

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022—p.m.

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:00 p.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James Cardin presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin [presiding], Coons, Kaine, and Hagerty.
Also present: Senator Cornyn

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. This Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. I want to thank the leadership of our committee for entrusting to Senator Hagerty and myself the honor of chairing and ranking on this particular nomination hearing. I want to thank all of our nominees.

We are going to defer to Senator Cornyn who wants to do an introduction.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is great to be with you and colleagues here for a very important introduction of Carrin Patman, nominated to serve as the Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland.

I have known Carrin longer than either one of us would care to admit. Our paths first crossed in Bear County, Texas, my hometown, San Antonio, when I was a baby district judge, pretty new to the bench, and Carrin was a young lawyer. She had just finished law school at the University of Texas and was at the starting line of what would be a long and distinguished career as a litigator, a trial lawyer. Carrin spent three decades practicing with international law firm Bracewell and became the first woman elected to the firm's seven-member management committee.

After retiring from Bracewell in 2016, Carrin was appointed to serve as the chair of the Board of the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Houston, or Harris County, as we know it, called METRO. Houston is the fourth-largest city in the country, and Harris County is the third-largest county. METRO has a \$1.3 billion budget, 4,100 employees, and it covers 1,300 square miles. That is a long way of saying that chairing METRO is no easy task. It requires diplomatic skills and an ability to bring competing constituencies together.

Fortunately, Carrin has mastered those skills. She turned them into an artform as the chair of Metro, and should the Senate con-

firm her for this position I know she will use those skills well and those experiences well to serve our country and fight for our interests abroad.

In just a moment you will hear directly from Carrin about her career, civic involvement, and her deep love for America. You will see the passion, the skill, and the sound judgment that has guided her throughout her career. And I hope you will reach the same conclusion that I have, that Carrin Patman will be an outstanding ambassador.

Four nearly four decades I have had the—I guess I disclosed it—for nearly four decades I have had the pleasure of knowing Carrin, as well as her husband Jim, who is here with us today, and I have full confidence in her ability to serve the American people as the ambassador to Iceland.

So thank you again, Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Hagerty, for giving me the opportunity to make this introduction today, and thank you to all of my colleagues, Senator Kaine, I saw Senator Coons earlier, for considering this nominee. I look forward to supporting this nomination and I hope you will too. Thanks so much.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Cornyn, we appreciate you taking the time to make these introductions. I know Senator Coons had the pleasure of being with the nominee on a plane flight to Washington, I was told. I do not know if that strategic planning that you decided to check his flight schedule to do that, but it was pretty good strategy.

Senator CORNYN. I told you she was good.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator.

Today, as I said, we are going to have hearings on nominees for some critically important ambassadors, ambassadors to the Netherlands, Iceland, Slovak Republic, North Macedonia, and Namibia. Each one of these positions are critically important to our national security. These are extremely challenging times to be in global diplomacy and to represent the United States, and we appreciate each of you making that decision to help our country and to serve our nation. So first and foremost, I want to thank you for your willingness to step forward in these critically important roles.

And secondly, I want to acknowledge your families. I see many sitting behind you today. You cannot do this without a supportive family, and there are certainly a lot of sacrifices that they make. So we thank them as well for sharing you with our country and the important work that you are going to be doing.

Let me just talk very briefly about each of you and then I will let Senator Hagerty make his opening statements, and then we will hear directly from you.

Shefali Razdan Duggal is a political activist, a women's rights advocate, and a human rights campaigner. In 2014, President Obama appointed her to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council, which I am also a member of that council, so thank you very much.

Carrin Patman, as we heard from Senator Cornyn, is the chair of the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas. She currently works as a partner at Bracewell LLP and worked as a

trial lawyer, handling litigation for commercial disputes, antitrust, competition issues, and regulatory compliance. Earlier commitments to public service include her role as a founding board member of the Center for Women in Law and as executive committee member of Girls Inc. of Greater Houston, and Sheltering Arms Senior Services.

Gautam Rana currently serves as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Algeria and was the embassy's Chargé d'Affaires from August 2020 to February 2022. Mr. Rana was previously the Deputy Chief of Mission and also Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in Slovenia. Among other positions, he was Director of Afghanistan and Pakistan on the National Security Council staff and the Deputy Minister Council for Political Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

Ms. Angela Price Aggeler is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Council. She served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, as well as its Chargé d'Affaires. She formerly served as Minister-Council for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of Press and Public Diplomacy.

She has held other diplomatic posts in Pakistan, North Macedonia, Vietnam, France, and India.

And then Randy Berry, to be Ambassador of Namibia. Mr. Berry served as U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. Prior of that he was Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and before that the State Department's first Special Envoy for Human Rights of the LGBTI Persons.

I understand that Senator Kaine will make an introduction for Ms. Duggal, but first let me turn it over to the ranking member, and then we will go Senator Kaine.

Senator Haggerty.

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

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, and I want to thank all the nominees for appearing here today. I also appreciate your willingness to serve this great nation. I cannot tell you what an honor it is to represent the most exceptional nation in the world to any country, and you have been nominated to do just that. So just being here is quite an accomplishment, to have gotten to this point, and I hope that we have a good hearing today to move you along the path.

I would like to start with the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands. The United States and the Netherlands share a long history of friendship and coordination that goes back to the American Revolution. I look forward to hearing from the nominee about how we can maintain a strong partnership and work to counter China's malign influence in Europe.

With respect to the nominee to be Ambassador to Iceland, Iceland is a strategically important country, and both President Trump and President Biden have pushed hard for enhanced en-

gagement on Arctic issues in light of concerns about Russian and Chinese activities in the region. I look forward to hearing from the nominee on this subject.

Next I would like to turn to the nomination to be the Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. The U.S. and Slovakia share a commitment to freedom and human rights, and I believe Slovakia's experience can be a model for other emerging democracies. I hope our next Ambassador can continue to build our strong diplomatic ties and aid in fulfilling our commitments to this ally.

For the nominee to be Ambassador to North Macedonia, the U.S. and North Macedonia have good relations, and recently held a Strategic Dialogue to take stock of the bilateral relationship and outline areas for enhanced cooperation. I am interested to know your thoughts on further areas of cooperation between the U.S. and this Western Balkan country.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to focus on the nomination to be Ambassador to Namibia. The United States and Namibia share a friendly relationship, and I look forward to hearing from the nominee about how we can strengthen the U.S. partnership with Namibia in light of their close ties with China.

And to all five nominees, again, thank you for serving our nation and for answering the questions of the committee today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Senator Hagerty.

Senator KAINE for an introduction.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to Senator Hagerty. It is real treat to be with a panel and Carrin, it is so good to see you as well. I do want to say just a few words of introduction about my longtime friend, Shefali Duggal, and I am really, really excited that she has been nominated for the Ambassador position in the Netherlands.

Being in politics is tough. The travel is hard and sometimes you wonder whether the T-account, does the plus and minus come out on the right side. But one of the things that I have certainly enjoyed from 28 years at the local, state, and now Federal level is I have just met wonderful people that I might not have met otherwise, and I put Shefali and her family in that category.

In the early 2010s I met Shefali on the West Coast, and came to know her. She is an immigrant to the United States from Kashmir, India. She is an experienced political activist, women's rights advocate, human rights campaigner, with a wonderful family. She is a former presidential appointee to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Council, where she acquitted herself in a very, very honorable way. She continues to serve as a Western Regional Advisor for that important American institution.

On the West Coast she is a San Francisco Committee member on Human Rights Watch, passionate about human rights issues, a member of the Wake Forest University Leadership and Character Council, and she is has also served on the National Board of Directors for Emily's List. Shefali has received numerous awards from the Holocaust Museum, a Community Hero from the California State Assembly, one of the Most Powerful Women in California by the National Diversity Council.

Shefali is just the kind of a person who is able to be passionate in her pride for this country. She will be a great Ambassador. She is also a great diplomat. She believes there is no challenge in life that a few Ghirardelli chocolate squares will not make go much better.

[Laughter.]

Senator KAINE. And I think there is some wisdom there that we could all learn from.

But I am going to stay and ask questions as a member of the committee, but I just wanted to introduce Shefali to my friends on this side of the dais and recommend her highly.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Kaine, thank you for this very fine introduction. We now know her a lot better.

We are going to now hear from all of our witnesses. We would ask that you try to summarize your statements in about 5 minutes. Your entire statement will be made part of the record.

So we will start with Mrs. Duggal.

**STATEMENT OF SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL OF CALIFORNIA,
NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO
THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Kaine. That was so lovely. I appreciate it.

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished committee members, it is a genuine honor to be with you today. Senator Kaine, thank you so very much for the incredibly kind introduction.

I am deeply appreciative to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the nomination and confidence in my ability to serve as Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If confirmed, I look forward to enthusiastically representing and serving the American people as a force multiplier for good to advance key U.S. foreign policy priorities.

If I may, I would also like to also thank my husband of 24 years, Rajat; my precious children, Tarak and Arya; my lifelong friends who have always been a protective shield of love and support; and the most resilient human I know, my mother, Veena Razdan. I would also like to thank the talented team at U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam, who perform vital diplomatic work every day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all of you closely.

As an immigrant, I represent the diverse face of the United States and the generations of people throughout our history who found opportunity in our great country. I was raised by a single mom in Cincinnati, who worked two minimum-wage jobs to support us. My father left us when I was very young, and this profoundly and permanently affected the direction of my life. Rather than dwell upon what I did not have, I embraced the boundless opportunities that we are given here in the United States. I attended college and graduate school with the help of loans, grants, and scholarships.

As I faced some of my own challenges of being a minority woman with limited resources, I became attuned to the values of diversity

and inclusion that continue to inspire me today. I also focused on the rights of minorities and the critical importance of being a voice of the oppressed. This motivated me to pursue my years of work with Human Rights Watch and to serve as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

While my life was often not easy, I was always saved by the Grace of God and the promise of the United States. I have full confidence that kindness, empathy, honesty, and sweat equity mean something in our country. It is the reason why people from all over the world see us as a beacon of hope and freedom. While my story is not unique, it is one that represents the infinite possibilities of the American Spirit and the American Dream.

The Netherlands was the second country to formally recognize the new American republic, making the U.S.-Dutch connection one of our longest, unbroken, peaceful friendships. If confirmed, I will work, along with the talented mission team, to deepen our bilateral relationship, and advance the following three priorities.

First, deepen bilateral and global security. If confirmed, my highest priority will always be the safety and security of the over 47,000 Americans in the Netherlands, including the 300-plus mission personnel and their families, along with the 1.5 million Americans who annually visit the Netherlands. The Netherlands has been a strong military ally of the United States. I will build on decades of close bilateral and multilateral relationships to face the global security challenges of today and potentially those of the future.

Second, deepen our economic ties. The U.S.-Netherlands economic relationship is one of our deepest and most important trade relationships. The Netherlands is one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, and Dutch investment supports over 800,000 American jobs. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our economic ties, promote American business, encourage further Dutch investment in the United States, and promote our shared prosperity.

Third, promote and defend our shared values of democracy and human rights. Throughout our 240-year friendship, our shared commitment to a rules-based international order forms our enduring foundation, especially in promoting and defending human rights, protecting democratic institutions, and strengthening the rule of law. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Netherlands to meet ever-evolving new challenges.

If confirmed, I will come to this position with humility and commitment. I would serve as the first person of color as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am a grateful and loyal American who loves this country deeply. I was born in India, but I was made in the United States.

It would be an honor to follow in the footsteps of our first ambassadorial envoy, John Adams. I wholeheartedly commit to being available to members of this committee, members of Congress, and staff, to work in partnership.

Thank you so very much for your time. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Duggal follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished committee members, it is a genuine honor to be with you today. Senator Kaine, thank you so very much for the incredibly kind introduction.

I am deeply appreciative to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the nomination and confidence in my ability to serve as Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If confirmed, I look forward to enthusiastically representing and serving the American people as a force multiplier for good to advance key U.S. foreign policy priorities.

If I may, I would also like to thank my husband of 24 years, Rajat; my precious children Tarak and Arya; my lifelong friends who have always been a protective shield of love and support; and the most resilient human I know, my mother, Veena Razdan. I would also like to thank the talented team at U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam, who perform vital diplomatic work every day. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all of you closely.

As an immigrant, I represent the diverse face of the United States and the generations of people throughout our history who found opportunity in our great country. I was raised by a single mom in Cincinnati, who worked two minimum wage jobs to support us. My father left us when I was very young, and this profoundly and permanently affected the direction of my life. Rather than dwell upon what I did not have, I embraced the boundless opportunities that we are given here in the United States. I attended college and graduate school with the help of loans, grants, and scholarships. As I faced some of my own challenges of being a minority woman with limited resources, I became attuned to the values of diversity and inclusion that continue to inspire me today. I also focused on the rights of minorities and the critical importance of being a voice of the oppressed. This motivated me to pursue my years of work with Human Rights Watch and to serve as a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. While my life was often not easy, I was always saved by the grace of God and the promise of the United States. I have full confidence that kindness, empathy, honesty, and sweat equity mean something in our country. It is the reason why people from all over the world see us as a beacon of hope and freedom. While my story is not unique, it is one that represents the infinite possibilities of the American spirit and the American dream.

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Second, deepen our economic ties: The U.S.-Netherlands economic relationship is one of our deepest and most important trade partnerships. The Netherlands is one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, and Dutch investment supports over 800,000 American jobs. If confirmed, I will work to deepen our economic ties, promote American business, encourage further Dutch investment in the United States, and promote our shared prosperity.

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If confirmed, I will come to this position with humility and commitment. I would serve as the first person of color as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am a grateful and loyal American who loves this country deeply. I was born in India, but I was made in the United States.

It would be an honor to follow in the footsteps of our first Ambassadorial envoy, John Adams. I wholeheartedly commit to being available to members of this committee, members of Congress (and staff) to work in partnership. Thank you so very much for your time. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your comments.
We will now go to Ms. Patman.

**STATEMENT OF CARRIN F. PATMAN OF TEXAS, NOMINATED
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENI-
POTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE
REPUBLIC OF ICELAND**

Ms. PATMAN. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished committee members, it is the deepest honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for the United States Ambassador to Iceland. I am honored and profoundly grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence, and of course I am also deeply appreciative for the support of my home state Senators, Senator Cornyn, for his so very gracious introduction, and Senator Cruz as well.

I am joined today by my husband, Jim Derrick, without whose love and support I would not be before you.

This nomination is particularly special to me because I grew up in a family of public servants. My dad, Bill Patman, and my grandfather, Wright Patman, served in the United States House for a total of 51 years, so I completely understand that this role will require me to work in partnership with Congress on the issues that I will face. In fact, both my dad and granddad were in the audience when President Roosevelt delivered his Day of Infamy speech, my grandfather as a Congressman and my dad as a page.

My maternal grandfather, Fred Mauritz, whose parents immigrated from Iceland's fellow Arctic country, Sweden, was a Texas state senator also, and in honor of our Scandinavian heritage my mother's Scandinavian heritage was so important to her that she raised the money to establish the Swedish Excellence Endowment at the University of Texas to be established, for which she was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star by the King of Sweden. So being nominated for this public service role, and in a country representing my own Nordic heritage, is deeply special.

As Senators Cardin and Hagerty have noted, it is a critical time to serve in this role, and in Iceland. Iceland has long been our highly valued ally, a strong democracy whose bedrock values mirror our own, a founding member of NATO, a 70-year security partner, a fellow Arctic nation, and a country of enormous strategic importance as we all face threats from other powers.

I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a Chief of Mission and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. And I will not repeat those from my statement here because Senator Cornyn kindly set those forth in his introduction.

But if confirmed, the following are top priorities I would seek to advance. First, of course, to protect the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Iceland, including those under Chief of Mission authority, Embassy personnel and their families, and U.S. tourists. More tourists visit Iceland from the United States than from any other country, and I look forward to welcoming all of you on codels, I hope.

Second, to advance our shared security interests. Iceland's key location, between North America and Europe, and at the center of two critical maritime passageways is even more important as melting Arctic ice increases maritime traffic. Russia and the People's Republic of China fully understand the economic and military importance of Iceland, and if confirmed, I will seek to deepen our se-

curity cooperation and support Iceland in managing these challenges. Ranking Member Hagerty had specifically discussed China, and yes, they, in fact, are increasing their presence in the Arctic, and I look forward to further discussing it in Iceland as well, if you want to question me about it.

Third, if confirmed, I would seek to strengthen our economic relationship. The United States is already Iceland's most important single-country trading partner, with great opportunities for additional trade and investment. I would work with Iceland with respect to its vital role in sustaining our planet and as a world leader in renewable energy and a pioneer in carbon storage.

Fifth, we are both members of the Arctic Council, so I would look forward to working with Iceland on Arctic issues.

Additionally, of course, I would prioritize people-to-people ties through exchange programs, robust public diplomacy efforts, and one-on-one contact with me and my husband, Jim. I am blessed that it is a country relatively small in population, so I hope to get to meet a lot of people in Iceland.

It would be a privilege and honor of a lifetime to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARRIN F. PATMAN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today as the President's nominee for the United States Ambassador to Iceland. I am honored and deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I'm also deeply appreciative for the support of my home state Senators, Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz.

And I'm joined today by my husband, Jim Derrick, without whose love and support I would not be before you.

