmed, I will faithfully uphold the Constitution and represent the United States with fairness, dignity, and respect toward people of every faith.

Question. You once shared a post on social media that said "Islam wants to kill." Do you still stand by these words?

Answer. I believe my record is the best answer to that question. During more than 30 years in the U.S. Army, I worked alongside Muslim allies, defended Muslim populations, partnered with Muslim governments, and personally led humanitarian missions for Afghan orphans. Those actions demonstrate how I have treated people throughout my career. If confirmed, I will faithfully uphold the Constitution and represent the United States with fairness, dignity, and respect toward people of every faith.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DOUGLAS MASTRIANO BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Mr. Douglas Mastriano, nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic
by Senator Jacky Rosen (No. 1- No. 6),
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 16, 2026**

Religious Pluralism:

You have spoken many times about the Christian identity of the United States, and that separation of church and state is a myth.

Question 1:

Do you think U.S. political leaders should be Christian?

Answer 1:

No. Article VI of the United States Constitution expressly prohibits any religious test for public office, and I fully support that constitutional principle. My record over more than 30 years of military service demonstrates that commitment. Throughout my career, I served alongside and led Americans of many different faiths and of no religious faith, evaluating them by their character, professionalism, integrity, and commitment to the mission—not by their religious beliefs. Americans of every faith, and of no faith, are entitled to serve in public office.

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Question 2:

Given the separation of church and state is part of the U.S. Constitution, would you accept that U.S. political leaders, including the President, can be of any faith, from Judaism to Islam to Hinduism and everything else in between?

Answer 2:

Yes. Article VI of the United States Constitution provides that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the United States, and I fully support that constitutional principle. My 30 years of military service demonstrate that commitment.

Throughout my career, I served under Presidents of both political parties and led Americans and coalition partners of many different faiths, evaluating them solely on their character, professionalism, integrity, and commitment to the mission—not by their religious beliefs. Americans of every faith are entitled to serve in public office under our Constitution.

If confirmed, I will faithfully uphold that constitutional principle in carrying out my duties as ambassador.

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Question 3:

Past Statements: In October 2022, your wife said at one of your campaign events that you and your family "probably love Israel more than a lot of Jews do."

Do you agree with that statement?

Answer 3:

My wife was expressing our family's shared, deeply held commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. That commitment has been reflected consistently in both our personal lives and my public service. We saved for five years to travel to Israel with our son, and over the years supported initiatives serving the Jewish people.

In this regard, my public record speaks for itself. Throughout my public service, I have consistently stood with Israel and the Jewish community. I authored Pennsylvania Senate Bill 127, establishing one of the strongest Holocaust education measures in Pennsylvania to help ensure future generations understand the horrors of the Holocaust and the dangers of antisemitism. I have worked closely with Jewish community leaders and Holocaust survivors, leading events and press conferences standing with Israel, combating antisemitism, and preserving the memory of the Holocaust.



ראש הממשלה
Prime Minister

November 6, 2023
כ"ב חשוון, תשפ"ד

Dear Senator Mastriano,

On behalf of the people of Israel, I thank you for your message following the October 7 atrocities, and resolution condemning the attack against us. We deeply appreciate the unwavering support of the United States government and the people of America for Israel's security, and your firm stand for our right to self-defense.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas waged war on Israel. Not since the darkest hours of the Holocaust have Jews suffered such despicable savagery. More than 1,400 Israelis and foreign nationals, including men, women, children, babies and the elderly were murdered in the most inhumane and sadistic ways imaginable. Thousands more were injured and abused, and hundreds were taken as hostages into Gaza. This, while Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza indiscriminately fired thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians throughout the country. This horrific attack was not only against Israel, it was an attack against the core values of human civilization itself. The world is faced with a test of moral clarity. Either you are with the civilized world or you are with Hamas savages.

Israel did not want this war. It was forced upon us by depraved ISIS-like Hamas terrorists with no regard for the sanctity of human life, that have taken root on our borders. However, they miscalculated the strength of our resolve.

We will win this war, we will dismantle Hamas.

Now is the hour for all civilized nations that value human life and decency to stand together against the forces of evil. In this regard, it is vital for all nations of conscience to voice their shock in the face of these atrocities and to continue supporting Israel's right to self-defense in all possible international forums. We expect your support when we are victims and also when we are victors. As we continue to mourn the many lives so violently taken, we embrace our moral obligation to safeguard our people and the common values of humanity, and appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Netanyahu

Senator Doug Mastriano
170 Main Capitol

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Mr. Douglas Mastriano, nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic
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July 16, 2026**

Following the October 7, 2023, terrorist attacks, I introduced and secured unanimous Senate passage of a resolution condemning Hamas, standing unequivocally with Israel, and reaffirming Pennsylvania's support for our ally. In recognition of that effort, I received a personal letter from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanking me for Pennsylvania's support of Israel.

If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the President's policies and continue to strengthen the enduring strategic partnership between the United States and Israel.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Mr. Douglas Mastriano, nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic
by Senator Jacky Rosen (No. 1- No. 6),
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 16, 2026**

Question 4:

Have you compared things to the Holocaust, such as abortion or your loss to Governor Shapiro and do you stand by those statements?

Answer 4:

I cannot speak to every characterization or context of statements made in the past. What I can say is that, through my work with Jewish community leaders and Holocaust survivors, I have come to appreciate that Holocaust comparisons—regardless of the issue being discussed, it can have the unintended effect of diminishing the unique horror of the Holocaust and the suffering of its victims.

As a result, I have since avoided making such comparisons. My record reflects a longstanding commitment to Holocaust education, combating antisemitism, and supporting the Jewish community, including authoring Pennsylvania Senate Bill 127, one of the strongest Holocaust education measures in Pennsylvania, and working closely with Holocaust survivors and Jewish leaders across the Commonwealth.

If confirmed, I will continue to speak with the care, respect, and judgment expected of a representative of the United States.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
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by Senator Jacky Rosen (No. 1- No. 6),
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 16, 2026**

Support for Ukraine:

Ukraine is gaining momentum on the battlefield, reclaiming territory and demonstrating the effectiveness of its drone capabilities. At this critical moment, continued support from the United States and our European allies is essential.

Question 5:

Do you believe Russia violated international law and Ukraine's sovereignty when it invaded Crimea in 2014 and launched its full-scale invasion in 2022?

Answer 5:

Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 and again on a larger scale in 2022, violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The President has made it clear that Russia must abandon the use of force in Ukraine, recognize that there can be no military solution to the war, and negotiate in good faith. As the Secretary has reaffirmed, our commitment to and support for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine to reach a durable resolution of the war is unwavering.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
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by Senator Jacky Rosen (No. 1- No. 6),
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 16, 2026**

Question 6:

I am concerned by Prime Minister Fico’s decision to halt military aid from Slovak stockpiles, oppose NATO membership for Ukraine, criticize EU sanctions on Russia, and call for normalized relations with Moscow. If confirmed, how will you engage the Slovak government to strengthen its support for Ukraine and keep it aligned with U.S., NATO, and EU efforts to counter Russian aggression?

Answer 6:

If confirmed, I would engage the Slovak government with respect, candor, and a clear focus on advancing American interests. Slovakia is a NATO ally and hosts a Forward Land Forces multinational battlegroup with Spain as the framework nation and troops contributed by several other allies – including U.S. troops from 2022 to 2025. Slovakia maintains a productive government-to-government relationship with Kyiv. If confirmed, I will continue and expand our strong relationship with Slovakia and will work with Slovak leaders to ensure we remain aligned in our efforts to achieve peace.

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Mr. Douglas Mastriano, nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic
by Senator Jacky Rosen (No. 1- No. 6),
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 16, 2026**

Support for the European Union:

If confirmed, you would represent the United States to a key member of the European Union. The EU is one of our closest diplomatic, economic, and security partners. Its member states are on the front lines of countering Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine.

The European Union and the United States also share the world's largest bilateral trade and investment relationship. Together, we conduct nearly \$1.8 trillion in annual trade in goods and services, have roughly \$6 trillion invested in each other's economies, and U.S. exports to the EU support approximately 2.3 million American jobs.

Yet, in a radio interview with News Talk 103.7 FM, you said that EU leadership is quote "the political and diplomatic enemy of the United States."

Question 7:

Do you still believe that?

Answer 7:

No. That comment reflected my reaction to specific statements and policy positions expressed by certain European Union leaders at a particular point in time. It was not intended as a characterization of the European Union, its member states, or the transatlantic alliance as a whole. My professional record demonstrates a lifetime of building, leading, and strengthening alliances with Europe and our NATO allies.

During more than 30 years in the U.S. Army, I lived overseas for twelve years and served throughout Europe, working daily alongside allied civilian and

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military leaders. I served on NATO's front line during the Cold War in Germany, working closely with our German allies in defending the Alliance. I later served as the G-2 (Senior Intelligence Officer) for NATO Land Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, where I led and coordinated multinational intelligence planning and operations in support of NATO's mission, working closely with allied military leaders from across the Alliance. I also helped build the multinational coalition of more than 40 nations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, working with coalition planners in Warsaw, Poland, London, and the United States to integrate allied partners into operational planning.