This nomination is particularly meaningful to me because I grew up in a family of public servants. My dad, Bill Patman, and my paternal grandfather, Wright Patman, both served in the United States House of Representatives. My maternal grandfather, Fred Mauritz, whose parents immigrated from Iceland's fellow Arctic country, Sweden, was a Texas State Senator. My mother's Scandinavian heritage was so important to her that she raised the money to establish the Swedish Excellence Endowment at the University of Texas and was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star by the King of Sweden. So being nominated for this public service role, and to a country representing my own Nordic heritage, is deeply special.

Moreover, it is a critical time in which to serve in this role, and in Iceland. Iceland has long been an important and highly valued ally. It is a strong democracy whose bedrock values mirror our own, a founding member of NATO, and a security partner with the United States for over 70 years. Iceland is a fellow Arctic nation with whom we have long cooperated on Arctic issues, and a country of great geostrategic importance to us and the world, as we collectively face concerning threats from other powers.

I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a chief of mission, and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. Most recently, I led the Houston region's \$1 billion transit agency serving almost 4 million people, bringing together the public and private sectors to develop and then secure overwhelming voter approval of a multi-billion-dollar plan to expand service, including to traditionally underserved constituencies. During several decades as a trial lawyer, I mastered complex and challenging cases, persuaded decision makers and often resolved disputes out-of-court even among antagonistic parties—one of my first cases was in then Judge Cornyn's court! -- and was elected to multiple terms on our international law firm's management committee. And of course, I've had a lifelong involvement in public service through my family's service as well as my own.

I'm thrilled to be nominated to serve in Iceland. The United States and Iceland cooperate on many important issues, from transatlantic security, to protecting fun-

damental human rights, to combating climate change, to sustainably developing the Arctic. If confirmed, the following are top priorities I would seek to advance:

First, to protect the safety and security of U.S. citizens in Iceland, including those under Chief of Mission authority, Embassy personnel and their families, and U.S. tourists. More tourists visit Iceland from the United States than from any other country.

Second, to advance our shared security interests. Iceland's key location right between North America and Europe, and at the center of the critical maritime Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap, is now even more important as melting ice increases maritime traffic in the Arctic. Russia and the People's Republic of China understand the strategic importance of Iceland, both economically and militarily, and if confirmed, I will seek to deepen our security cooperation with Iceland and support Iceland in managing these challenges.

Third, if confirmed, I would seek to strengthen our economic relationship. The United States is Iceland's most important single-country trading partner, with great opportunities for additional trade and investment.

Fourth, Iceland plays a vital role in sustaining our planet, not only as an important site for research and understanding of climate developments, but also as a world leader in renewable hydropower and geothermal energy, and a pioneer in carbon storage.

Fifth, as a fellow member of the Arctic Council, Iceland is an instrumental partner in shaping Arctic policy, and if confirmed I will work closely with Iceland on Arctic issues.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will promote and strengthen people-to-people ties with Iceland through exchange programs and robust public diplomacy efforts.

I also look forward to working with Congress to further U.S. priorities in Iceland.

It would be a privilege and honor of a lifetime to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you very much for your comments.

We will now hear from Ms. Aggeler.

STATEMENT OF ANGELA PRICE AGGELER OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Ms. AGGELER. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the committee, it is the honor of my Foreign Service career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia. I am humbled by and grateful for the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to represent the United States in Skopje. I hope to also earn your trust, and if confirmed, would work closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in North Macedonia.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my husband, Brian, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and the Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Paris. I would not be here today were it not for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Madeleine, who has come from Austin, Texas, to have my back today, as always.

I began my foreign service career in 1998, and have served in Pakistan, Vietnam, France, and India. I am also no stranger to North Macedonia. I served as Counselor for Public Affairs in Skopje, where I focused on educating and empowering youth and minority communities, good governance, and building a stronger economy and more tolerant society. I would be deeply honored to

return to Skopje to serve as the U.S. Ambassador and to advance our priorities with this important strategic partner.

NATO's newest ally, North Macedonia, will also assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023. We must continue to work closely with North Macedonia in responding to the threats posed to our security and the international order, most immediately Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The urgency of this moment underscores the importance of deeper political, economic, cultural, security cooperation, and people-to-people ties with North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries as they work to realize their strategic goals of European integration.

The United States has supported North Macedonia's long-standing goal of EU accession. We stand firmly behind the EU enlargement process because it has advanced democratic development and promoted peace, stability, and prosperity on the European continent, building stronger strategic partners for the United States. North Macedonia has overcome difficult challenges and made tough choices to take historic steps forward on its accession path. If confirmed, I will build on these successes to secure that path forward.

The United States and North Macedonia have many shared priorities, including fighting corruption, improving the rule of law, and strengthening good governance. If confirmed, I will encourage judicial reforms and urge the institutions of North Macedonia to promote transparency, investigate allegations of abuse, and decisively counter corruption to bolster public confidence in governance. I will work with interagency partners to help North Macedonia develop a national strategy that effectively holds corrupt actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will work to support North Macedonia's economic future through policies to bolster its investment climate, strengthen infrastructure, improve energy diversity and security, and build resistance to malign external influence, including from Russia and China. I will work to advance the country's integration into regional economic growth initiatives based on EU standards, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. I will support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia needs to diversify energy sources and routes and develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets. If confirmed, I will champion the country's transition from coal towards cleaner alternatives and create the market conditions that attract American investment that will spur North Macedonia to become a regional energy hub.

Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the positive momentum of June's bilateral Strategic Dialogue, which you mentioned, Senator Hagerty, which touched on a range of issues, including deepening military-to-military cooperation.

It would be an honor to lead our Embassy Skopje team and work with the Government, citizens, and our international partners on these priorities. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Aggeler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANGELA PRICE AGGELER

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, it is the honor of my Foreign Service career to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia. I am humbled by and grateful for the trust President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me to represent the United States in Skopje. I hope to also earn your trust, and if confirmed, would work closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in North Macedonia.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognize my husband, Brian, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, and the Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Paris. I would not be here today were it not for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my daughter, Madeleine, who has come from Austin, Texas, to have my back today, as always. I began my foreign service career in 1998 and have served in Pakistan, Vietnam, France, and India. I am also no stranger to North Macedonia. I served as Counselor for Public Affairs in Skopje, where I focused on educating and empowering youth and minority communities, good governance, and building a stronger economy and more tolerant society. I would be deeply honored to return to Skopje to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to North Macedonia and to advance our priorities with this important strategic partner.

NATO's newest ally, North Macedonia, will also assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023. We must continue to work closely with North Macedonia in responding to the threats posed to our security and the international order, most immediately Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The urgency of this moment underscores the importance of deeper political, economic, cultural, security cooperation, and people-to-people ties with North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries as they work to realize their strategic goals of Western integration.

The United States has supported North Macedonia's longstanding goal of EU accession. We stand firmly behind the EU enlargement process because it has advanced democratic development and promoted peace, stability, and prosperity on the European continent, building stronger strategic partners for the United States. North Macedonia has overcome difficult challenges and made tough choices to take historic steps forward on its accession path. If confirmed, I will build on these successes to secure the EU accession path of North Macedonia.

The United States and North Macedonia have many shared priorities, including fighting corruption, improving the rule of law, and strengthening good governance. If confirmed, I will encourage judicial reforms and urge the institutions of North Macedonia to promote transparency, investigate allegations of abuse, and decisively counter corruption to bolster public confidence in governance. I will work with inter-agency partners to help North Macedonia develop a national strategy that effectively holds corrupt actors accountable.

If confirmed, I will work to support North Macedonia's economic future through policies to bolster its investment climate, strengthen infrastructure, improve energy diversity and security, and build resilience to malign external influence, including from Russia and China. I will work to advance the country's integration into regional economic growth initiatives based on EU standards, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. I will support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia.

North Macedonia needs to diversify energy sources and routes and develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets. If confirmed, I will champion the country's transition from coal towards cleaner alternatives and create the market conditions that attract American investment that will and spur North Macedonia to become a regional energy hub.

Finally, if confirmed, I will build on the positive momentum of June's bilateral strategic dialogue, which touched on a range of issues, including deepening military-to-military cooperation.

It would be an honor to lead our Embassy Skopje team and work with the Government, citizens, and our international partners on these priorities. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for your testimony.
Mr. Rana.

STATEMENT OF GAUTAM A. RANA OF NEW JERSEY, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Mr. RANA. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, Senator Kaine, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests in the Slovak Republic.

I first want to thank my wife, Alexsa Alonzo, and my sons Rohan and Arjun. Alexsa and Rohan are here with me today, and my younger son, Arjun, is watching from home with my wonderful sister-in-law, Alicia Alonzo. I am so proud of them all, and I am here before you today because of their love, sacrifice, and support. As part of a diplomatic family that moves every few years, I want to thank them for their own service to our country.

My family and I are the embodiment of the American Dream, thanks to the courage, vision, and sacrifice of my parents, Amrat and Nirmala Rana. When I was only a year old, my father departed his native India and arrived at JFK Airport with \$20 dollars in his pocket. For 3 years, he worked a succession of minimum-wage jobs before his wife and three children joined him in New Jersey. My mother and father made tremendous sacrifices for me, my sisters, and their extended family, believing in their hearts that America truly was the land of opportunity and that their hard work would be rewarded. They stressed to my sisters and me the importance of education and how it could liberate us to pursue our dreams. Thanks to my parents' sacrifices and hard work, and my own journey as an immigrant, I am deeply conscious of how privileged I am to be an American citizen, and I am honored to have served and represented my country as a diplomat for the last 20 years.

As a person with a disability, I am also immensely grateful for the opportunities and freedom I have had as an American. I contracted polio as a child in India and need to use a leg brace and forearm crutches to walk. Between my time in the Peace Corps and Foreign Service, I have lived and worked in eight foreign countries on four continents. Though we still have much to do in the United States to ensure all disabled people can live full and dignified lives, I believe from my own lived experience that we are doing much better than many other countries. I sit before you today as an ambassador-nominee only because my parents had the wisdom and foresight to come to the United States.

As a Foreign Service Officer, I have advanced U.S. interests all over the globe, including in Europe. Next year marks the 30th anniversary of Slovakia's independence, and if confirmed, I hope to continue strengthening our already close relationship with the Slovak Republic.

If confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the protection of my Embassy team and our citizens, from ensuring the safety of

individual American travelers to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

If confirmed, I will focus the Embassy on three priorities. First, supporting Slovakia's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening regional and global security and stability. I will also prioritize supporting Slovakia as it stands with Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Slovakia has already provided more than 159 million euros in humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including donating an S-300 air defense system at a crucial time. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP, and since 2014, Slovakia has provided a critical link for Ukraine to import natural gas from Europe.

Second, if confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, including 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 enhance Slovak and European energy security while advancing their climate change goals.

Third, if confirmed, as you noted, Senator Hagerty, I will also focus on reinforcing Slovakia's commitment to the West and on actively engaging the Slovak public to build support for our shared commitment to democracy and human rights. This includes working with our Slovak partners in addressing disinformation.

As demonstrated by the First Lady's visit to Slovakia in May, the United States continues to deepen our partnership with the Slovak Republic. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to lead our outstanding team in Bratislava to advance our country's interests there and across the region.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, Senator Kaine, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rana follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GAUTAM A. RANA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Biden's nominee for the position of Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work with you to advance our nation's interests in the Slovak Republic.

I first want to thank my wife, Alexsa Alonzo, and my sons Rohan and Arjun. Alexsa and Rohan are here with me today, and Arjun is watching from home with my wonderful sister-in-law Alicia Alonzo. I am so proud of them all, and I am here before you today because of their love, sacrifice, and support. As part of a diplomatic family that moves every few years, I want to thank them for their own service to our country.

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ents' sacrifices and hard work, and my own journey as an immigrant, I am deeply conscious of how privileged I am to be an American citizen and I am honored to have served and represented my country as a diplomat for the last twenty years.

As a person with a disability, I am also immensely grateful for the opportunities and freedom I have had as an American. I contracted polio as an infant in India and need to use a leg brace and forearm crutches to walk. Between my time in the Peace Corps and Foreign Service, I have lived and worked in eight foreign countries on four continents. Though we still have much to do in the United States to ensure all disabled people can live full and dignified lives, I believe from my own lived experience that we are doing much better than many other countries. I sit before you today as an ambassador-nominee only because my parents had the wisdom and foresight to come to the United States.

As a Foreign Service Officer, I have advanced U.S. interests all over the globe, including in Europe. Next year marks the thirtieth anniversary of Slovakia's independence, and if confirmed, I hope to continue strengthening our already close relationship with the Slovak Republic.

If confirmed, I will have no greater priority than the protection of my Embassy team and our citizens—from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers, to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

If confirmed, I will also focus the Embassy on three priorities: first, supporting Slovakia's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening regional and global security and stability. I will also prioritize supporting Slovakia as it stands with Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Slovakia has already provided more than 159 million euros in humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including donating an S-300 air defense system at a crucial time. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP, and since 2014, Slovakia has provided a critical link for Ukraine to import natural gas from Europe.

Second, if confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, including 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 enhance Slovak and European energy security while advancing their climate change goals.

Third, if confirmed, I will also focus on reinforcing Slovakia's commitment to the West and on actively engaging the Slovak public to build support for our shared commitment to democracy and human rights. This includes working with our Slovak partners in addressing disinformation.

As demonstrated by the First Lady's visit to the Slovak Republic in May, the United States continues to deepen our partnership with Slovakia. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to lead our outstanding team in Bratislava to advance our country's interests there and across the region.

Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your questions.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for your testimony.

We will now hear from Ambassador Berry.

STATEMENT OF HON. RANDY W. BERRY OF COLORADO, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, NOMINATED TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ambassador Berry: Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and members of the committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you this afternoon as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence and trust in this nomination, and if confirmed, look forward to continuing my nearly 30 years of service to the United States Government, this time to advance our relationship with the Namibian Government and the Namibian people.

I am a proud sixth-generation son of the soil of the great state of Colorado. My Foreign Service career has taken me from a childhood on horseback on my family-run cattle ranch in the shadow of the Rockies to my current office in Kathmandu, in the shadow of the Himalayas, where I am now concluding 4-year tenure as Ambassador soon. I have had the great opportunity, however, to live and work on the African continent for nearly a decade over my career, advancing U.S. interests and relationships there.

As you are aware, and mentioned, Senator Cardin, the Foreign Service life demands a full buy-in from our families and those who love us, I want to acknowledge the enduring love and support of my family in this career and really in all things: my husband Pravesh Singh, who is seated behind me, and my children Arya and Xander, who are also joining me today.

For the past 30 years, Namibia has been a stable, democratic country and a model of U.S.-Africa partnership. It has continued to build strong institutions and an independent judiciary, and typically ranks right at the top in Africa for press freedom. Namibia's Government and citizens share many of the United States' priorities, including strengthening democratic institutions, increasing free trade and investment to grow an inclusive economy, promoting human rights, and addressing global threats such as climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to leading our dynamic team in Windhoek to deepen our partnership and further our common interests and values.

I would like to share with you the priorities that, if confirmed, I would work hard every day to advance as U.S. Ambassador. First and foremost, the welfare of U.S. mission colleagues and American citizens is my paramount priority, and I will work every day to ensure that our people are serving in a workplace that is healthy, is inclusive, and is marked by respect. I am excited also for the chance to move our team into a new Chancery next year that will provide a better physical work environment for all. Also, relationships of trust are a key part of diplomacy, I believe, both inside and outside the walls of an embassy, and I will invest heavily in building up relationships based on respect that produce results for our goals.

My mission team and I will support Namibia as it builds on its tradition of good governance. Anti-corruption messaging and assistance to fortify Namibia's democracy is a priority for both for their government and for ours. Through advocacy and partnerships, we will encourage Namibia to fully implement laws and policies that respect human rights.

Namibia also faces threats to its abundant natural resources, which are, like our own, vulnerable, in this case to exploitation by transnational criminal organizations and foreign powers due to insufficient social and legal protections. We will partner with Namibia to minimize opportunities for corruption and nature crimes and ensure that Namibia's ambitions to become a regional transport hub via the Walvis Bay Port include strong safeguards against illicit activity.

Both the United States and Namibia seek increased bilateral trade and investment. The U.S.-Namibia commercial relationship is a growing one, and recent successes show that fostering increased

trade and investment through mechanisms like the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Prosper Africa, Power Africa, and other infrastructure and economic initiatives are critical components of our efforts to accelerate economic development in Namibia. If confirmed, I will facilitate commercial relationships and call for a pro-business and pro-innovation policy for U.S. and Namibian businesses and accelerate equitable and inclusive development. Creating opportunities for planning and security partnerships will allow us to advance our priorities as Namibia grows in strategic importance as an anchor for activity in the south Atlantic Ocean.

Finally, if confirmed, I will focus on our continued investment in people. Once facing one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, Namibia became a flagship country for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, and it is now one of the few highly affected countries in the world nearing epidemic control of HIV/AIDS. Our investment of over USD \$1 billion in PEPFAR funds to Namibia since 2004 has saved lives of thousands and been a force multiplier for our bilateral relationship, fostering cooperation in many areas in addition to health.