I was subsequently selected by the Chief of Staff of the Army to lead Project 1704 and Project 1721, two multinational strategic studies examining the future of NATO land power in the Baltic region. These efforts brought together senior military officers, civilian officials, and defense experts from allied nations. As part of this work, I conducted extensive on-the-ground assessments throughout Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, working directly with senior civilian and military leaders to develop recommendations for strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense posture.

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In Afghanistan, I served as Director of the Joint Intelligence Center for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), leading a multinational organization composed of civilian and military professionals from 18 NATO and partner nations. Every day, I worked alongside coalition commanders, ambassadors, intelligence officials, and senior civilian leaders to integrate diverse national perspectives into a unified intelligence enterprise supporting combat operations across Afghanistan. Success depended upon building trust, earning credibility, fostering mutual respect, and leading multinational teams toward a common objective.

Throughout my career, I planned, led, or participated in multinational exercises and operations across Germany, Poland, Norway, the Baltic States, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Turkey, the Balkans, and the Middle East. I have spent my professional life commanding, leading, and serving in multinational organizations; building alliances; strengthening interoperability; and accomplishing shared missions alongside our NATO allies and European partners in both peace and war. Those experiences reinforced my conviction that enduring alliances are built on mutual respect, shared responsibility, common strategic interests, and trust earned over time.

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As Chairman of the Pennsylvania Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I also oversaw Pennsylvania's National Guard State Partnership Program with Lithuania, working closely with Lithuanian civilian and military leaders to strengthen defense cooperation and deepen an already strong bilateral relationship.

If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the President's foreign policy, strengthen the partnership between the United States and Slovakia, and work constructively with Slovakia, our NATO allies, the European Union, and other European partners to advance America's security, prosperity, and shared strategic interests.

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Question 8:

Advancing U.S. interests in Slovakia means strengthening our economic, diplomatic, and security ties—not driving wedges between allies. If confirmed, will you actively seek to drive a wedge between Slovakia and the EU?

Answer 8:

No. My objective as Ambassador would be to advance the interests of the United States by strengthening our bilateral relationship with Slovakia while reinforcing the transatlantic partnership that has underpinned Europe's security and prosperity for generations. At a time when Russia, China, and other authoritarian powers seek to exploit divisions among allies and weaken transatlantic unity, America's interests are best served by strong alliances, capable partners, and close cooperation among free nations.

My career has been devoted to working with our allies—not dividing them. During more than 30 years in the U.S. Army, including twelve years living overseas, I served in senior NATO assignments, including as G-2 (Senior Intelligence Officer) for NATO Land Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, where I led and coordinated multinational intelligence planning and operations with allied officers from across the Alliance. I also helped build the coalition of more than 40 nations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom,

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led Project 1704 and Project 1721 for the Chief of Staff of the Army examining NATO's future posture in the Baltic region, and later served as Director of the Joint Intelligence Center for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, leading a multinational organization composed of civilian and military professionals from 18 NATO and partner nations.

I also had the privilege of deploying to Afghanistan three times in support of NATO's mission following the Alliance's historic invocation of Article 5 after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—the only time Article 5 has ever been invoked. My understanding of Article 5 comes not only from diplomatic history, but from serving three combat deployments alongside the allied men and women who honored that commitment after America was attacked.

During those deployments, I served alongside soldiers, diplomats, intelligence professionals, and civilian officials from across the Alliance, including in Italian-led and multinational NATO headquarters. We endured the same harsh conditions, accepted the same risks, celebrated successes together, and grieved the loss of friends and comrades together.

When I think of NATO, I do not first think of treaties or institutions. I think

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of the American, Slovak, Czech, Polish, Lithuanian, Danish, Belgian, Norwegian, German, Italian, Hungarian, Dutch, Romanian, and many other allied soldiers, diplomats, intelligence professionals, and civilian leaders with whom I served in Afghanistan. Together, we answered the call after September 11, shared the same dangers, endured the same hardships, and stood shoulder to shoulder in defense of our common security. Some of my close lifelong friendships were forged during those deployments. That is what alliance means to me.

If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the President's foreign policy by strengthening the strategic partnership between the United States and Slovakia, expanding cooperation in defense, security, trade, energy, and regional stability, and working constructively with Slovakia, our NATO allies, the European Union, and other European partners wherever doing so advances the interests of the United States.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DANIEL PEREZ BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

U.S.-Brazil Relationship

Question. In response to perceived U.S. aggression on trade, Brazil is diversifying its trade relationships, which has included signing a MERCOSUR-EU agreement and expressing openness to expanding cooperation with the People's Republic of China. If confirmed, how do you plan to approach the growing strained bilateral relations with the Brazilian Government?