The next chapter in our partnership with Namibia must ensure a resilient, well-equipped, and civically engaged population, especially among Namibia's youth. If confirmed, I will use our resources to empower current and future generations to partner with us to respond to global threats and opportunities and to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you again and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Berry follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RANDY W. BERRY

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence and trust, and if confirmed, look forward to continuing my nearly thirty years of service to the United States Government to advance our relationship with the Namibian Government and people.

I am a proud sixth-generation son of the great state of Colorado, though my Foreign Service career has taken me from a childhood on horseback on my family-run cattle ranch in the shadow of the Rockies to the Himalayas, where I am concluding my service as Ambassador to Nepal. I have had the opportunity to live and work on the African continent for nearly a decade advancing U.S. interests and relationships. As you are aware, the Foreign Service life demands a full family commitment. I want to acknowledge the enduring love and support of my family in this career and in all things: my husband Pravesh Singh, and my children Arya and Xander, who are joining me today.

For the past 30 years, Namibia has been a stable, democratic country and a model of U.S.-Africa partnership. It has built strong institutions and an independent judiciary, and typically ranks at the top in Africa for press freedom. Namibia's Government and citizens share many of the United States' priorities, including strengthening democratic institutions, increasing free trade and investment to grow an inclusive economy, promoting human rights, and addressing global threats such as climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to leading our dynamic team to deepen our partnership and further our common interests and values.

I would like to share with you the priorities that, if confirmed, I would work to advance as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. First and foremost, the welfare of U.S. Mission colleagues is my paramount priority, and I will work to ensure that our people are serving in a workplace that is healthy, inclusive, and marked by respect. I am excited to move us into a new Chancery that will provide a better physical work environment for all. Relationships of trust are a key part of

diplomacy, both inside and outside the Embassy, and I will invest heavily in building relationships based on respect that produce results on mutual goals.

My Mission team and I will support Namibia as it builds on its tradition of good governance. Anti-corruption messaging and assistance to fortify Namibia's democracy is a priority for both our government and theirs. Through advocacy and partnerships, we will encourage Namibia to fully implement laws and policies that respect human rights. Namibia also faces threats to its abundant natural resources, which are, like our own, vulnerable to exploitation by transnational criminal organizations and foreign powers due to insufficient social and legal protections. We will partner with Namibia to minimize opportunities for corruption and nature crimes and ensure that Namibia's ambitions to become a regional transport hub via the Walvis Bay Port include strong safeguards against illicit activity.

Both the United States and Namibia seek increased bilateral trade and investment. The U.S.-Namibia commercial relationship is growing, and recent successes show that fostering increased trade and investment through mechanisms like the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), Prosper Africa, Power Africa, and other infrastructure and economic initiatives are critical components of our efforts to accelerate economic development in Namibia. If confirmed, I will facilitate commercial relationships and call for a pro-business and pro-innovation policy environment. We will expand opportunities for U.S. and Namibian businesses and accelerate equitable and inclusive development. Creating opportunities for planning and security partnerships will allow us to advance our priorities as Namibia grows in strategic importance as an anchor for activity in the south Atlantic.

Finally, if confirmed, I will focus on our continued investment in people. Once facing one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, Namibia became a flagship country for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program. It is now one of the few highly affected countries in the world nearing epidemic control of HIV/AIDS. Our investment of over USD \$1 billion in PEPFAR funds to Namibia since 2004 has saved thousands of lives and been a force multiplier for our bilateral relationship, fostering cooperation in areas other than health. The next chapter in our partnership with Namibia must ensure a resilient, well-equipped, civically engaged population—especially among Namibia's youth. If confirmed, I will use our resources to empower current and future generations to partner with us to respond to global threats and opportunities and to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to answering your questions.

Senator CARDIN. We thank all of you for your comments and your observations. We appreciate that very much.

This committee has a tradition of asking all nominees questions about their availability. Some of you have already answered this in your presentations. You must have anticipated these questions were going to be asked. That is good staff work. But I am going to ask each of you to answer yes or no individually on the four questions that are asked about responsiveness to our committee.

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

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador Berry: Yes.

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

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador Berry: Yes.

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

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador Berry: Yes.

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

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Ms. PATMAN. Yes.

Ms. AGGELER. Yes.

Mr. RANA. Yes.

Ambassador Berry: Yes.

Senator CARDIN. You all passed. Congratulations.

As I think has been observed, the five countries that you have been nominated to be our representatives are all democratic states. So we are dealing with countries that are naturally allies of the United States but they have certain challenges.

There are a couple of common concerns that we have. One is the dependency on Russian oil, which is today a very important consideration. As we know, Russia has weaponized the use of energy, and these countries remain very dependent upon Russian energy sources. It makes it more challenging for us to have the type of leverage to keep unity in our support for Ukraine. In the Slovak Republic, I understand 100 percent of their oil is imported, and 85 percent of their natural gas. We know in North Macedonia it is a large percentage, and in the Netherlands.

So let me start first with Mr. Rana. How would you go about urging the importance of removing that dependency from the point of view of the national security not only of the Slovak Republic but also of our allies in Europe?

Mr. RANA. Thank you very much for that question, Senator Cardin. You are absolutely right—100 percent of Slovakia's oil and nuclear energy, or the fuel, is derived from Russia, and 85 percent of its natural gas. The most important thing that I would do, if confirmed as Ambassador would be to encourage Slovakia to integrate within the European Union's own internal energy market and diversify fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes.

What do we mean by that? One, with the nuclear fuel, try to find new suppliers. Right now they are completely dependent on the Russians. With natural gas Slovakia has already built interconnectors with all of its neighbors. They have contracted with the Norwegians to supply natural gas. They have also brought in LNG, including from U.S. suppliers. So these are the types of activities that we would continue to encourage Slovakia and, frankly, all of the European allies, to continue doing. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Ms. Aggeler, there is a similar problem in North Macedonia, not quite as great, and as you point out, North Macedonia is taking on a leadership within the OSCE, which we are very pleased to see. But it also gives us a chance for who-

ever assumes leadership in that organization to demonstrate, by action, their commitment to the Helsinki principles.

In North Macedonia the energy issue is one, but also they have had some challenges in the rule of law and building that capacity. Tell me how you could utilize our position in that country, through our mission, particularly as North Macedonia ascends in the OSCE.

Ms. AGGELER. Thank you so much for the question, Chairman Cardin, and they are both critical important right now, particularly as we look at the fact that just 12 days ago the Parliament of North Macedonia passed the required motions to begin its EU accession, to accept the French proposals for that accession, and as we look to this country and to Albania moving forward in the EU.

First of all, you are absolutely right about the energy crisis. North Macedonia is on the verge of declaring an energy crisis as of August because of their dependence largely on Russian gas. We have already seen efforts throughout our mission in Greece, for example, on a Greece-North Macedonia interconnector LNG that would not only benefit North Macedonia but also many of its neighbors. And there are a number of initiatives on clean energy that would assist them to move away from the dependency on Russia.

But your point also about not only OSCE leadership but also their EU accession aspirations are critically important and I believe offer us an opportunity. And if confirmed, I will do everything in my power, Senator, to help them make so many of the reforms in rule of law, for example, that will assist that country in overall governance, which they so desperately need.

I was very pleased to read today that the Embassy in Skopje announced \$4.3 million in additional funding for rule-of-law programs across North Macedonia that were a direct result of the Strategic Dialogue that we had in June. So those reforms, those necessary reforms, I would do everything I could to support them. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Ms. Duggal, let me complete the issue in regard to Russian dependency. There is a similar problem in regard to Netherlands. Tell us how you would address that as our Ambassador.

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you for the question, Chairman Cardin. That is absolutely such a critical thought, and Russia does use energy as a weapon to attempt to weaken Europe. The Netherlands is, in fact, less dependent on Russian energy than other European countries, and the Netherlands does hope to cut Russian oil and fossil fuels by the end of the year and aims to halt coal imports by August 11th and expand wind and solar.

The steps they have already taken in the Netherlands, if I could list a few, the EU has reached a plan, actually just very recently, to cut natural gas by 15 percent between now and spring of 2023. They are also using coal-fired stations to operate at 35 percent maximum capacity. And there is an emergency option in the Netherlands to tap into the Groningen gas field, which is the largest in Europe, and reopen, if need. And if confirmed, I would be helpful in that conversation.

Senator CARDIN. And we are going to follow up on all these issues.

One of the areas, and particularly as a Senator from Maryland, we have an LNG export facility located in our state. We know that

American LNG is part of the solution of Europe to remove their dependency on Russian energy sources, particularly natural gas. So these are all areas that are going to have to be put into fast gear because some of these issues take a while to implement. And it could be a very cold winter in Europe this year.

Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Cardin, and I want to stay with you, Ms. Duggal, just to continue my concerns of what is happening in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has proven to be a significant swing vote in our technological competition with the Chinese Communist Party and with China. There is a tool company there called ASML. Are you familiar with is?

Ms. DUGGAL. Yes.

Senator HAGERTY. ASML produces a special tool known as an extreme ultraviolet lithography system. It basically cuts the thinnest lines in the world on silicon wafers. These tools—I think they cost \$150 million a copy—Communist China would love to get their hands on these tools. Huawei would like to decrease its dependence on other countries because they would like to have this capability internalized in China.

Thankfully, ASML has worked with us, and the Government of the Netherlands has worked with us, and Communist China has not received a single one of these machines. And that is because the Government of the Netherlands has withheld export licenses for this to China.

The Trump administration began this sort of coordination between the United States and the Netherlands to persuade them on national security grounds not to grant such an export license, and the Biden administration has continued this policy, which I am very pleased to see. And I would like to know, if confirmed, Ms. Duggal, would you commit to fully support our efforts to encourage in the Netherlands, and other key countries for that matter, to adopt export controls on national security grounds that will prevent Chinese companies from obtaining and acquiring such critical tools and technologies?

Ms. DUGGAL. Thank you for the question, sir. Yes, I actually am aware of, in the Trump administration, the efforts that were made and that were successful, and I also am aware that in July of this year there has been lobbying for the older DUV systems, and if confirmed, yes, I do commit to that, sir.

Senator HAGERTY. I think it is going to be absolutely critical to take every step that we can because the predatory posture of China is becoming more and more evident to everyone around the globe. But our technology competition is absolutely vital. And if you have the opportunity to be confirmed, I think your recognition of the national security threat that Communist China poses and the fact that you will be representing us to a nation that could play a critical role in denying Communist China with that capability I think would be vitally important.

If I could turn my next question to Ms. Patman. As you know, Iceland has no armed forces and it depends on the United States and NATO for its defense. I am very concerned about Russia's increased naval presence in the North Atlantic and I am concerned

about the frequency of their naval patrols. They are levels that we have not seen since the Cold War.

In 2016, the United States and Iceland agreed on a new Joint Defense Declaration. It was aimed at bolstering security cooperation, and the United States has been upgrading its facilities at Iceland's Keflavik military base. Although Iceland's Government has been cooperating with U.S. authorities and activities at Keflavik, some Icelandic officials and parliamentarians are cautious about our increased presence there.

So if confirmed, how would you work to strengthen the defense relationship between the United States and Iceland?

Ms. PATMAN. Thank you so much for the question, Senator. I would work at the highest levels of the Icelandic Government to continue that cooperation and make sure that Iceland understood how valued they are and have been for over 70 years as a strategic partner. As I am sure you know, their location is so pivotal that in World War II we had a base there with troops, which we ultimately, thinking that the Cold War was over, prematurely as it turns out, withdrew in 2006. But subsequent to that time Keflavik, as you are obviously aware, has served as a really critical military base for surveillance.

And in fact, on either side of Iceland are the two maritime passages, collectively known as the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap, that are essential be used for NATO surveillance of Russian submarines before they drop off into the North Atlantic and become untraceable.

So I am very aware of the aggressions of Russia in that region, of their recognition not only that the Arctic is of critical importance to them economically, given their oilfields and other interests, but they, along with China, are hoping to open up the northern sea route and shorten shipping times, and the northern sea route goes directly through the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap, which makes that surveillance so important and makes allied control of that location so very important.

So I too have become extremely aware of all the different Russian aggressions, military and economic, involving Iceland, and I do commit to work very faithfully with the Icelandic Government to manage those aggressions and make sure they do not jeopardize either Icelandic or American security.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you for that response.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Berry, I want to talk a little bit about Namibia. It is a bright spot on the African continent, so let me start by acknowledging that. They are ranked 58 out of 180 in the ranking on the 2021 Corruption Index, which is the sixth-best score in Africa. But as I assume you are aware, they recently had a major scandal in their fishing quotas, dubbed the "Fishrot," in which government officials were engaged in corruption.

We recognize that corruption is one of the major ways in which democratic states become very vulnerable. So how can you use the resources of our mission to help strengthen their commitment for anti-corruption activities within their country?

Ambassador Berry: Thank you, Senator Cardin, for that question. I think there is no doubt that corrupt practices, particularly

when they involve government officials who are betraying the trust of the people, poses one of the greatest threats to democracy, and I think the Fishrot scandal obviously has laid bare some of the vulnerabilities that Namibia's young democracy faces here.

I think there are a couple of things that I would point to as encouraging signs there. First of all, the corruption was largely uncovered through a free and independent media. Second of all, the Government took positive action in sacking those who were responsible or accused through that process and have moved them to trial.

I think that as the United States Government we have a grave and solemn commitment to help support them in those efforts. I think through training, through our regional hub for the International Law Enforcement Academy, through other types of assistance to help ensure that sunshine and daylight, transparency and accountability is really the coin of the realm.

I think that by emphasizing in personal relationships and engagements through our programmatic involvement as well, emphasizing that which binds us most closely, these elements of a democratic society, will be the best guarantee that we have in helping them combat this scourge.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you for that answer.

Ms. Patman, I want to follow up on the issue of Arctic security because I really do think Senator Hagerty's point is one that is of critical importance. Russia is anything but predictable, other than we know that they want to bring down democratic states and they want to expand their influence. That we know. The Arctic is an area of major interest for Russia, and Iceland depends upon NATO. They do not have a capacity themselves, in armed forces. They do have some capacity on the coast.

So how do you sort of help develop the strategies, recognizing Russia's brazen aggression now, that nothing is off the table? How do we strengthen that alliance so that we have a greater Arctic defense than we currently have, recognizing that Russia feels rather emboldened in that area?

Ms. PATMAN. Thank you for the question, and I certainly am ready to meet that challenge, if confirmed as Ambassador to Iceland. Iceland, as we talked earlier, does play a critical geostrategic role, and the whole attitude toward Russia, in my understanding in Iceland, has completely changed in light of the aggression in Ukraine. I think the Foreign Minister spoke at the Wilson Institute here in Washington recently, and talked about how it has changed everything. They are absolutely on red alert about the threat Russia poses and they are ready to engage in all measures necessary to thwart that kind of aggression. Not only have they been totally supportive of the sanctions, giving humanitarian aid, accepting refugees, and a number of other ways to help in Ukraine, they also recognize, and have actually acknowledged, the possible need for enhanced security presence with respect to NATO security.

Now I will say that Iceland plays above its weight. Iceland really does contribute to NATO in many incredibly valuable ways. The Icelandic Coast Guard operates the Keflavik Air Base. We have a number of installations in Iceland, including a radio transmitter facility at Grindavik that the United States has there, and there are

military exercises in the Arctic to ensure interoperability should there be a problem there, just to name a few examples of how Iceland does contribute handsomely to NATO.

So I would say that yes, it is true that under their security agreement with the United States and under their agreement with NATO we are responsible for their security, but they also contribute to ours as well, and I always like to recognize that.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you. Senator Hagerty?

Senator HAGERTY. If I might just add one more question. This is for Mr. Berry, and again a concern about China's predatory presence in Africa, broadly speaking. They have aggressively used their debt trap diplomacy to move into Africa, and I am very concerned about the posture they are adopting with regard to lithium. And China is on track, if nothing is done about it, to control 75 percent of the world's lithium supply in just a few more years, by 2030.

In Namibia, all the active uranium mines are majority Chinese owned, and China has invested \$4.7 billion in a uranium mining project that is one of the largest investments that China has in Africa. So I would love to hear what your perspective is on the Chinese Communist Party's activities in Namibia and what you would foresee, if you are confirmed, what you would foresee as your response to that.

Ambassador Berry: Thank you, Senator, for that question. You know, for the last 4 years I have been leading a team in a country that shares a border with China so I have become acutely familiar with many of the Chinese predatory policies, its use of disinformation, for example, to target the relationships through the predatory lending that I think has troubled so many states around the world.

I think what I have learned from that is that the best vaccination against those kinds of predatory or unhelpful interventions in any country, Namibia included, is for full transparency and full visibility on arrangements around deals on the extractive industries, on any kind of investment. I think that we lean very heavily into our shared role as democracies around the world. I believe that, if confirmed, what the United States can bring into looking at investment in the extractive industries or bringing greater scrutiny and greater clarity on the arrangements of those deals really is at the core of what we can do there.

I believe that in Nepal we have seen the Chinese Government really attack U.S. programming by the deployment of misinformation, and if confirmed, I will work every day to promote private sector engagement, to provide greater clarity on these deals, and to engage in the common-sense and, I think, extremely useful engagement of building up relationships. I think that an investment of our time, our energy, our focus, and working on the fundamentals of the extractive industries there will give us some new insight on how we can compete. It is, obviously, a great concern to me.

Senator HAGERTY. To be clear, Ambassador, you would be supportive them of U.S. private sector involvement in the extractive industries there, in Namibia?