Answer. The U.S.-Brazil relationship is based on shared interests, not coercion or dependency. If confirmed, I will urge Brazil to exercise caution and prioritize transparent, market-based, and durable economic relationships. The United States offers a partnership grounded in mutual respect, shared democratic values, and genuine reciprocity. The United States wants to be Brazil's partner, and if confirmed, I will work to demonstrate that American engagement delivers better outcomes for the American and Brazilian people.

Question. The Brazilian people are preparing to hold their Presidential election in October. If confirmed, do you commit to not engaging in activity that could be perceived as endorsing one candidate over another?

Answer. U.S. diplomatic actions are anchored in clearly defined U.S. national interests and guided by longstanding commitment to the rule of law, democratic norms, and human rights, not partisan alignment. The U.S. focus is on ensuring that Brazil's democracy remains vibrant, that fundamental freedoms are protected, and that the rule of law is upheld fairly and transparently.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the outcome of the election regardless of the candidate elected?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the government of Brazil, as elected by the Brazilian people. Also, if confirmed, I will be the strongest and most vocal supporter of U.S. interests in Brazil, to include protecting U.S. citizens and all employees working for the Mission. I will work to advance our bilateral relationship in trade, security cooperation, combatting narcoterrorism, advocating for U.S. companies, and securing a Critical Minerals Framework.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DANIEL PEREZ BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. In 2025, the Trump administration ordered visa sanctions against Brazilian judiciary officials working on the prosecution case of former President Jair Bolsonaro and also proposed a 50 percent tariff on Brazilian imports in an effort to pressure Brazil's judiciary from prosecuting the former president. Do you believe the administration was right to propose visa sanctions and tariffs in order to pressure Brazil's government?

Answer. U.S. concerns regarding judicial and prosecutorial overreach and threats to freedom of expression in Brazil are consistent with positions we raise around the world. In my view, our use of statutory tools to impose or remove sanctions should be transparent and subject to this Committee's oversight. I also understand U.S. tariff actions with respect to Brazil followed a distinct, statutorily grounded process. If confirmed, I will advocate for Brazil's democratic institutions and the rule of law while working to strengthen the broader U.S.-Brazil relationship.

Question. Would you support similar actions from the administration in the future as a means to influence Brazilian politics?

Answer. Any decision to impose visa restrictions, sanctions, or trade measures depends on the specific facts and circumstances at the time and would involve careful interagency deliberation.

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. Although I have never had the opportunity to work in the Federal bureaucracy before, I have traveled extensively and met with political leaders throughout Latin America as well as in Israel, Taiwan, Japan and Ireland. As a lawyer, I am trained to apply a fixed set of skills to new situations. Diplomacy rests at the intersection of clear communication, understanding people who see the world differently than you do, and having the ability to earn and build trust. Those are the skills that have defined my political career and allowed me to lead the Florida

House of Representatives in one of our nation's most ethnically, racially and geographically diverse states. Working hand-in-hand with the subject matter experts in the embassy and the State Department, those are the skills that I would bring to this position, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in our bilateral relationship with Brazil?

Answer. The designations of Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists underscore the threat these organizations pose to Americans and Brazilians. Countering them will require deep law enforcement cooperation. With the upcoming Presidential election, Brazil's democratic institutions face real strain around judicial independence and freedom of expression. On economics, American businesses face a bevy of unfair trade practices. July's Section 301 tariff recommendations based on Brazil's actions seek to level the playing field for American companies, but as noted by Secretary Rubio and Ambassador Greer, extensive negotiations have not resolved these issues. Moreover, China's dual-use infrastructure investments in Brazil and Brazil's participation in BRICS raise questions about the country's long-term alignment and pose a challenge to American preeminence in the region. Finally, critical minerals is one of our greatest opportunities for cooperation with Brazil.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Brazil?

Answer. On security, if confirmed, I will prioritize strengthening law enforcement cooperation and intelligence sharing with Brazilian authorities to dismantle transnational organized crime networks through supporting efforts to combat cybercrime and money laundering, disrupting trafficking routes, and prosecuting criminal leadership. Given Brazil's constraints, including corruption and limited resources, success will require sustained engagement at multiple levels of government, U.S. technical assistance and training, and close coordination with regional partners.

If confirmed, I will work closely with USTR and the interagency to address trade concerns through diplomatic engagement while pushing to reduce market access barriers for American businesses. I will also make the case to Brazilian officials that overdependence on China carries risks of economic coercion and lost autonomy. Critical minerals cooperation is an opportunity to address this challenge. Brazil's mineral reserves and technical expertise are essential to building secure, diversified supply chains, and the United States can offer investment, technology, and market access that create a genuine partnership.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. American foreign policy is defined and shaped by the President of the United States and the Secretary of State, subject to applicable Federal laws. It would be my responsibility as an ambassador to give voice to policies as outlined by the President and the Secretary, not substitute my interpretation for theirs. I understand the America First foreign policy recognizes that America has distinct military, economic, cultural and geopolitical interests and that our foreign policy should be conducted in a way that prioritizes those needs.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Brazil?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that our engagement with Brazil is anchored in U.S. national interests, consistent with President Trump and Secretary Rubio's guidance that an America First approach defines "the important national interest the United States has in different parts of the world" and aligns all diplomatic activity accordingly.