Ambassador Berry: Absolutely, Senator. I think whether you look at Namibia's potential in developing its green power sources, the rare earth minerals, the lithium, uranium that you mentioned, or

even to develop the potential of petroleum discoveries, I would sure as heck rather see American companies develop those resources, because I think that we can do it better, I think the technology supports it, and I think we can do it in a way that is environmentally sensitive, which is also a high priority for the Namibian Government.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. And I would just urge you, in the extractive industries, to recognize that it is utilized too often for corruption. And I have been to Namibia and I think they are committed to an honest system, but the more transparency that we have in the process, the stronger that is going to be as these relationships are developed.

Ambassador Berry: Thank you, Senator. I agree.

Senator CARDIN. The committee record will remain open until close of business on Friday, July 29, for members of the committee that may have ask questions for the record. We would urge you all to try to answer those questions as promptly and as completely as possible because until that process is completed the committee cannot schedule the next step in the confirmation process. So we would ask that you cooperate with the committee, and again we thank you very much for your willingness to put up with this process and to serve our nation.

And with that the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:12 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy, and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, the Netherlands was noted for violence or threats of violence against journalists, crimes and threats motivated by anti-Semitism, threats of racial violence, and threats of violence against LGBT communities. Authorities of the kingdom identified, investigated, prosecuted, and punished officials who committed abuses.

- What is your assessment of the efficacy of the Government in identifying and punishing officials committing human rights abuses?

Answer. The Government of the Netherlands has demonstrated efficacy and a strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, including as a member state in the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC). The Netherlands has also worked hard to identify and punish officials who commit human rights abuses. If confirmed, I intend to work with the Government of Netherlands to keep the issues of human rights and religious freedoms at the forefront of our bilateral agenda. I would call upon the Government to hold accountable perpetrators of such threats. I would also encourage the Dutch Government to continue to support community-based initiatives promoting tolerance and inclusivity.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take with host government to address violations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would call upon the Government to hold accountable perpetrators of human rights abuses. I would also encourage the Dutch Government to continue to support community-based initiatives promoting tolerance and inclusivity.

Question. If confirmed, how would you direct your mission to bolster civil society and respect for human rights in country?

Answer. As President Biden has said, the United States is ready to work with partners and allies to help lead the world toward a more peaceful, prosperous future grounded in respect for human dignity. I have been a long-time committee member of Human Rights Watch and defending human rights has been a key priority of mine. If confirmed, I would work with the relevant offices in the U.S. Mission, including with the Public Affairs Section, to work with civil society organizations that advocate for human rights. I would utilize our many public diplomacy tools, such as exchanges, cultural programs, and media engagement, to highlight and share best practices.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, the Netherlands remained a Tier 1 country for meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking, maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the Government's efforts on the Dutch Caribbean islands remained weak, and the Government did not report complete victim statistics for the reporting.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government improve efforts in the Dutch Caribbean islands?

Answer. Embassy The Hague works closely with the Dutch Government to share our concerns about trafficking in persons in the Dutch Caribbean, and the Embassy contributes to our Congressionally mandated reporting on conditions there. If confirmed, I would coordinate with U.S. Embassy leadership in the Caribbean, the Dutch Government, senior State and Justice Department officials, and Congressional leadership to encourage increased efforts against trafficking in the Dutch Caribbean.

Question. What steps could you take to encourage the host government to increase the level of victim statistics reported?

Answer. If confirmed, I would encourage the Government of the Netherlands to provide accurate and comprehensive reporting and statistics of their work to address trafficking problems. I would also lead the U.S. Mission in the Netherlands to work with journalists, civil society, advocates, academics, and survivors, who are vital contributors to our understanding of this terrible crime.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, the Netherlands constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or beliefs. However, some local politicians have made anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic statements. Some Jewish groups have expressed concern over rising anti-Semitism through vandalism of Jewish monuments, anti-Semitic chants at soccer matches, and vandalism involving text sprayed with swastikas.

- What is your assessment of anti-Semitism in the country?

Answer. The Dutch constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief. Dutch ministers have spoken out against antisemitism and have appointed a National Coordinator for Countering Antisemitism. However, there is still more to be done to address religious intolerance and discrimination, including antisemitism. As a former member of the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial Council, for which I continue to serve as a Regional Western Advisor, confronting antisemitism and defending human rights has been a primary focus and, if confirmed, would be one of my highest priorities. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Office of International Religious Freedom and Special Envoys for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism and for Holocaust Issues to push back effectively on antisemitism.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. Officials from U.S. Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam engage in interfaith dialogue, formally and informally, with government officials, religious leaders, youth activists, and other civil society groups to highlight the need for religious tolerance. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with these stakeholders and in coordination with colleagues in Washington to highlight the need for religious tolerance.

International Organizations

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

tin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.N. member states.

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

Answer. Absolutely. If confirmed, I would encourage the Netherlands to support Doreen Bogdan-Martin. It is vitally important that key international organizations like the International Telecommunications Union are led by capable individuals committed to upholding the integrity of the rules-based international order. Ms. Bogdan-Martin is clearly the most qualified candidate for Secretary-General of the ITU. I will encourage the Netherlands not only to vote for Ms. Bogdan-Martin at the upcoming ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in September, but to encourage other ITU member states to do the same.

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

Answer. Ensuring that the United States and our like-minded allies and partners do not cede influence in the U.N. system to those who do not share our values and are not committed to the foundational principles of the U.N. is of vital importance to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. If confirmed, I will work hand-in-glove with the International Organizations Bureau, the Government of the Netherlands, and other stakeholders to augment the number of Americans while encouraging citizens of likeminded nations to work throughout the U.N. system. I would also work with the Embassy's Public Affairs Section to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans to the U.N.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. The Netherlands has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Netherlands Government on anticipated votes in the U.N. system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. The Netherlands is closely aligned with the United States across the spectrum of foreign policy, national security, and economic issues, and we should take full advantage of this close alignment to advance U.S. interests. If confirmed, I would ensure that my team and I maintain regular contact with Dutch counterparts to ensure maximum coordination on upcoming votes and other actions in the U.N. and other multilateral bodies, including actions to stand with Ukraine and further isolate Russia in the international system.

Question. The Netherlands hosts the International Criminal Court, the main body that implements the Rome Statute. The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute.

- If confirmed, do you commit to working with the Ambassador for Global Criminal Justice Van Schaak and Under Secretary Zeya to protect American interests in the context of the ICC?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would absolutely work closely with Ambassador Van Schaack and Under Secretary Zeya to protect our interests in the context of the ICC. The Dutch are proud hosts of the ICC and led efforts to hold Russia to account for human rights abuses in Ukraine during a recent Accountability Conference. As a court of last resort, the ICC has a critical role to play in the international system of justice and the USG supports constructive engagement aimed at supporting the Court's mandate, which is a key priority for the President.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with Congress on ICC issues, including any new or rumored investigations of the U.S., Israel, or other allies who are also not a party to the Rome Statute?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work closely with Washington colleagues, Global Criminal Justice Ambassador-at-Large Van Schaack, Under Secretary Zeya, and with Embassy The Hague's Office of Legal Counselor (OLC) to address any concerns related to the ICC. The United States continues to maintain its longstanding objection to efforts by the Court to assert jurisdiction over personnel of non-States, Parties such as the United States and Israel, but believes that any concerns are best addressed through engagement with all stakeholders.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

Answer. Mission the Netherlands comprises our Embassy in The Hague and the Consulate General in Amsterdam. My understanding is that our Mission faces staffing shortages among our locally employed hires. Our Consulate General in Amsterdam provides consular services for the country including non-immigrant and immigrant visas and American Citizen Services for both tourists and more than 45,000 Americans citizens who reside in The Netherlands. If confirmed, I would make every effort to regularly meet with the staff to understand any concerns they may have and address any morale issues that may arise.

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

Answer. Mission Netherlands has very high morale. If confirmed, the welfare of all Americans and my staff would be my top priority; I would do my utmost to keep morale high at both posts, including by addressing staffing gaps. I would seek frank input and feedback from the staff at Consulate General Amsterdam, enthusiastically recognize their contributions and accomplishments, and work assiduously with my Consul General and my management team to address any concerns they may have.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would use my experience building bridges to maintain close communication among staff at the Embassy and Consulate General. In addition to the established, regular meetings between the Embassy and Consulate General, I would work to communicate a unified mission and vision, be inclusive and open, and encourage more frequent interactions among staff. The Consulate General in Amsterdam is uniquely located on Museumplein—the heart of a world-class city. We have an opportunity to leverage this presence as a strategic platform to advance Mission priorities.

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

Answer. I have always striven to forge inclusive, open environments where individuals feel empowered and develop a shared sense of responsibility. When conflicts arise, I work to resolve them professionally and with respect for all parties involved. I look to delegate authority, but not responsibility, as often as possible. If confirmed, I would bring my optimistic attitude along with a collaborative and team-focused management style to the mission.

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

Answer. No, this type of behavior is not acceptable. If confirmed, I will work to resolve issues professionally and with respect for all parties involved.

Question. How do you envision your leadership relationship with your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build a relationship of trust and respect with the Deputy Chief of Mission, delegating when appropriate and ensuring the individual can cover for me in the event I am not available.

Question. If confirmed, what leadership responsibilities do you intend to entrust to your Deputy Chief of Mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to let my Deputy Chief of Mission serve as the Embassy's chief management officer, responsible for the day-to-day functions of the Mission. If confirmed and after I arrive at post, I will work out the details with the Deputy Chief of Mission of our respective portfolios to form the basis of a collaborative, productive relationship.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Candid and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and for them to understand where they need

to improve. Beyond the annual reviews, it is also important for supervisors to set clear expectations and provide continuous feedback.

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

Answer. Yes. Ensuring clear, accurate, and direct feedback for employees will raise their overall performance. I will enthusiastically recognize the accomplishments of high-performing employees.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Diplomats in Embassy The Hague enjoy a free range of movement throughout the country to establish a breadth of contacts and complete their work. If confirmed, I would commit to continue this practice of getting outside of the Embassy to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations and fellow foreign diplomats stationed in the Netherlands.

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

Answer. Diplomats working in Embassy The Hague already enjoy a free range of movement throughout the country. If confirmed, I will work to ensure they continue to leave the Embassy to meet with Dutch officials and other citizens throughout the country as often as possible. I will also work closely with Diplomatic Security to monitor the security situation in case there are any changes to the permissive security environment that allows Mission staff to travel throughout the Netherlands. If confirmed, one of my key priorities will be to visit each of the 12 provinces and substantively engage with the local Dutch population to convey and exemplify our American ideals.

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

Answer. Embassy The Hague uses the full array of public diplomacy tools to engage with the Dutch public across all facets of society, including educational and professional exchanges, cultural and sports diplomacy programs, and grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

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

Answer. Working in a country such as the Netherlands, with an open media environment, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression, U.S. diplomats face few constraints. If confirmed, I will work to help ensure that this trend continues and will work energetically with my Public Diplomacy Section to ensure that our public diplomacy efforts deepen our bilateral people-to-people ties and advance U.S. strategic priorities in and with the Netherlands.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct my public diplomacy officers to continue to shape and advance U.S. messages in country in a smart, balanced manner, which will require them to coordinate and collaborate closely with colleagues in Main State.

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

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

Answer. Absolutely. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department. AHIs have been a top priority for Secretary Blinken, who set clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department’s communication with the workforce, provide care for affected employees and family members, and better protect against these events in the future as we work to uncover the cause. If confirmed, I would

have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my Embassy team and their families.

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to talking openly with Embassy The Hague and Consulate General Amsterdam. I believe that we will be better suited to advance our goals through frequent, honest, and transparent communication.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SHEFALI RAZDAN
DUGGAL BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The Netherlands is a major hub for natural gas trade, and has significant stores in the Groningen field that could be used to alleviate gas shortages in Europe. If confirmed to be ambassador, how will you work with the Government of the Netherlands as it, and its European Union partners, navigates the burgeoning European energy crisis?

Answer. The Netherlands has taken many important actions to enhance European energy security and support diversification of energy supplies. Raising production at the Groningen gas fields is challenging because operations there trigger earthquakes. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Government of the Netherlands and colleagues in Washington to support bilateral and multilateral efforts to improve European energy security and reduce European dependence on Russian fossil fuels. I will also support other bilateral and multilateral efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels in the long-term.

Question. How will you work with the Dutch Government to modernize and diversify its gas and energy industry away from Russia?

Answer. The Government of the Netherlands has been proactive in seeking alternative energy sources to those supplied by Russia, including by speeding up their transition to sustainable sources of energy; increasing the use of hydrogen and responsibly-sourced gas; installing additional wind turbines in the North Sea; and securing additional infrastructure to support diversification of natural gas supplies. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Dutch Government to further those important efforts.

Question. How will you work with the Netherlands' Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States and the Netherlands have a robust bilateral commercial and economic relationship, and in 2021 the United States had an \$18 billion trade surplus with the Netherlands. The Netherlands is also one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, supporting over 800,000 direct and indirect American jobs. The Netherlands has invested in many sectors of the U.S. economy, including electronics/high-tech, life sciences and health, transportation, logistics, financial services, petrochemicals, agriculture, horticulture, energy, and water management. If confirmed, I will engage with the Dutch Government and private sector to strengthen existing relationships and identify new opportunities for trade and investment.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and the Netherlands?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Public Diplomacy Section to strengthen the already deep and enduring people-to-people ties between the United States and the Netherlands. I believe deepening these ties will help to advance the four priorities that the United States shares with the Netherlands: 1) to enhance Transatlantic security cooperation; 2) to promote our shared economic prosperity; 3) to highlight the U.S.-Netherlands climate partnership; and 4) to safeguard our shared democratic values, promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and protect human rights. If confirmed, one of my key priorities will be to visit each of the 12 provinces and substantively engage with the local Dutch population to convey and exemplify our American ideals.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Dutch Government to protect critical industry, such as semiconductor development and manufacturing, from foreign espionage and intellectual property theft, especially from China?

Answer. The Netherlands is one of the most technologically-advanced countries in Europe and one of the United States' most like-minded partners on digital govern-

ance and cyber security. If confirmed, I will continue our cooperation with the Netherlands to promote and protect critical and emerging technologies, such as semiconductor technology, in which the Netherlands is a world leader.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of the Netherlands to coordinate and implement sanctions on Russia and support aid to Ukraine? To ensure sanctions compliance and crack down on any attempts to evade sanctions?

Answer. The Netherlands has emerged as a leader within Europe to hold Russia to account for its war against Ukraine, supporting several rounds of EU sanctions against the Kremlin, supplying security and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and continuing to shape and mold a strong EU response to Russia's aggression. Prime Minister Rutte has been a strong leader within the EU, as well as in the region. If confirmed, I plan to build upon sound U.S.-EU-Dutch coordination to deter Russian malign influence globally, including through the provision of security assistance to Ukraine, development of further economic sanctions, and coordination in multilateral organizations to hold Russia to account.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO SHEFALI RAZDAN DUGGAL BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Our European allies and NATO members must recognize the need to take the lead to counter Russia's aggression on their doorstep. Officials from the past and current administrations have agreed that the CCP is the only power willing and able to challenge U.S. leadership on the global stage. In practice, this means undermining our open system here at home and undermining our alliances and credibility abroad. While CCP is most interested in becoming a regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific, they have global and European aspirations. In July 2019, the Dutch government decided to add additional vetting requirements to their telecommunications companies regarding equipment suppliers to fifth generation (5G) mobile networks.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the PRC as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. The Netherlands shares U.S. concerns with PRC behavior that undermines international norms and European security. The Netherlands does not allow untrusted vendors in their 5G network and its parliament was the first to pass a resolution labeling the situation in Xinjiang as a "genocide." If confirmed, I will work with the Netherlands to address the risks that could impact U.S. and Dutch interests, so that we can better compete with the PRC.

Question. How have Dutch views of the CCP changed in recent years given the significant trade between the two nations?

Answer. Dutch views increasingly reflect the threats posed by the PRC to our economic security, regional stability, shared values, and the international rules-based order. While the Dutch pursue cooperation with the PRC where they have shared interests, they do so while remaining mindful of security and economic concerns. They share our concerns over the PRC's unfair trade practices, especially the use of forced labor, and recognize the threat of strategic dependency on the PRC.

Question. U.S. relations with the Netherlands are generally regarded positively. How do you assess the current state of the bilateral relationship and how can the U.S. utilize the Dutch historical relationships in the Indo-Pacific region to counter CCP further expansion?

Answer. The U.S.-Netherlands bilateral relationship is strong, based on shared values and excellent people-to-people ties. The Dutch share many of our views about the challenge the PRC poses to our vision of a free, open and prosperous Indo Pacific as evidenced by their China policy and their engagement in shaping the European Union's approach to the region. If confirmed, I would work with the Netherlands to advance our shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Question. The Netherlands strongly supports NATO and transatlantic relations. Dutch forces continue to participate in NATO operations and supported NATO efforts to support Ukraine's defense against Putin's war by providing both lethal and non-lethal weapons. The Dutch are well aware of the abuses that Russia is capable of given the downing of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine by pro-Russian separatists killing close to 300 Dutch citizens. To what extent has Putin's aggression in Ukraine boosted political momentum in the Netherlands toward meeting NATO's re-

quirement for members to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending?