In practice, this means prioritizing reciprocal trade and economic partnership, working to position the United States, rather than China, as Brazil's preferred trading partner, leveraging American economic and technological leadership, geographic proximity, cultural ties, and shared democratic values. It also means deepening collaboration on counternarcotics, transnational criminal organizations, and counterterrorism, through joint law enforcement efforts. It means defending American interests and values by engaging with Brazil on areas of friction, including treatment of the digital sector and free expression, while emphasizing that respect for sovereignty is a two-way street.

Question. In Brazil, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. Secretary Rubio has been clear that opaque financing risks placing our neighbors “at China’s mercy,” with long-term implications for U.S. strategic access and influence.

If confirmed, I will prioritize promoting the United States as Brazil’s preferred economic partner, advancing trade and investment alternatives that reflect shared democratic values and geographic ties. I will seek to expand critical minerals co-operation, building on the February 2026 Critical Minerals Ministerial where the United States engaged regional partners to strengthen transparent supply chains and reduce dependence on unreliable suppliers, including through DFC financing of mineral processing infrastructure.

On Russia, I will remain vigilant to the risk of a deepening Russia-China alignment in the hemisphere and will coordinate with Washington on any concerns.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to PRC or Russian influence operations or infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes. I see significant opportunities, particularly in critical minerals, infrastructure financing, and digital/telecommunications security.

Brazil holds vast, underexploited mineral reserves relevant to supply chains for defense and emerging technologies. The United States can offer market-based alternatives to Chinese state-directed investment. U.S. and allied private-sector financing compete directly with China’s infrastructure offers by emphasizing transparency, debt sustainability, and adherence to international labor standards, addressing the concerns Secretary Rubio has raised about debt-trap dynamics.

If confirmed, I will work with USTR, DFC, Commerce, other interagency partners, and the Brazilian government and private sector to identify actionable projects and will keep Congress informed of opportunities as they develop.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch’s policy priorities?

Answer. I recognize that Congress and the executive branch share responsibility for advancing U.S. foreign policy, and that Congress’s statutory authorities and oversight functions are essential to that shared enterprise. I intend to work in good faith toward solutions that respect both the law and legitimate policy equities and do not view compliance with congressional mandates and pursuit of executive branch priorities as inherently in conflict. If confirmed, I will comply fully with all applicable statutory requirements, including reporting and notification obligations.

Where I perceive tension between a statutory requirement and executive branch policy priorities, I will raise the issue promptly and transparently through appropriate Department channels and ensure Congress receives complete and accurate information to support its oversight role. I am committed to operating within the bounds of the law at all times.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to doing my part to obligate appropriated funds in accordance with all applicable statutory requirements, in a timely manner, and consistent with sound stewardship of taxpayer resources. I will work closely with the relevant bureaus of the Department and other relevant offices to ensure funds are executed efficiently and that any obstacles to timely obligation are identified and addressed promptly, with appropriate notice to Congress where required.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining open, timely, and substantive communication with Congress, including responding promptly to requests for briefings, testimony, and information, through the appropriate channels at the Department. I view robust engagement with Congress as essential to effective oversight and to the success of our diplomatic mission in Brazil.

Question. What do you consider a reasonable timeframe for response?

Answer. I believe congressional inquiries should generally receive a substantive response within 30 days, consistent with standard Department practice, and an acknowledgment of receipt much sooner, typically within a few business days, so that your office knows the request is being actively worked.

For more complex or classified matters requiring interagency coordination, I commit to providing interim updates on status rather than allowing a request to go un-

answered, and to working with your staff on realistic timelines when a 30-day turnaround is not feasible.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Brazil?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with Brazilian society and government to ensure that Brazil's democracy remains vibrant, that fundamental freedoms are protected, and that the rule of law is upheld fairly and transparently. I will support the deployment of the full range of available tools including visa restrictions and targeted sanctions to hold corrupt actors, human rights abusers, and those who suppress press freedom to account. I recognize that corruption fuels transnational crime, drives illegal immigration, and undermines democratic governance.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, foreign aid is not charity and must serve U.S. national interests and strategic goals to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous at home and around the globe. In my view, humanitarian aid and assistance in response to humanitarian crises is almost always in the U.S. interest for a host of reasons, as our recent assistance to earthquake victims in Venezuela demonstrates.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. Each has its role. In Venezuela, the U.S. deployed Urban Search and Rescue teams bilaterally as we have the best in the world. But we have also used private sector and multilateral organizations when they had the capability to accomplish the mission promptly and effectively. I would observe that with respect to multilateral aid it is unfair to expect the United States to continue bearing 60-70 percent of the world's humanitarian aid burden. We will provide aid when and where appropriate, while also advocating for wealthy nations, particularly countries like China and India, to increase their contributions.