Answer. The current Dutch governing coalition has already announced that the Netherlands will meet the Wales Defense Investment pledge of spending two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of the Netherlands to sustain this commitment and ensure that the Dutch continue to contribute substantially to transatlantic security.

Question. Will you press the Netherlands to meet the 2 percent requirement and sustain it over time?

Answer. The current Dutch governing coalition has already announced that the Netherlands will meet the Wales Defense Investment pledge of spending two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of the Netherlands to sustain this commitment and ensure that the Dutch continue to be a major contributor to transatlantic security.

Question. If so, how will you be effective in this endeavor?

Answer. The United States continues to enjoy a close relationship with the Netherlands, based on shared values and a shared vision for the future. Like the United States, they are deeply committed to NATO. If confirmed, I plan to rely on this incredibly close relationship to advance U.S. goals and priorities with respect to the Netherlands.

Question. To what degree does the Netherlands support cooperation with the United States, including at NATO and with the EU, to address the strategic and economic challenges posed by CCP?

Answer. The Netherlands strongly supports cooperation with the United States in NATO and with the EU to address strategic and economic challenges posed by the PRC. They are a capable NATO ally and a strong contributor to maritime security. They are also a strong voice in shaping the EU's more critical approach to the PRC. They work closely with the United States to promote and protect leading edge technologies, and their parliament was the first in Europe to label the situation in Xinjiang a genocide. If confirmed, I will work to deepen this cooperation with the Dutch.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO CARRIN F. PATMAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, Iceland did not report any significant issues of human rights abuses. The Government had mechanisms in place in order to prosecute and punish officials who carried out these abuses or engaged in corruption.

- How could you work with Icelandic Government to maintain their human rights record?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Icelandic Government to maintain its strong human rights record, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout civil society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take with the host government to help spread these practices to neighboring countries and around the world?

Answer. Iceland is a strong advocate for addressing global issues in multilateral fora. If confirmed, I will work to leverage our strong bilateral relationship and shared values to help share Iceland's strong human rights practices with neighboring countries and around the world, including through cooperation during the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action. If confirmed, I would utilize public diplomacy tools to promote the international rules-based order and bolster human rights.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, Iceland remained a Tier 1 country for meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking, maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the Government continued to charge suspected traffickers under non-trafficking statutes such as smuggling, which carry more lenient penalties and did not have a formal process for identifying victims of child-trafficking.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to continue to improve these efforts to eliminate trafficking?

Answer. From reviewing this year's TIP report, I understand that the Government of Iceland fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. According to the report, the Government made key achievements during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government prosecuted and convicted one trafficker, marking the Government's first prosecution and conviction in 12 years, and established a law enforcement advisory panel. In addition, the Government identified and assisted more potential trafficking victims and funded a new counseling and support center for victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking victims. The Government also funded and published a new online emergency services portal with information on trafficking indicators and assistance, developed standard operating procedures for emergency services operators responding to suspected trafficking cases, and financed production of educational videos to help workplace inspectors detect potential incidents of human trafficking. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Iceland to continue efforts on this important issue.

Question. What steps could you take to increase the rate of traffickers being charged under trafficking statutes?

Answer. Iceland has made key achievements in this past reporting period, which if confirmed, I look forward to building on. As noted in this year's TIP report, the Icelandic Government prosecuted and convicted one trafficker, marking the Government's first prosecution and conviction in 12 years. The Government also established a law enforcement advisory panel that worked with foreign law enforcement agencies and anti-trafficking organizations and cooperated with international organizations on data collection regarding trafficking trends and responses. If confirmed, I would leverage the TIP Report as the primary guide for U.S. anti-trafficking policy and encourage the Icelandic Government to implement the TIP Report's prioritized recommendations, including to significantly increase efforts to convict suspected traffickers and sentence them to significant prison terms, investigate and prosecute trafficking cases under the trafficking statute, and enhance training for investigating cases and collecting evidence against suspected traffickers.

Question. How could you work with the Icelandic Government to establish formal processes for identifying child-trafficking victims?

Answer. Although Iceland made key achievements in this past reporting period, the Icelandic Government did not have a formal identification and referral process for child trafficking victims. If confirmed, I will engage with the Icelandic Government, civil society organizations, and the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to encourage cooperation to establish formal processes for Iceland to identify child-trafficking victims.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Iceland provides for freedom of religion. Religious report generally good relations with the Government and society at large, however Jewish community leaders have noticed an uptick in anti-Semitic rhetoric on social media.

- What is your assessment of anti-Semitism in the country?

Answer. As you note, according to the State Department's most recent International Religious Freedom report, religious groups in Iceland reported generally good relations with the Government and society at large. However, Jewish community leaders noted a slight uptick in antisemitic rhetoric on social media, and one incident involving a verbal confrontation. If confirmed, I plan to meet with community leaders of all faiths, civil society organizations, and government officials in Iceland to discuss religious equality and religious tolerance in Iceland, and I plan to utilize social media to highlight the importance of religious freedom.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regularly engage with the Icelandic Government to address any crimes against religious minorities, through meetings and outreach with counterparts in the Government and throughout society. I would also ensure the Embassy regularly engages on this issue.

International Organizations

Question. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) in the State Department's bureau of International Organizations is leading a whole-of-government effort to identify, recruit, and install qualified, independent personnel at the

U.S., including in elections for specialized bodies like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). There is an American candidate, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who if elected would be the first American and first woman to lead the ITU. She is in a tough race that will require early, consistent engagement across capitals and within the U.S. member states.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to demarching the Icelandic Government and any other counterparts necessary to communicate U.S. support of Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would coordinate closely with and engage the International Organizations bureau at the Department of State to ensure that the United States is readily able to identify, recruit, and install qualified Americans at the U.S. and in other specialized international bodies. I believe in continued open communication and if confirmed, I commit to meeting IO officials at the Department to discuss ways I can be helpful in this regard.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. Iceland has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the U.S. General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with the Iceland Government on anticipated votes in the U.S. system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. Iceland is a U.S. ally that shares many values and priorities, and is a stable and democratic country with longstanding close ties to the United States. Iceland is also a strong advocate for addressing global issues in multilateral fora. If confirmed, I commit to continuously engaging with the Icelandic Government and will work to leverage the strong bilateral relationship and shared values to continue to build upon this record.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

Answer. Mission Reykjavik has faced challenges posed by COVID-19, and I am thankful for the staff's resilience and continued service. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Mission Reykjavik will be my top priority, and I look forward to working with the talented team of U.S. Direct Hires, locally employed staff, and their families, and ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and has my support.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure everyone on my team is treated professionally, their rights are respected, they are safe and secure, and they have the resources necessary to perform their jobs. We are all one team working for the good of the U.S.-Icelandic relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring open and continuous communication throughout the Mission. We are all one team working together to advance the U.S.-Icelandic relationship and the interests of the American people, so I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work. Furthermore, I am committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce at U.S. Embassy Reykjavik. Diversity makes the Mission strong by bringing different perspectives and enhancing creativity and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the team to maximize innovation and effectiveness.

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

Answer. I have been blessed with opportunities that have prepared me to be a chief of mission, and to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. I have demonstrated an ability to work with colleagues of all backgrounds and if confirmed, I

will regularly engage with members of my team and always seek to create a space for open dialogue and diversity of thought. I also believe in leading by example. If confirmed, I will work hard to foster an environment of respect as Embassy Reykjavik carries out important work on behalf of the American people.

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

Answer. No, it is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates, either in public or private.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to a close and productive relationship with the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). If confirmed, I will work closely with the DCM to advance U.S. priorities in Iceland, including protecting the safety and security of Americans, expanding our economic relationship, and advancing shared priorities.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will entrust the Deputy Chief of Mission with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Mission and serve as Chargé d'Affaires in my absence. If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Deputy Chief of Mission on a range of issues and I will value the institutional knowledge that career Foreign Service officers provide.

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

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

Answer. Yes, I believe it is important to provide employees with accurate, constructive feedback on their performance to encourage improvement and reward those who most succeed in their roles. If confirmed, I hope to be an inspiring leader with an open-door policy to discuss constructive and timely feedback to enhance and lift the performance of the entire team.

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

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I would support and encourage clear, accurate, and direct feedback to employees to improve performance and reward high achievers.

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

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

Answer. I firmly believe it is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of the Embassy to meet with local citizens, including host government officials and non-governmental organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals, but as conditions improve, I understand that U.S. diplomats have resumed in-person engagements and programs again, as appropriate.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Embassy public diplomacy section to use both social and traditional media to reach people across Iceland. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are also an important part of public diplomacy outreach to ensure efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad and encourage the involvement of people from traditionally under-represented audiences. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage engagements with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individual interactions to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

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

Answer. The United States has strong academic, cultural, and professional exchanges with the people of Iceland. As I understand it, many government leaders are alumni of U.S. exchange programs with Iceland. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to leverage relationships with the media, cultural and educational exchange organizations, and individuals to expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral relationship.

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

Answer. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for U.S. diplomats to travel and fully engage face-to-face with host country nationals. As conditions improve, U.S. diplomats have started in-person engagements and programs again. If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing both traditional and social media to engage with the Icelandic public, in addition to in-person programs.

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

Answer. We are all one team working to advance the bilateral relationship and the interests of the United States and the American people and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the offices at Main State to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in Iceland. If confirmed, I will leverage public diplomacy tools to enhance security cooperation, strengthen collaboration on Arctic and climate issues, expand economic and trade relations, defend democratic values, and deepen people-to-people ties. I will work to counter adverse influence and mis- and disinformation through engagements with traditional media, communication via social media, institutional outreach, and personal interactions, and through a variety of public diplomacy programming. Working with the public diplomacy team, we will tailor our messaging in a way that is most appropriate for Icelandic audiences.

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

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

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

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

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to sharing what information I can within the bounds of privacy and security concerns with Mission Reykjavik personnel.

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FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO CARRIN F.
PATMAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Bilateral Defense Relationship / Arctic

Question. The Arctic is becoming increasingly important to global security. Russia and China have both stated interest in the region, and through its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has shown a new willingness to use its military to achieve its geostrategic goals.

- If confirmed, how will you work to strengthen the U.S.-Icelandic security relationship, both bilaterally and with a mind to our mutual security relationships with the other Arctic nations?

Answer. Iceland considers its membership in NATO and its defense agreement with the United States as the two main pillars of its security policy. I understand that the United States plans to maintain its presence on a rotational basis to support its obligations to NATO and Iceland. The United States works closely with the Government of Iceland on NATO and U.S. activities, and U.S. military forces have received great support at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland. This invaluable cooperation is crucial to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions in the region. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security and the broader North Atlantic region, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. How will you work to counter Russian or Chinese influence that may seek to undermine the United States’ Arctic interests in Iceland?

Answer. Iceland seeks to maintain commitment to the rules-based international order and low tensions in the High North and works with other NATO Allies to ensure the Alliance has a credible deterrence and defense posture in the region. Iceland, together with the United States and other likeminded Arctic States, immediately and strongly condemned Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war in Ukraine. I understand that Iceland is keenly aware of Russia's increased military activities in the Arctic. Iceland is also taking concrete steps to protect its critical infrastructure including through the recent passage of a telecommunications law. If confirmed, I will work with the Icelandic Government to ensure Iceland and NATO's continued attention to security challenges in the High North and share best practices on reducing vulnerabilities and protecting critical infrastructure. Further, if confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and the Department of Defense and the Department of Treasury on this issue.

Question. Do you believe that Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO will fundamentally change the security environment in the Arctic? If so, please explain how?

Answer. The accession of Finland and Sweden would introduce two new, highly capable Allies with deep Arctic expertise into the Alliance. I believe this will contribute to greater predictability and stability in the region. Iceland is a founding member of NATO and has strongly welcomed Finland and Sweden's decisions to apply for NATO membership. Iceland was among the first group of countries to ratify Finland and Sweden's applications. Page Break

Nuclear

Question. Public support for the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in Iceland is high.

- If confirmed, how will you engage with the Icelandic Government to express the importance NATO's nuclear arsenal holds in our collective defense and how joining the TPNW could undermine our nuclear security?

Answer. As a member of the NATO Alliance, Iceland has committed to ensuring that NATO's nuclear deterrent aligns with the realities of the current security environment and remains safe, secure, and effective. If confirmed, I will regularly engage with the Icelandic Government on tangible, verifiable measures to reduce strategic risk and enable progress on nuclear disarmament.

Question. While Iceland is a member of NATO, it has refused to store nuclear weapons within its territory.

- Given a paradigm shift in the NATO's security with regard to renewed Russian aggression, do you believe the conversation about nuclear weapons in Iceland should be revisited, and that the U.S. should have a role in that conversation?

Answer. Iceland has a longstanding policy against nuclear weapons on Icelandic territory. However, as a member of the NATO Alliance, Iceland is committed to ensuring NATO's nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defense and are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Iceland to maintain nuclear deterrence.

Economic Relations

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government and private sector of Iceland to increase and improve economic ties with the United States?

Answer. The United States enjoys an active trade and investment partnership with Iceland and is Iceland's largest trading partner. The United States and Iceland signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2009. If confirmed, I will continue our promotion of U.S. exports to Iceland and encourage Icelandic investment in U.S. companies by engaging regularly with both the Government and the private sector in Iceland.

Question. In what sectors do you believe exist the best opportunities for increased U.S.-Iceland trade?

Answer. Key U.S. exports to Iceland include fuels and lubricants, food and beverages, capital goods, and transportation equipment. Key U.S. imports from Iceland include fish and fish products, orthopedic equipment, and food and beverages. The United States has an important opportunity to work with Iceland in deploying innovative green technologies that can help in our shared fight against climate change. Iceland has been a leader in developing green technologies and if confirmed, I look

forward to continuing our cooperation in this important field, including commercial opportunities for U.S. firms.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO CARRIN F. PATMAN BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to expand its influence in Iceland and offered to develop a deep-sea port to gain a larger footing in the Arctic and North Atlantic, all while the U.S. provides military defense for Iceland through NATO.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest in America, align with our Allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will strengthen our partnership with Iceland, including working with Iceland to implement investment screening mechanisms to protect ports and other critical infrastructure.

Question. How does Iceland view Moscow's and Beijing's activities in the Arctic?

Answer. Iceland seeks to maintain commitment to the rules-based international order and low tensions in the High North and works with other NATO Allies to ensure the Alliance has a credible deterrence and defense posture in the region. Iceland, together with the United States and other likeminded Arctic States, immediately and strongly condemned Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war in Ukraine. I understand that Iceland is keenly aware of Russia's increased military activities in the Arctic. Climate change has increased strategic competition in the Arctic region. Melting sea ice has created new opportunities for the PRC and Russia to exploit the region—both economically and militarily. Iceland is taking proactive steps to protect its critical infrastructure, including by passing a recent telecommunications bill to establish a new legal framework governing a broad range of telecommunications issues, including national security. At the NATO Summit in June 2021, all thirty Allies agreed to a Summit Communique that referenced the High North for the first time, demonstrating a commitment to bolstering NATO's deterrence and defense in the region. NATO's new Strategic Concept reaffirms this commitment. If confirmed, I will work with the Icelandic Government to ensure Iceland and NATO's continued attention to security challenges in the High North. Further, if confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and the Department of Defense on this issue.

Question. Since the 1951 signing of the U.S.-Iceland Defense Agreement, Iceland has no armed forces and the United States, on behalf of NATO, is responsible for its defense. In return, the U.S. military possesses basing rights in Iceland, which it has not used since 2006. In 2016, the United States and Iceland agreed on a new joint defense declaration aimed at bolstering security cooperation, and the United States has been upgrading its facilities at Iceland's Keflavik military base. Should the 1951 Treaty be revised so Iceland can build up its own capabilities and contribute to NATO's collective defense? Why or why not?

Answer. Iceland is the only NATO ally without a standing military; however, even without a military it provides invaluable contributions to NATO's collective defense and transatlantic security. Iceland provides 24/7 air surveillance through its four remote radar and communication sites and hosts NATO Air Policing Missions, helping to maintain NATO's crucial readiness in the Arctic and North Atlantic. Furthermore, the United States and Iceland consult and cooperate regularly on defense-related matters, including through an annual Strategic Dialogue, regular consultations with U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), and various joint exercises. I understand that under the auspices of the annual Strategic Dialogue, security-related issues can be discussed in a mutually beneficial manner, so while I cannot speak to hypotheticals regarding the 1951 Treaty, the United States and Iceland maintain an open dialogue on these issues. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. In what ways are such measures contributing to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions between Russia, the West, and countering CCP aspirations in the region?

Answer. Iceland lies in a key geostrategic location in the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap, and due to climate change opening maritime routes through the Arctic, the North Atlantic is becoming more critical in the realm of defense and security. The U.S. Department of Defense maintains a rotational presence at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland to support theater and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and maritime domain awareness. The U.S. Navy deploys P-8A aircraft and crews to Iceland to support the ASW mission. Icelandic Coast Guard personnel also maintain a central hub for the four radar stations around Iceland that provide data to NATO and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), providing a complete listing of all aircraft in the North Atlantic to NATO and NORAD. This invaluable cooperation is crucial to the defense of Iceland and the broader North Atlantic region, especially given increased tensions in the region. If confirmed, I will work to maintain Icelandic contributions to transatlantic security and the broader North Atlantic region, which is directly in the interest of the United States and our Allies and partners.