Question. What should be the determining factors on whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. When the aid is used in alignment with the America First foreign policy objectives of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Again, when we are talking about humanitarian aid like responses to earthquakes, hurricanes or other disasters it is almost always in the U.S. interest to take a leadership role.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. Secretary Rubio is the senior official at the Department of State, which oversees assistance coordination efforts around the world.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than "political purity" tests?

Answer. In my career, I have always sought to work with people of high talent, strong character, and good faith. I do not see that changing in any position I ever hold. However, I also do not define competence based on job titles, resumes, or bureaucratic ranking systems. I value hard work, candor, and actual ability and those are the qualities that I would look to reward if I am privileged to lead the U.S.'s diplomatic mission in Brazil.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LAURENCE SOCHA BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Democracy, Human Rights and Governance

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the U.S. continues to support democracy, rights and governance in The Gambia ahead of, during and after the upcoming Presidential election?

Answer. Respect for the rule of law, accountability, access to justice, and strong institutions are not only critical, but are fundamental to The Gambia developing an enabling business environment for U.S. commercial interests. If confirmed, I will make clear to Gambian leadership that a strong rule of law is not just good govern-

ance—it is an important factor in attracting and sustaining U.S. private sector investment, and I will advocate for the reforms necessary to make that a reality.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LAURENCE SOCHA BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. As a career member of the U.S. Foreign Service, I have worked to advance U.S. interests in 12 countries across four continents, dedicating a third of my career to strengthening U.S. relationships in Africa. If confirmed, I would lead our embassy team with the professionalism I have developed over an 18-year career in public service to deliver positive results for the American people.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in our bilateral relationship with The Gambia?

Answer. The top U.S. priorities in The Gambia are protecting U.S. citizens, promoting U.S. commercial opportunities and ensuring The Gambia is a partner in deterring illegal immigration to the United States. If confirmed, I look forward to focusing on these areas.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in The Gambia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on strengthening border security cooperation and private sector development to advance U.S. strategic interests and mitigate competing foreign influence.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. America First foreign policy makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. It defends the sovereignty of the United States and leverages our unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships around the world, when appropriate, to achieve our foreign policy priorities.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in The Gambia?

Answer. America First foreign policy champions core American interests and always puts America and U.S. citizens first. In The Gambia, our top priorities are supporting U.S. citizens in country, promoting U.S. trade and investment, and deterring illegal immigration.

Question. In The Gambia, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. U.S. commercial investment is a particularly effective tool to counter Russian and Chinese influence over the long term in The Gambia: a country seeking to strengthen infrastructure, increase energy supply, and develop pathways for semi-finished goods production. If confirmed, I will work with American companies and the U.S. interagency, such as DFC, to facilitate competitive commercial deals that build The Gambia of tomorrow.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to PRC or Russian influence operations or infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes. I understand The Gambia's energy and telecommunications sectors present substantial near- and long-term opportunities, such as upcoming construction at the Banjul International Airport, a planned expansion of energy storage and oil refinery, a new Special Economic Zone to incentivize industrial growth, and support for increased internet penetration through U.S.-owned firm Africell and burgeoning U.S. low-earth orbit satellite technology.

Russia has only recently taken an interest in The Gambia, as seen in their announced plans to construct an embassy. If confirmed, I will monitor Russia's activities in The Gambia and seek to limit their influence operations and infrastructure investments over potential Gambian investments with U.S. firms.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. I believe that Congress and the executive branch share the fundamental goal of advancing U.S. national security and foreign policy interests. If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the policies of the Administration while ensuring full compliance with all applicable laws.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure that Embassy Banjul complies with all applicable statutory requirements, including those concerning foreign assistance, in a way that advances American interests in The Gambia while delivering results and ensuring responsible stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing timely briefings and responses to congressional inquiries?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to providing timely responses to such requests from the Committee and its designated staff.

Question. What do you consider a reasonable timeframe for response?