Question. Would Iceland welcome the U.S. deploying forces to Iceland to help deter Chinese and Russian military activity in the Arctic?

Answer. While I cannot speak to hypotheticals or on behalf of the Icelandic Government, I understand that Iceland considers its membership in NATO and the defense agreement with the United States as the two main pillars of its security policy. I understand that the United States plans to maintain its presence on a rotational basis to support its obligations to NATO and Iceland. The United States works closely with the Government of Iceland on NATO and U.S. activities, and U.S. military forces have received great support at Keflavik Air Base in Iceland. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this close cooperation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Democracy and Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Human Rights report, North Macedonia is noted for inhuman and degrading conditions in prisons, violence and threats against journalists, serious government corruption, lack of accountability for gender based and family violence, and more.

- How could you work with the North Macedonian government to address issues of government corruption?

Answer. The United States recognizes and welcomes the steps the current government has taken to fight corruption and impunity. There is more work to be done, and anyone that has abused the public's trust must be held to account no matter his or her party, background, or position. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the government of North Macedonia to hold its officials accountable, to thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse of office, and to address corruption swiftly and thoroughly. I will work to strengthen state institutions and bolster public confidence in the government and the rule of law.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take with the host government to mitigate the levels of violence or threats of violence against journalists, and increase the accountability of family and gender based violence?

Answer. If confirmed, I will promote the values of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and human dignity. U.S. assistance includes grants to local groups that promote the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of members of vulnerable or targeted populations, including members of minority groups and journalists. If confirmed, I will reinforce the importance of a free media with North Macedonia's political leaders and public and will speak out publicly and privately in defense of targeted journalists and media organizations. Free and independent media is critical for any democratic society. I would also work with the Ministry of Justice to increase accountability for acts of violence against journalists and gender-based violence.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to personally raising these issues with the host government?

Answer. Absolutely. The U.S. closely follows the state of North Macedonia's democratic institutions and rule of law, as we do with all countries. If confirmed, I will continue to work with North Macedonia to uphold transatlantic values, including

personally raising the issues of violence against journalists and gender-based violence with the government.

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons report, North Macedonia remained a Tier 2 country for not fully meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking but maintaining significant efforts to do so. However, the police maintain a lack of funding and equipment to conduct proactive investigations, and local teams and border security lack the ability to properly screen for trafficking indicators.

- If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to increase the funding provided to properly conduct proactive trafficking investigations?

Answer. The Embassy maintains close relationships with anti-trafficking civil society groups and actively engages the government of North Macedonia to address priority recommendations highlighted in the 2022 TIP Report, including investigating, prosecuting, and convicting traffickers -- including complicit officials -- imposing adequate penalties, and allocating sufficient resources to this important work. If confirmed, I will encourage the government of North Macedonia to increase assistance for victims, particularly among vulnerable groups, and to allocate consistent and sufficient funding for victim services and investigations.

Question. What steps could you take to improve the level of training to better identify trafficking indicators?

Answer. The United States supports the government of North Macedonia's work with international humanitarian organizations and has contributed border security equipment and training for anti-trafficking officials. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage the government to seek additional training opportunities for its officials and to work closely with the United States as well as non-governmental organizations to better identify trafficking indicators. I would also work with the interagency to identify opportunities for American experts to engage, train, and mentor the government on anti-trafficking work, border security, resilience, information sharing, and prosecution of traffickers.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, North Macedonia's constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of religion and expression. However, some members of religious communities such as the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid say their clergy and family members are targets of insult and physical attack by individuals close to the Macedonian Orthodox Church—Ohrid Archbishopric, which is considered to be a governmental favorite of religious organizations.

- What is your assessment of the level of religious tolerance in the country?

Answer. North Macedonia's constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens regardless of national origin, and the country has an active, independent ombudsman to protect human rights and freedoms of individuals and groups of citizens. Smaller religious groups report unequal government treatment compared with the five religious groups named in the constitution, which automatically receive tax exemptions and other benefits. Several communities have expressed concerns about the religious property restitution process.

Question. If confirmed, how could you work with the host government to address these concerns?

Answer. The Embassy in Skopje regularly meets with religious groups and government representatives to discuss religious freedom issues, including perceived government favoritism toward certain religious groups and religious property restitution. If confirmed, I would continue vigorous outreach efforts and work with the government to address such concerns.

International Organizations

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

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

Answer. Yes. I would continue to engage the Government of North Macedonia to encourage support for American candidates at the UN, including Doreen Bogdan-Martin who is seeking election as Secretary-General of the ITU. This is an important election for leadership of a UN agency that plays a critical role in technology and digital policy, cybersecurity, internet governance, radio spectrum management, telecommunication standards, and critical development initiatives to close the digital divides.

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

Answer. Embassy Skopje has a vibrant public affairs section. If confirmed, I will work with IO, but also through public-facing Embassy outreach, to identify and recruit qualified Americans to the UN, including for the JPO Program. I would maintain close communication with Washington to identify upcoming opportunities and amplify these through Embassy channels.

Europe and Eurasia

Question. North Macedonia has a high rate of voting coincidence with the U.S. in the UN General Assembly and in the Security Council.

- If confirmed, what concrete actions can you take to engage with North Macedonians on anticipated votes in the UN system that would continue to build upon this record with the U.S.?

Answer. The Embassy regularly engages the government in Skopje on important issues, including but not limited to votes in the UN system. If confirmed, I would uphold this practice and pursue open and transparent conversations on our voting posture and its import for democracy, security, economic growth, and human rights around the world. Page Break

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

Answer. The American and local employees at Embassy Skopje have dealt with significant challenges posed by COVID-19. I am grateful for their tremendous service in overcoming these challenges. If confirmed, the health and safety of the personnel and family members of Embassy Skopje will be my first priority. I will prioritize meeting with and supporting Embassy employees to understand and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the mission. I look forward to working with the incredibly talented team of locally employed staff, U.S. Direct Hires, and their families, and to ensuring that everyone on my team understands they are valued and have my support.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my Deputy Chief of Mission and senior staff to foster an atmosphere in which all employees know that they can bring serious issues to us and are being heard at the highest levels. If confirmed, I will work to ensure everyone on my team, including our ethnically diverse local staff, is treated professionally, their rights are respected, and they are safe and secure. I will conduct personal outreach to Embassy staff when I arrive. If confirmed, I will promote training and professional development, and work to ensure that all staff members are aware of the employee and family support resources that the Department offers to assist employees.

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

Answer. Having served as Charge d'Affaires of Mission Pakistan for two years, I understand the imperative of a unified team with a shared strategic vision to meeting policy priorities. If confirmed, I will foster a strong team with a clear understanding of our goals and objectives; maintain clear and transparent communications throughout the Mission through regular information sharing; promote diversity and inclusion; seek ways to build and sustain morale; and support and ensure the safety and community of the Mission community—including both American and local staff. I will treat the team with the respect and professionalism they deserve and work to provide them the tools they need to do their jobs. We are all one team, working together to advance U.S. policy goals and the U.S.-North Macedonia rela-

tionship, in the interests of the American people; I will ensure this collaborative service focus is central to our work.

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

Answer. I value respect, professionalism, open communication, and creative thinking. I welcome divergent points of view. I strive to provide clear decisions and guidance as needed. I am committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce that fully represents and supports many different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives to provide a productive and effective workplace for all that advances U.S. policy goals.

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

Answer. No, never. Berating subordinates is offensive, counterproductive, and unacceptable. If confirmed, I will treat all my employees with the utmost respect and professionalism that each one deserves.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the deputy chief of mission, delegating when appropriate and ensuring he or she can step in for me in the event I am not available.

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

Answer. I see the role of the deputy chief of mission as both a chief operating officer and the alter-ego of the ambassador. If confirmed and after I arrive at post, I will work out with the deputy chief of mission which responsibilities rest with whom.

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

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

Answer. Yes. Candid, constructive, and comprehensive performance reviews are essential for employees to know where they stand and understand where they need to improve. In between formal annual reviews, it is also important for supervisors to clearly communicate what expectations are and to provide regular feedback to employees on meeting these goals.

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

Answer. Absolutely. Ensuring clear, accurate, and direct feedback will help improve mission performance, and I will recognize the accomplishments of high-performing employees as deserved.

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

Answer. In my time as Chargé at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, I encouraged our diplomats to engage as security situations allowed. If confirmed, I hope to exchange ideas with people from all parts of North Macedonia's society to hear their views, promote our shared goals, and expand the people-to-people bonds that are the foundation of our strong bilateral partnership. I will encourage colleagues and official visitors to do the same.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the U.S. diplomats under my authority can travel and meet the people they need to accomplish their jobs. My understanding is that in North Macedonia this has not been an issue.

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

Question. What is the public diplomacy environment like in North Macedonia?

Answer. Embassy Skopje’s Public Diplomacy Section uses the full array of public diplomacy tools to engage with citizens of North Macedonia across all facets of society, including media engagement; the U.S. Speaker Program; English language instruction; educational and professional exchanges; alumni outreach; cultural and sports diplomacy programs; grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and educational advising.

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

Answer. Disinformation, malign foreign influence, and the COVID-19 pandemic pose challenges to public diplomacy outreach in North Macedonia, as it has globally. If confirmed, I look forward to using traditional and social media, in addition to in-person programs, to engage with the public in North Macedonia and push back on disinformation from malign actors and a shrinking space for independent media.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Public Diplomacy Section to closely coordinate the efforts of public diplomacy professionals in both Washington and Skopje to ensure that there is a unified approach to highlighting key U.S. messages and policies in North Macedonia. I will leverage public diplomacy tools to engage on a variety of different social media platforms in English, Macedonian, and Albanian to deliver tailored messages on U.S. foreign policy; promote Embassy activities and events; provide information on security, economy, voting, and other topics of interest to U.S. citizens; and communicate with the public in North Macedonia in an impactful way that advances U.S. priorities out of Washington.

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

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

Answer. Absolutely. The issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents—is an absolute priority for the Department. AHIs have been a top priority for Secretary Blinken, who set clear goals for the Health Incident Response Task Force to strengthen the Department’s communication with the workforce, provide care for affected employees and family members, and better protect against these events in the future as we work to uncover the cause. I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my embassy team and their families.

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

Answer. Absolutely. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a workplace to function well, and leadership should set the example for that within the bounds of privacy and security concerns.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Europe and Eurasia

Question. If confirmed to be Ambassador, how will you work with the Government of North Macedonia on key domestic issues like legal reform and education as they move toward EU accession?

Answer. For 18 years, the United States has supported North Macedonia as it has worked to achieve the democratic and economic reforms necessary to join the European Union. The EU has been clear that in addition to making required legal changes, it expects strong implementation of reforms across the board. U.S. Government programs focus on helping to create and sustain an enabling environment for the Government of North Macedonia to address EU recommendations. The State Department also focuses on improving basic competencies and the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of justice sector and law enforcement institutions. In line with North Macedonia’s goals of integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for reforms and their full implementation.

Question. Should the U.S. play a role in helping negotiate North Macedonia's prospective EU membership with its neighbors? How can the U.S. contribute to regional stability?

Answer. Although not a member state, the United States continues to strongly support the EU accession process and related reforms for all Western Balkan countries, which will contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of the region. As part of this, we are supporting continued, constructive dialogue between North Macedonia, EU institutions, and EU member states, including Bulgaria. If confirmed, I would urge flexibility and cooperation by both Skopje and Sofia as they work on resolving their bilateral issues. The United States contributes further to regional stability through its support for robust and inclusive regional initiatives based on EU rules and regulations, such as Open Balkan and Common Regional Market. Initiatives like these are energizing Western Balkan economies, moving the region closer to the EU single market, and promoting peace and stability through implementation of the EU Four Freedoms: goods, capital, services, and people.

Question. 100 percent of North Macedonia's natural gas imports come from Russia. What vulnerabilities does this monopoly place on North Macedonia, and how can the U.S. help reduce them?

Answer. North Macedonia has been hit hard by the energy crisis in Europe this spring. For example, the city of Skopje relies on Russian natural gas to power the central heating system, and Gazprom took advantage of its monopoly to quadruple its prices last winter. Additionally, energy prices have risen by 10-20 percent since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, leading the Government to temporarily reduce value-added tax (VAT) and excise duties on fuels to lessen the hardship on citizens. We are encouraging diversification of energy sources to address these vulnerabilities. North Macedonia is determined to move forward on a gas interconnector with Greece, currently awaiting final loan financing, which would diversify North Macedonia's supply, introduce competition, and potentially open the market to U.S. LNG suppliers. The Government's focus on renewable energy sources also brings opportunities for U.S. investment.

Question. How will you work with North Macedonia's Government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. North Macedonia's legal framework for foreign investors is generally in line with international standards. U.S. Embassy Skopje works to defend the rights of U.S. exporters, suppliers, and investors doing business in North Macedonia, including protecting intellectual property rights and identifying and addressing trade barriers that interfere with the growth of U.S. exports, including agriculture commodities. If confirmed, I will continue to support American companies exploring opportunities in North Macedonia; protect the rights of U.S. exporters, suppliers, and investors; and identify and work with the Government to address trade barriers that interfere with U.S. exports.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and North Macedonia, particularly to counter Russian influence?

Answer. During June's bilateral strategic dialogue in Washington, DC, North Macedonia's Minister of Culture Stojcevska identified protection of cultural heritage and youth engagement as her Ministry's top two priorities for bilateral people-to-people engagement. People-to-people relationships are essential to strengthening cooperation on global challenges, especially with respect to disinformation and foreign malign influence. Between 2018 and 2022, five Fulbright English Teaching Assistants received "Countering State Disinformation and Pressure" funding from Congress and are promoting media literacy and critical thinking in schools and universities throughout North Macedonia. If confirmed, I will focus on raising media standards, bolstering public education about disinformation, especially among youth, and encouraging capacity-building to improve the Government of North Macedonia's communications capabilities. If confirmed, I would also continue efforts to deter illicit trafficking of antiquities and encourage bilateral cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges, and work to preserve North Macedonia's cultural heritage, including through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Question. If confirmed, how will you promote democratic and anti-corruption reforms in North Macedonia, and in what areas of government is progress most viable?

Answer. The U.S. recognizes and welcomes the steps the current government has taken to fight corruption and impunity. There is more work to be done. Anyone that has abused the public's trust must be held to account, no matter his or her party, background, or position. If confirmed, I will urge North Macedonia's Government to

hold officials accountable, thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse of office, and combat corruption vigorously, to strengthen government institutions and bolster public confidence in the Government and the rule of law. The current government is making strides on good governance reforms. In January 2021, it appointed a new Deputy Prime Minister for Good Governance Policies to focus on structural and procedural reforms that reduce opportunities for corruption.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ANGELA PRICE AGGELER BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. North Macedonia is very reliant upon energy imports, including Russian natural gas. They have been very supportive of U.S. and NATO responses to Russia’s war in Ukraine, but have been added to a list of Moscow’s “enemy states.”

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) presents itself in the Western Balkan region as an alternative to EU financing and other international financial and development organizations. It is a threat not only to solid economic and democratic practices and international standards, but also to U.S. companies seeking fair entry into the market. If confirmed, I would bolster U.S. ability to respond to the economic and political threats the CCP and other malign actors pose in the region.

Question. North Macedonia does not currently meet the 2 percent GDP goal but is heading in the right direction. What will you do to press North Macedonia to meet the 2 percent requirement and sustain it over time?

Answer. As NATO’s newest ally, North Macedonia has been responsive and is implementing its plan to reach 2 percent by 2024. The country intends to spend more than \$750 million through 2028 toward military modernization to meet its NATO capability target requirements and actively seeks U.S. assistance and training. If confirmed, I will champion strong military to military cooperation to help North Macedonia to meet its 2 percent commitment.

Question. How has Putin’s war on Ukraine impacted North Macedonia’s energy security and economy?

Answer. The Balkans energy sector has long been plagued by chronic underinvestment, over-dependence on Russian supply, structural weaknesses, heavy subsidization of coal and electricity, and inefficient market mechanisms. Putin’s war against Ukraine has exacerbated North Macedonia’s energy security and economic challenges, including food security. North Macedonia already faced inflation in energy costs. The Government’s clear alignment with EU sanctions packages led Russia to label North Macedonia an “unfriendly state,” and this spring Moscow shut off supply to Bulgaria—through which North Macedonia receive its gas—further elevating gas prices. The Government expects key commodity and energy prices to continue rising and investments to be delayed.

Question. In what ways can the United States support diversification of their energy imports?

Answer. North Macedonia needs to further diversify its energy sources and routes; develop competitive, transparent, and efficient energy markets; and better integrate its domestic energy market with regional energy markets. North Macedonia currently relies on one pipeline for its limited quantities of natural gas, which come from Russia. A proposed gas interconnector connecting North Macedonia with Greece could help diversify gas routes and supplies and allow gasification of other parts of the country. In the long term, the proposed interconnector could also provide alternatives to Kosovo and Serbia and help turn North Macedonia into a regional energy hub. If confirmed, I will work to facilitate private sector participation in renewable energy policymaking and encourage U.S. companies to bid on renewable energy projects.

Question. Would this include construction of the proposed East Mediterranean Pipeline?