Answer. I understand the Department seeks to provide a timely reply to all congressional inquiries. I will coordinate through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs to respond as quickly as possible in accordance with longstanding Department and executive branch practice.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in The Gambia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead Embassy Banjul's engagement with partner diplomatic missions and the full range of Gambian officials and citizens to promote respect for human rights, including religious freedom, and address the harmful issue of wide-spread corruption. The Gambia has a flourishing free press, and I will work with my team and the government to ensure free speech remains protected and encouraged.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. Under President Trump's leadership, the United States continues to be the world's most generous donor of life-saving assistance, but we cannot do it alone. Within the America First Foreign Assistance framework, we are committed to providing assistance that is hyper-prioritized to those most in need, efficient, time-bound, and accountable to the U.S. taxpayer. We must also continue to use diplomatic channels to reform the U.N. system to deliver better results and to encourage other donors to increase their contributions to humanitarian responses. The United States and the generous American people remain the largest donor to multiple U.N. and international agencies such as The Global Fund and World Food Program—all of which benefit Gambians every day.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. The United States' use of bilateral mechanisms for the rapid deployment of time-bound, life-saving assistance is evidenced by the Department's historic memorandum of understanding and \$3.8 billion in assistance provided through the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This approach reduces bureaucratic grant management burdens on staff and reinforces our work to make humanitarian assistance faster, more efficient, and more accountable to U.S. taxpayers.

Question. What should be the determining factors on whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. In general, the Department considers the following factors when deciding whether to provide humanitarian assistance: (1) there is evidence of significant unmet need; (2) U.S. disaster assistance will save the lives of disaster-affected people; (3) the affected country requests or will accept international assistance; and (4) responding supports explicit U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. Declarations of Humanitarian Need are issued by a Chief of Mission. Additional assistance may be provided at the discretion of Department leadership in response to humanitarian need and/or foreign policy priorities, in coordination with the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than “political purity” tests?

Answer. Yes.

Submitted by Senator Chris Van Hollen

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2026

Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Pamela Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Michael Huckabee
U.S. Ambassador to Israel
U.S. Embassy Jerusalem
14 David Flusser
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Dear Secretary Rubio, Attorney General Bondi, and Ambassador Huckabee:

In the wake of the killing of another U.S. citizen in the West Bank, the ninth since January 2022, we write with grave concern regarding the ongoing lack of accountability for the deaths of Americans in the West Bank. On February 18th, Nasrallah Abu Siyam was shot and killed in the West Bank village of Mukhmas, near Ramallah, by violent Israeli settlers during an attack on Palestinian farmers.¹ This is yet another example of the impunity afforded to extremist Israeli settlers in the West Bank under the protection of the Israel Defense Forces. The U.S. government must conduct a credible and independent investigation into Nasrallah's killing and hold all perpetrators accountable.

Unfortunately, this is the second letter we've written to this administration in the last seven months about the killing of an American citizen in the West Bank.² Our July 2025 letter was regarding the killing of Saifullah Kamal Musallet, a 20-year-old American citizen from Florida who was beaten to death by extremist Israeli settlers.³ Since that letter, two other Americans have been killed as a result of Israeli settler violence. In response to our letter, the State Department wrote "The United States calls for accountability in all cases where U.S. citizens are harmed abroad to help prevent future tragedies." It's clear that these "calls" and whatever efforts were made, if any, to secure accountability, failed. This has now become a consistent pattern in which

¹ Rasgon, Adam, and Fatima AbdulKarim. "Palestinian-American Teenager Killed in West Bank Is Laid to Rest ." *The New York Times*, 20 Feb. 2026, www.nytimes.com/2026/02/20/world/middleeast/palestinian-american-teenager-killed-west-bank.html.

² "Van Hollen, 28 Senators Call on Administration to Conduct Independent, U.S.-Led Investigation into Death of American Citizen in West Bank." 24 July, 2025, <https://www.vanhollen.senate.gov/news/press-releases/van-hollen-28-senators-call-on-administration-to-conduct-independent-us-led-investigation-into-death-of-american-citizen-in-west-bank>

³ Clayton, Freddie. "American Beaten to Death by Israeli Settlers in the West Bank." *NBC News*, 13 July 2025, www.nbcnews.com/world/middle-east/american-killed-west-bank-israel-settlers-violence-rcna218408.

Americans are being killed in the West Bank by settlers or the IDF without justice or accountability, despite promises from U.S. officials.

Nasrallah Abu Siyam, a 19-year-old American born in Philadelphia, has become the ninth American killed in the West Bank since January 2022. Along with Saifullah Musallet and Khamis Ayyada, a forty-year-old American citizen and father of five who died of smoke inhalation in August after a fire was set by Israeli settlers in his West Bank village of Silwad, Abu Siyam is now the third American killed in the West Bank during the second Trump administration.