Answer. Energy sector diversification in this heavily coal-reliant region will require more rapid implementation of renewable and clean energy technologies and the optimized application of lower-carbon fuel alternatives, including potential nat-

ural gas applications. If confirmed, I would work to help North Macedonia diversify away from Russian gas and support economically viable projects that connect North Macedonia with non-Russian energy supplies.

Question. To what extent does the Chinese Communist Party wield economic or political influence in North Macedonia?

Answer. The PRC presents itself in the Western Balkan region as an alternative to EU financing and other international financial and development organizations. In North Macedonia, PRC investments are primarily focused on road construction and other infrastructure projects. Two major PRC road construction projects are currently underway, funded by the PRC's ExIm Bank. Not surprisingly, the largest of these projects has been plagued by delays, design flaws, quality control problems, and additional expenses. This, along with disappointing results from procurement contracts for city buses, rail cars, and computers for school children, have made the Government appropriately wary of pursuing future PRC contracts. If confirmed, I would work with the current government to raise awareness of the risks associated with such projects and encourage other private and government financing options.

Question. As Ambassador, how would you help North Macedonia build resilience to external authoritarian influence?

Answer. Our goals align with the aspirations of the people of North Macedonia and their Government for a stable, prosperous, and democratic future. External authoritarian elements actively seek to undermine the democratic and Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations of the country, by stoking tensions, spreading disinformation, and sowing corruption. If confirmed, I would champion strong, democratic institutions, a vibrant and independent media environment, and work to crack down on external influences seeking to corrupt government actors. Embassy Skopje is also pressing the Government to create a national security investment screening mechanism to protect key assets from malign external influence. If confirmed, I would press forward ongoing technical consultations to see that these measures are put in place.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GAUTAM A. RANA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Europe and Eurasia

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Slovakian Government to navigate the impending European energy crisis? What elements of this impending crisis concern you most vis-à-vis Slovakia?

Answer. Obstacles to greater Slovak energy independence include geography, a legacy of dependence on cheap Russian energy and associated infrastructure, and a need to increase and accelerate programs to enhance renewable energy sources. To their credit, the Slovak leadership has the high-level political will to take difficult decisions to advance energy security. The United States is committed to advancing European energy security through an integrated European energy market and through diversification—of fuel types, supply source countries, and delivery routes. We continue to encourage Slovakia to work within EU structures to promote greater integration within the EU's own internal energy market. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the region to promote this type of regional collaboration. My intent would be to urge the Slovak Government to remain on its pathway to energy diversification, prioritizing reliable and politically stable partners across fuel types.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Government of Slovakia to continue to coordinate and implement sanctions on Russia? How will you work with the Government of Slovakia to help them foil attempts at evasion of U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia?

Answer. Following Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Slovakia's government has been unequivocal in condemning the Russian Federation and supporting U.S. and EU sanctions against it. Slovakia also significantly reduced the size of the Russian embassy in Bratislava by imposing a cap on the number of Russians with diplomatic status allowed in the country. I understand that Slovakia's leaders have strongly advocated for the implementation and coordination of strong sanctions on Russia. If confirmed, I will work with the Slovak government to diminish Russia's capacity to foil U.S. and EU sanctions, including through the sharing of U.S. knowhow.

Question. Slovakia has been a significant provider of military aid to Ukraine. If confirmed, how will you ensure Slovakia receives proper support from the U.S., most particularly on the question of assistance to backfill the equipment they donated to Ukraine?

Answer. I understand that, to date, the Slovak government has provided more than \$159 million in both humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, including its S-300 air defense system, valued by the government at \$68 million. Slovakia remains one of the largest donors to Ukraine measured by aid as a share of GDP. Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine has stretched Slovakia's resources, as it has the resources of many countries in the region. Slovakia would benefit from U.S. assistance, above all to support Foreign Military Financing. Assistance would also be useful to address disinformation, bolster civil society, and fight corruption. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would advocate for appropriate U.S. support for Slovakia, and I will ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. Slovakia has housed over 85,000 Ukrainian refugees since the Russian invasion in February. If confirmed, how will you assist the Slovakia government in their efforts provide for these refugees and their security?

Answer. Following Russia's February 2022 further invasion of Ukraine, I understand that Slovakia was among the first EU member states to create a temporary protective status for Ukrainian refugees, providing them immediate access to critical services, support, and the right to work in Slovakia. The outpouring of support by Slovaks for their Ukrainian neighbors has been inspiring. Slovaks have opened their hearts and their homes to Ukrainians. Through the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the United States has provided nearly \$22 million to international humanitarian organizations in Slovakia supporting refugees from Ukraine. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to prioritize these and other avenues of support and ensure that any U.S. assistance is impactful and spent well.

Question. How will you work with Slovakia's government and private sector to increase economic ties with the United States?

Answer. Slovakia presents significant opportunities for U.S. business, such as suppliers in the automotive parts industry. Slovakia is also focusing on supporting innovative small and medium-sized enterprises that are an attractive segment for U.S. investors, especially venture capitalists, private equity, and pension funds. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Department of Commerce to ensure that the full resources of the U.S. government are used to advocate for U.S. businesses exporting to Slovakia and promote opportunities for Slovak firms seeking to invest in the United States. I will also partner with the local American Chamber of Commerce, if confirmed, to keep a pulse on the health of Slovakia's business climate, with a focus on continuing to improve transparency, predictability, stability, and the transfer of best practices from the United States.

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work to build people-to-people ties between the U.S. and Slovakia?

Answer. I understand that one of the Embassy's key goals is expanding people-to-people ties in order to build support for shared values and reinforce Slovakia's commitment to the West and our common transatlantic goals. If confirmed, I will prioritize sending Embassy and visiting speakers out to engage Slovak audiences on the full range of Mission priorities, and by organizing regular, creative public outreach engagements designed for a variety of audiences that allow us to engage with a wide range of Slovaks across the country. The Embassy is working to strengthen education in Slovakia through its small grants program and by providing support to English-language teachers. The Embassy has given small grants to support a variety of initiatives that help build critical thinking skills, support the integration of minorities, and encourage the greater participation of girls in science, technology, engineering and math. The Embassy also supports English-language education through teacher training courses and workshops, and by providing resources, materials, online course opportunities, and strong support for teachers.

Often once someone has had the chance to experience the United States in person, the United States has a supporter and ally for life. One of the challenges with a smaller country like Slovakia is that it is not always offered the number of positions commensurate with demand. If confirmed, I will explore how to increase space for Slovaks in U.S. programs so we can offer more of them a first-hand introduction to the United States.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

- What is your understanding of morale throughout Mission Bratislava?

Answer. My understanding from the State Department is that morale is strong and the mission is well-run. Following Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine, I understand the mission has been called upon to do much more and has met the challenge. One area to which I will give attention is the salaries of the Locally Employed staff. If confirmed, I will work with Washington colleagues to ensure that Locally Employed staff salaries keep up with the labor market. I would also work to ensure that the mission has the personnel and tools necessary to carry out its expanded responsibilities, if confirmed.

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

Answer. Having served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., in two posts, ensuring high morale was one of my chief priorities. I worked closely with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO), Management Team, and senior staff to instill a "One Team" culture where everyone's voice was heard and valued. If confirmed, I would utilize similar management techniques in Bratislava and seek to foster a workplace of empowerment and open, transparent communication. I pledge to hold regular Town Hall meetings, consult with all staff (Americans and Locally Employed staff), and convey to them my appreciation for the work they do to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.

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

Answer. In my two assignments as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., I emphasized that two of my management principles were respect and One Team. In regard to the first, I expected all staff to treat everyone in the Mission—no matter their nationality or job—with respect. The latter, that all staff members—no matter their agency or section—were part of "One Team" working on behalf of the American people to further U.S. national interests. I stated these principles on my first day in the job, reiterated them to the Country Team, and repeated them to every new staff member who joined my embassies. If confirmed, I will begin my first speech to the Mission Bratislava workforce emphasizing these values, and I will work hard to ensure Mission Bratislava's workforce is cohesive, respectful of each other, and working as One Team towards our goals and priorities.

Question. Management is a key responsibility for chiefs of mission. How would you describe your management style?
*Answer 10:*As a manager, I value open communication, empowering my team, and holding staff members to high standards. As we work for the American people, we have a responsibility to produce on their behalf. As a manager, I have a responsibility to my team to create the optimal work environment so that we can successfully execute our mission.

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

Answer. It is never appropriate to berate subordinates, either in public or private. Such behavior undermines morale, reduces productivity, and is never acceptable from any manager. In multiple embassies where I have served as a manager, I have always treated subordinates (and all colleagues) with respect. If confirmed, I pledge to treat all staff at Mission Bratislava with the utmost respect.

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

Answer. Having served as deputy chief of mission at two embassies with three different ambassadors, I know firsthand that it is the most important relationship to ensuring an effective and productive embassy. If confirmed, I will work closely with the deputy chief of mission to ensure the effective management of Mission Bratislava. I would work to develop a relationship of trust and respect, empowering the deputy to serve as the Mission's chief operating officer, delegating when appropriate, and ensuring he or she can step in for me if I am not available. If confirmed, I will work closely with my deputy chief of mission to ensure his or her success.

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

Answer. Having served as deputy chief of mission at two different embassies, I believe the role of the deputy chief of mission is to serve as the embassy's chief operating officer and as the alter-ego of the ambassador. An effective deputy chief of

mission ensures the smooth operations of the embassy, while also serving as the ambassador's senior policy advisor. If confirmed, I will work closely with my deputy chief of mission to ensure his or her success.

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

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

Answer. As a manager, I have always prioritized providing constructive feedback to my team and working closely with them to write effective evaluations. In my last two assignments as deputy chief of mission, I have led numerous workshops on EER writing, bidding strategies, and other career development issues. In my last post, I provided feedback on every State Department employee's EER. If confirmed, I will continue to place a high priority in proactively managing my team and providing them accurate, constructive feedback.

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

Answer. I fully support these principles and if confirmed, I pledge to provide my employees clear, accurate, and direct feedback. I have done so in my previous Foreign Service assignments as a manager, including when I served as deputy chief of mission and Chargé d'Affaires.

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

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

Answer. I have served in some of the most dangerous places in the world including Mosul, Iraq, Peshawar, Pakistan, and Khost, Afghanistan. My experiences taught me it was imperative to balance risk with the necessity to engage local populations and authorities to advance U.S. national security interests. In these posts, and all of my other assignments in the United Arab Emirates, India, Algeria, and Slovenia, I have regularly gone outside of the Embassy walls and strongly encouraged my teams to do so also.

My sense from Mission Slovakia is that diplomats are encouraged to get out and meet as many people as possible. In fact, my understanding is that one of the Embassy themes for the post-COVID era is "Back to the Regions," focused specifically on getting out from behind desks and our embassy walls and into regions outside the capital of Bratislava. If confirmed, I pledge to interact with a wide array of Slovaks across the country, and I will encourage the Embassy team to follow my example.

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

Answer. In all of my previous assignments, I have encouraged my teams to learn as much as possible about the local populations, including their history, culture, religion, and at a minimum, a few words of the local language. Most importantly, I have always instructed them that it is imperative they learn about local issues from the local population, and not just our government interlocutors and other elites. If confirmed, I will emphasize these same points to the Mission Bratislava team to ensure that the U.S. diplomats under my authority travel and meet a wide range of people so they can effectively do their jobs. My understanding is that the team in Slovakia regularly travels throughout the country, which assisted their efforts to serve U.S. citizens and refugees from Ukraine on the border after Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

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

Answer. I am told that Slovakia is home to a thriving, professional journalist community, and the U.S. Embassy is able to connect and reach audiences. Public diplomacy is a core component of our efforts to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in Slovakia, and if I am confirmed, that focus will continue. While there is considerable interest in the United States across the country and great willingness among our partners to support outreach, I understand that polls show many Slovaks remain skeptical of the United States and the Transatlantic relationship. If confirmed, I

pledge to meet regularly with a wide range of Slovaks across all fora—in person, on social media, via the traditional press—to improve their views of the United States and the importance of the transatlantic relationship.

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

Answer. I understand that COVID-19 has been a significant challenge and has impacted in-person public diplomacy and exchange programming in Slovakia, as it has everywhere. I am told other challenges to U.S. public diplomacy in Slovakia include widespread disinformation from malign actors and a public skeptical of the United States and the Transatlantic relationship. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Mission's public diplomacy team to increase our outreach to all Slovaks, and improve their views of the United States and the transatlantic relationship.

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

Answer. As a long-term Chargé d'Affaires at my last two posts in Slovenia and Algeria, I worked regularly with colleagues at Main State and the embassies' public diplomacy teams to tailor our messages to foreign audiences. In Algeria, I led the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau's top-ranked public diplomacy team that had 75 percent of all social media interactions for the entire bureau (across 19 countries, and over 25 posts). If confirmed, Mission Bratislava's messaging and engagement will be aligned with State Department policy priorities, including support for the Transatlantic relationship, strong person-to-person outreach and engagement, robust anti-corruption programming, countering disinformation and extremism, maintaining and supporting defense cooperation, and growing U.S. businesses. As I did in Slovenia and Algeria, I will work with the Mission Bratislava team to tailor our messages to most effectively reach the local audience.

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

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

Answer. I have previously received classified and unclassified briefings on the issue of Anomalous Health Incidents—including the interagency effort to protect and care for our personnel and uncover the cause of these incidents. These incidents are an absolute priority for the Department, and it would be an absolute priority for me if I am confirmed.

As the President has said, the health and well-being of American public servants is of paramount importance to the Administration. On a personal level, I have no higher priority than the safety of the members of my Embassy team and their family members.

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

Answer. Absolutely. In my recent assignments as deputy chief of mission and Chargé d'Affaires, I regularly held Town Halls and executed a "management by walking around" approach. I believe open and transparent communication is critical for a workplace to function well, and leadership should set the example for that. If confirmed, I pledge to bring the same approach to Mission Bratislava.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO GAUTAM A. RANA BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Whether we want it or not, the United States is currently engaged in a great power competition with the Chinese Communist Party. Our European allies and NATO members must recognize the need to take the lead to counter Russia's aggression on their doorstep. While Slovakia does not yet meet NATO's requirement for members to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending, it has drastically increased its defense spending, including a 40 percent increase in 2019. Earlier this year, Slovakia's Defense Minister announced that Slovakia would treat the 2 percent requirement as a floor and that even spending 3 percent of GDP would be necessary. The United States needs more NATO members to meet, or exceed, this requirement for their own defense to deter Russian aggression.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. The President has made it clear the United States views the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as a strategic competitor that challenges the existing rules-based international order. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest at home, align our efforts with partners and allies, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. The United States, our Allies, and partners have been clear-eyed on the threat the PRC poses, and Slovakia is no exception. For example, Slovakia’s Parliament approved a National Security Strategy identifying potential challenges posed by China. If confirmed, I would work to deepen ties between Washington and Bratislava and ensure we leverage the inherent advantages of our democracies to ensure the international system remains rooted in democratic values, not authoritarian ones.

Question. How would you describe the role and contributions of Slovakia as a NATO ally and how will you press Slovakia to reach the 2 percent goal and sustain it over time?

Answer. The United States and Slovakia have a strong defense and security relationship that continues to deepen. Slovakia is a stalwart NATO ally and has been since joining the Alliance in 2004. Slovakia has a strong record of participation in NATO missions within Europe and throughout the world, and the Slovak contingent was the last ally on the ground in Afghanistan. Following Russia’s unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia agreed to host a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) battlegroup, within which U.S. troops are currently participating. Slovakia takes its burden sharing commitments seriously and is in the process of a historic defense modernization effort. Slovak leaders have committed to reaching their two percent spending goal ahead of 2024—Slovakia’s Defense Minister announced earlier this year that Slovakia would treat the 2 percent requirement as a floor—and, if confirmed, I will advocate for sustaining this commitment over time.

Question. While the 2 percent spending goal is a good target, it’s not the whole story. NATO does not need its members to increase spending on pensions, or increasing salaries—we need member states to develop new and modern capabilities to keep pace with the threats presented by Putin’s and the CCP’s military. To what extent has Putin’s invasion of Ukraine bolstered public support for NATO in Slovakia?

Answer. Russia’s February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has underscored for all allies the importance of the NATO Alliance. Even before the invasion of neighboring Ukraine, Slovakia had embarked upon a historic military modernization project, including purchasing F-16 fighter jets for \$1.8 billion and Blackhawk helicopters. Slovakia is hosting a NATO Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) battlegroup, in which the United States is participating and could result in up to 3,000 NATO troops eventually deploying to the Slovak Republic. Most public polling in Slovakia shows that public support for NATO has been increasing. I understand that shortly after Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, 80 percent of Slovaks support the Government’s response to the invasion, and a comprehensive poll released in May showed that 72 percent of Slovaks perceive Slovakia’s membership in NATO positively, an almost ten percent increase from the year before. This is Slovakia’s highest level of support for NATO since at least 2018.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. RANDY W. BERRY BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In November 2020, I published a Senate Foreign Relations Committee majority report entitled “The United States and Europe: A Concrete Agenda for Transatlantic Cooperation on China.” The report gave several recommendations for increased transatlantic cooperation, including on Africa, to counter malign Chinese influence more effectively.

- In what ways should the United States partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests in Namibia and counter the influence of China and other malign actors?