Six other Americans were killed in the West Bank since January 2022. This includes a 14-year-old boy from New Jersey, Amer Mohammad Saada Rabee, who was shot 11 times⁴, and two 17-year-old boys, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar⁵ and Mohammad Ahmed Mohammad Khmour⁶, both shot and killed in separate instances. Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, a 26-year-old American citizen raised in Seattle, was shot in the head by an Israeli soldier⁷, and respected Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, was also shot in the head and killed by the IDF while clearly marked as a journalist.⁸ Omar Assad, an elderly Palestinian-American, died of a stress-induced heart attack after being gagged, blindfolded, bound with his hands behind his back, and left on the ground in the cold.⁹

For all nine of these killings, no one has yet been held accountable by the Netanyahu government, nor has the U.S. government upheld its duty to protect Americans and secure justice and accountability for their deaths. It is unclear to us how many more Americans must die in the West Bank in order for this administration, and other administrations, to take serious, credible steps to secure accountability and ensure an end to the ongoing killings of Americans without consequence.

We urge you to launch an independent investigation into the killing of Nasrallah Abu Siyam and provide an update on the status of investigations into the killings of all the other Americans killed in the West Bank since January 2022. We expect a briefing on this information by April 5, 2026.

⁴ Atta, Nasser, et al. "14-Year-Old Dual Palestinian-US Citizen Killed in the West Bank." *ABC News*, 8 Apr. 2025, abcnews.com/International/14-year-dual-palestinian-us-citizen-killed-west/story?id=120590549.

⁵ Loveluck, Louisa, and Sufian Taha. "An American Teen Was Killed in the West Bank. His Family Wants Answers." *The Washington Post*, 26 Jan. 2024, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/01/26/tawfic-jabbar-american-palestinian-teenager/

⁶ Rosenzweig-Ziff, Dan, and Niha Masih. "Family Grieves after American Teenager Shot Dead in West Bank." *The Washington Post*, 13 Feb. 2024, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/02/13/american-killed-west-bank-israel-war/

⁷ Tufana, Aref and Julia Frankel. "Israeli Settlers Kill 19-Year-Old Palestinian American, Officials and Witnesses Say." *AP News*, 20 Feb. 2026, apnews.com/article/american-shot-killed-west-bank-israel-palestinians-b2f1c741cea3d56eb1a339240dbf036e.

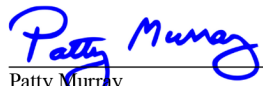
⁸ Abdulrahim, Raja, et al. "The Killing of Shireen Abu Akleh: Tracing a Bullet to an Israeli Convoy." *The New York Times*, 20 June 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/06/20/world/middleeast/palestian-journalist-killing-shireen.html

⁹ Hendrix, Steve. "Autopsy Finds Palestinian American Man Died of Heart Attack after Being Bound and Gagged by Israeli Soldiers." *The Washington Post*, 26 Jan. 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/26/us-citizen-died-heart-attack-israeli-custody/

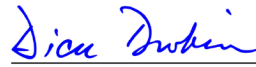
Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



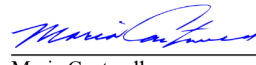
Patty Murray
United States Senator



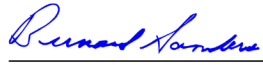
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



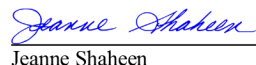
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



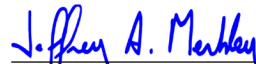
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



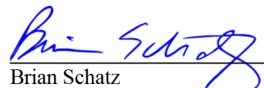
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



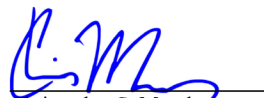
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

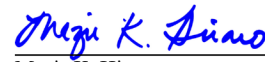

 Michael F. Bennet
 United States Senator


 Christopher A. Coons
 United States Senator


 Brian Schatz
 United States Senator


 Tammy Baldwin
 United States Senator

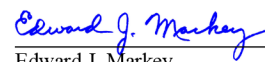

 Christopher S. Murphy
 United States Senator


 Mazie K. Hirono
 United States Senator


 Martin Heinrich
 United States Senator

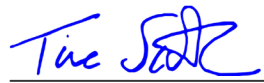

 Tim Kaine
 United States Senator

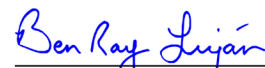

 Elizabeth Warren
 United States Senator


 Edward J. Markey
 United States Senator


 Cory A. Booker
 United States Senator


 Tammy Duckworth
 United States Senator


 Tina Smith
 United States Senator


 Ben Ray Lujan
 United States Senator


 Raphael Warnock
 United States Senator


 Peter Welch
 United States Senator


 Andy Kim
 United States Senator


 Ruben Gallego
 United States Senator


 Lisa Blunt Rochester
 United States Senator


 Angela D. Alsobrooks
 United States Senator