Answer. The United States has a number of opportunities to partner with European countries to build on likeminded interests, particularly in support of democratic principles and practices, the international rules-based order, accountability and transparency, and the trade and investment sectors. Namibia has vast natural resources from world class mineral riches such as diamonds, uranium, and rare earths to high value timber and endangered wildlife species. Namibia’s mining industry is largely undeveloped and would benefit from international investment. Na-

mibia also has bold ambitions to develop renewable energy and green hydrogen that could advance decarbonization and energy security goals in the region and of likeminded partners, notably those in Europe. If confirmed, I would work closely with my counterparts from these countries to promote trade and investment between Namibia and the United States and European countries, thus filling a gap often filled by malign actors.

Human Rights

Question. In the State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), Namibia remained the only sub-Saharan African country ranked Tier 1 for meeting minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Although the Government met minimum standards, it prosecuted fewer victims and initiated fewer investigations through the reporting year and did not provide specialized training to law enforcement for human trafficking practices.

- How will you work with the Namibians to maintain progress as a Tier 1 country and to serve as an example among peers in the Southern Africa region if you are confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. Maintaining its Tier 1 ranking on the annual trafficking in persons (TIP) report is a serious policy priority for the Government of Namibia. Youth unemployment, extraordinary socioeconomic disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the influx of Angolan climate migrants into Namibia have increased TIP vulnerabilities. However, Namibia is taking proactive steps to address many of the concerns, as encapsulated in the Government of Namibia's revised draft National Trafficking in Persons Strategy (2021-2026) and demonstrated by recent efforts to repatriate TIP victims from Oman. If confirmed, I will leverage USG resources to support the continued development of Namibia's judiciary and law enforcement mechanisms to strengthen its ability to protect vulnerable persons.

Question. If confirmed, what concrete steps could you take to help Namibia operationalize the prioritized recommendations contained in the TIP report?

Answer. If confirmed, I will leverage available USG resources to continue support for training law enforcement and other front-line responders to identify and respond to TIP cases. This includes training and exchange programs, such as those offered by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), identifying foreign assistance mechanisms to bolster Namibia's home-grown efforts to prosecute traffickers, protect TIP victims, and prevent TIP altogether. My team and I will also amplify messages that aim to raise awareness about TIP and encourage accountability—both in private meetings and on public platforms.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report, Namibia was identified as having credible reports of serious government corruption and poor prison conditions, including overcrowding from lengthy pre-trial detentions. The Government has taken steps to prosecute or punish officials who committed abuses, but some officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

- Do you commit to raising the issue of corruption with the host government?

Answer. Yes. Corruption is increasingly a threat to the stability of Namibia's democratic institutions, the vitality of its economy, and the ability of the U.S. Government (USG) to safeguard our investments and achieve our strategic goals in Namibia. Though President Geingob has strongly messaged the importance of democratic institutions and systems and the need for leaders to combat corruption and tribalism, recent polls in Namibia indicate shaken faith in democratic leadership and serious corruption concerns.

In line with the anti-corruption call in President Biden's National Security Study Memorandum, Embassy Windhoek created an anti-corruption plan of action targeting both the public and government to simultaneously empower, equip, and advocate to combat corruption. Embassy Windhoek has already partnered with civil society to set up a National Anti-Corruption Network and online whistleblower portal; supported anti-corruption trainings for law enforcement; mentored investigative journalists; [designated under section 7031(c) of the annual appropriations act and] imposed visa restrictions on officials implicated in corruption scandals; and highlighted budgetary loopholes for corruption through a fiscal transparency study. If confirmed, I plan to build on this foundation, including through frank conversations with the host government.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work with the Namibian Government on prison conditions and improving the efficiency of the legal system to reduce the length of pre-trial detentions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will leverage available USG resources to continue support for rule of law and human rights in Namibia. This includes training and exchange programs, such as those offered by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), as well as identifying foreign assistance mechanisms to bolster Namibia's home-grown efforts to build a more efficient and equitable legal system. My team and I will, if confirmed, also encourage progress in private meetings with government officials and empower civil society advocates to continue to hold Namibia, a member of the U.N Human Rights Council, to a high standard in this area.

Question. In the State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom report, Namibia's constitution provides for freedom of belief and right to practice, profess, and promote any religion. The nongovernmental Interfaith Council consisting of members of various Christian and Muslims groups regularly met to discuss and coordinate their approach to the Government to address the needs of their respective congregations.

- What actions would you take with the host government to continue to promote religious tolerance and freedom?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Namibian Government, both publicly and privately, to build on the provisions in its constitution that prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of belief and the right to practice, profess, and promote any religion. I will meet with religious leaders of all faiths, and I will also work with members of civil society on this issue.

Question. How could you engage with the Interfaith Council and government to further understand the country's religious environment to best prevent possible areas of religious discrimination?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to meeting regularly and developing strong relationships with all members of the nongovernmental Interfaith Council to discuss what actions the United States can take to support the provisions in Namibia's constitution that provide for freedom of belief and the right to practice, profess, and promote any religion.

Namibia in the United Nations

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

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

Answer. Yes, I commit to continuing to build on previous discussions that have already been held between U.S. Embassy Windhoek and members of the Namibian Government on Ms. Bogdan-Martin's candidacy for Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union.

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

Answer. The U.N's Junior Professional Officer program supports young professionals interested in serving in international organizations by providing them with hands-on experience across various U.N agencies. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Bureau of International Organizations to identify qualified and diverse candidates for the JPO program. I will advise and support the work of Washington-based colleagues in the Bureau of African Affairs in efforts to use their engagements with Namibian officials in Washington, New York, Geneva, and elsewhere to advance these goals.

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

- What is your assessment of this issue?

Answer. Thirty-two years after independence, many top government positions are filled with SWAPO's liberation-era fighters who continue to harbor Cold War-era suspicions about U.S. intentions in Namibia. These suspicions—and in some instances antipathy—are rooted in resentment for the United States' previous friendly relations with apartheid South Africa and a belief that the United States' negoti-

ating posture in the 1980s unnecessarily delayed Namibia's independence by a decade.

In multilateral fora, the Government of Namibia advocates for conflict resolution through peaceful dialogue and democratic process “anchored on respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations.” President Geingob has stressed that “Namibia does not want to be put in an awkward position between two competing superpowers.” While Namibia's rhetoric still favors liberation struggle allies, in practice the Government is slowly adjusting its policies to be in line with international standards and often U.S. interests.

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

Answer. Namibian leaders stress that the country fought hard for its independence and places high value on the ability of Namibia to shape its own policy. If confirmed, I would work with my team and interagency partners to build a true partnership with Namibia that advances our common interests and allows the United States to be viewed as a reliable partner. On this foundation, we can build a relationship in which our shared values are also reflected in our U.N. voting records. My team and I will engage with Namibian officials to place increased value on taking positions and voting in a manner that benefits Namibia. We will also continue to encourage Namibia's foreign affairs officials to vote for human rights resolutions, even if they are single-country resolutions, in line with Namibia's principles—rather than abstaining.

State Department Management and Public Diplomacy

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

Answer. Morale at Mission Windhoek, despite the global challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, remains high. Dedication to the Mission, strong and consultative leadership by the Chargé d'Affaires, and good communication have been key, and if confirmed, I look forward to using my own leadership to advance positive morale.

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

Answer. I believe that positive morale and the well-being and productivity of staff stems from the creation of a respectful, consultative environment that allows for the best ideas, concepts, and innovations to emerge. Promoting and maintaining a Mission where open communication, the free expression of alternative ideas and dissent, and community-based initiatives and activities flourish are all key elements. The most vital among these principles is treating the team of professionals that make up our Mission with respect and trust, and to ensure their viewpoints, ideas, and concerns are heard and acted upon.

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

Answer. Common purpose and a unified team are critical, and effective communication is the vital foundation. I intend to create this environment of “One Mission, One Team” by consulting and drawing upon four key elements essential to my conception and demonstration of leadership. First, adopting a jointly understood vision of USG goals and targets is vital, and that is a team effort, produced through ongoing and effective communication. Second, a consistent articulation of that vision ensures the team remains on a unified track—in Country Team meetings, in Town Hall formats, and in our vital planning documents. Third, ensuring our team understands how program and external engagement supports underlying policy and goals—essentially how we turn aspiration into results—is vital. And finally, focusing on implementation and achievement built upon that foundation is key. Our greatest asset in our Missions overseas are our people, and effective communication at all levels is the greatest imperative.

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

Answer. Over the course of my career, I have relied heavily on the components of consultative and servant leadership, and I believe this approach to be the most beneficial in delivering a positive work environment and tangible achievements for the Mission team, for USG policy priorities and for the American people. I believe leaders carry the mantle of outlining a vision, based on consultation, and in the creation of a management environment that values and rewards innovation, bold

thinking, and achievement. I believe strongly that accessibility, approachability, and understanding that effective communication doesn't simply lie in speaking well, but in listening well, are the key components of success.

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

Answer. No. It is never acceptable or constructive to berate subordinates in any setting, public or private.

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

Answer. Leadership is a true team effort, and the relationship between a Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission, the most vital in the Mission, depends heavily on trust, open communication, and a shared approach and vision. Collaborative and consultative leadership requires the DCM to speak openly and honestly on issues facing the Mission, both in policy and operational terms. I will invest my support and trust to my DCM and ensure that our Mission team understands we speak with one voice on issues facing the community and our policy priorities. Essential for the success of that approach is a professional relationship where honest and open dialogue forms the foundation.

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

Answer. Though the ultimate responsibility for defining leadership rests on the shoulders of the Chief of Mission, the most generous sharing of responsibilities is vital as we look to develop the next generation of Foreign Service Officers. I intend to partner fully with my DCM to define and deliver the type of collaborative leadership that creates the type of professional environment most conducive to professional growth and achievement. Leadership at its core is a team sport, and effective communication is vital.

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

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

Answer. Not only do I believe it is important; I believe it is absolutely critical to do so to achieve our common Mission goals, and also to shape and prepare the next generation of Foreign Service professionals to lead and succeed. Over many years of service, I have used constructive and clear feedback and discussion with employees at all levels to improve performance, establish new targets for achievement, and create opportunity. Vital in that is also the ability to identify, cite, and recognize achievement through awards, promotions, and recognition.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit fully to supporting and encouraging clear, accurate and direct feedback. I have found this to be a critically important skill as I have assumed roles of greater responsibility throughout my nearly 30-year career with the State Department.

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

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

Answer. I firmly believe that the key imperative for our diplomats posted overseas is to get to know the country of assignment as thoroughly as possible, and that cannot be done adequately by remaining in the office. Engagement, relationship-building, and understanding is only possible through personal contact and experience. Diplomacy is a full-contact sport, and if confirmed, I will make this approach a priority for myself and my team, so that we can most faithfully execute on our goals—because we know and understand our environment.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Regional Security Officer and team at Post to ensure that the staff at Embassy Windhoek have the means and resources to safely travel and access all local populations in order to further USG priorities. I will always seek to balance the importance of person-to-person engagements with the safety of my staff.

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

Answer. Historically, suspicion of the United States for the role it played during the liberation struggle dominated public sentiment. With a new generation, that narrative is starting to fade, but Namibians are wary of dueling U.S.-China relationships in their country. However, in a country with 50 percent youth unemployment and one of the world's highest levels of inequality, economic and social concerns far outweigh political ideology for young people. Young Namibians increasingly want to go to the United States, not to immigrate, but to create professional and social opportunities for themselves. American freedom, lifestyles, and culture are very compelling for the new generation of Namibians. There is renewed interest in participating in U.S. exchange programs, and, if confirmed I will strive to utilize the full gambit of public diplomacy tools, including though social media outreach, cultural and social diplomacy, and new media.

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

Answer. Namibians are somewhat skeptical of our message, and there is some sentiment that the U.S.-Namibia relationship is in effect more about countering China than building a genuine partnership with Namibia. Exchange programs, as well as continued investment in people—whether in the health or education sectors, among others—will continue to move the needle with the Namibian public. High-level meetings and visits also matter; they demonstrate that our stated commitment to U.S.-Africa collaboration on shared global priorities, including ending the COVID-19 pandemic and building back to a more inclusive global economy, combating the climate crisis, revitalizing our democracies, and advancing peace and security is more than just words.

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

Answer. Public diplomacy messages should have an objective and an intended audience. Determining the source, content, or method of delivering those messages, requires a nuanced assessment of the audience(s), their orientation, how to influence them, and potential unintended reactions by primary or other audiences. The issue, circumstance, and audience should inform whether the in-country Mission or Main State is better positioned to achieve the objective. Often, messaging from Post/in-country Mission has the benefit of more targeted, time-responsive messaging, and is met with greater authenticity, as long as it is coordinated and within Department of State guidance. Accessibility, engagement, and authenticity enhance our ability to connect and inform, and if confirmed, I intend to engage substantially across our platforms and using all our tools, to communicate America's story, and our USG priorities.

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

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

Answer. I am deeply concerned by potential anomalous health incidents impacting U.S. Government personnel and their family members. These incidents affect the wellbeing of U.S. personnel serving their country abroad and must be taken extremely seriously. If confirmed, I will make the health and safety of my staff my top priority, including contributing to the extensive, ongoing interagency investigation into the cause of these incidents and how we can best protect our people. Reported cases will be taken seriously, and proper treatment and support from the USG will be provided. If confirmed, the health, safety, and security of Embassy Windhoek staff and all those supporting the Mission will be my highest priority.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit fully to leading our team in Mission Windhoek through effective and frequent communication, driven by honest and clear discussions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. RANDY W. BERRY BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Namibia and the People’s Republic of China maintain close trade ties and warm relations. The CCP enjoys a prominent role in Namibia’s mining sector and have financed major infrastructure, to include a major shipping port. Namibia’s president Geingob has praised Beijing and signed a number of agreements to increase bilateral partnerships. Namibia’s ruling party has particularly strong relations with the CCP, conducting regular party-to-party trainings. The CCP is filling a vacuum left by the United States’ indifference as a partner. Reportedly, Beijing has been in discussion with Namibia to open a naval base in Walvis Bay, which would significantly increase the PLA Navy’s power projection capabilities.

- Is the CCP a threat to the United States?

Answer. Certain activities by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represent significant challenges to U.S. economic, political, and security interests globally and in the Africa region. The PRC has used its influence abroad in ways that undermine laws, agreements, and institutions which has the effect of undermining rule of law and democratic principles. The port of Walvis Bay is a significant nexus for southern Atlantic security and could be an important opportunity for partnership with the United States. As Secretary Blinken said on May 26, we will invest, align, and compete with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. If confirmed, I will invest in our partnership with Namibia, align our concerns highlighting the risks associated with PRC engagement that could impact Namibia’s security, democratic principles, sovereignty, and U.S. interests, and ensure that our vision of a positive partnership and regional security and prosperity competes successfully with the PRC.

Question. What is the nature and extent of CCP ties with Namibia and what are their implications for U.S. interests?

Answer. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) maintains strong and rapidly growing economic ties to Namibia; in 2021, the PRC was Namibia’s second largest export destination and second largest source of imports. Additionally, Namibia is home to vast amounts of natural resources and mineral wealth; in addition to uranium, diamonds, gold, copper, and zinc, Namibia has rich deposits of critical minerals, all of which are of great interest to the PRC. While Namibia recognizes U.S. global engagement and appreciates U.S. support in the health and conservation fields, Namibia sees its relationship to the PRC through the lens of “friend to all, enemy to none,” particularly given historic support from the PRC in the struggle for Namibia’s independence. Namibia values its hard-built democracy and independent institutions, and our common commitment to democratic principles, transparency, and the fundamental freedoms should guide our efforts. If confirmed, I commit to building key relationships with senior leadership and others to emphasize the values, interests, and commitment of the USG to act as a key partner for the Namibian Government and people.

Question. What can the U.S. do to counter the CCP’s influence in Namibia?

Answer. There are a number of opportunities for the United States to counter the PRC’s influence in Namibia. First and foremost, being a present and active partner is key, guided by foundational democratic principles and fundamental freedoms. While the United States and Namibia currently have a limited commercial relationship, largely due to Namibia’s small market, there are growing possibilities for U.S. businesses to invest in renewable energy, green hydrogen, critical minerals, transportation infrastructure, specialized business services, and tourism. Continued investment in Namibia’s conservation and health sectors could also play a significant role as the United States seeks to counter the PRC’s influence in Namibia.

It is vital, as well, to articulate U.S. engagement and values through effective public outreach, and to ensure that transparency and accountability are key standards defining any democracy’s external engagements. A free and independent media, and environment in which public tenders and contracts are fully examined and visible to the press and public are vital. That environment also creates opportunities for the power of the U.S. private sector to engage more fully and engage in economic activities that benefit inclusive development with respect for the environment, a key

interest for the country. If Namibia is to succeed in the development of its economy, that development should come with support to her democratic institutions and practices, to her people through expanded training and employment, and support her sovereignty.

Question. Please assess the Namibian Government's record on human rights. How free and fair are elections in Namibia?

Answer. Since independence, the Namibian Government has maintained a strong record on human rights, though some challenges obviously remain, as outlined in the State Department's historical human rights reports. Namibia has made combatting trafficking in persons a key policy priority and has maintained its Tier 1 ranking on the USG annual trafficking in persons (TIP) report. Namibia also ranks at the very top consistently in terms of press freedoms -- an essential component for the health of a democracy and a force for transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption efforts. Religious freedoms are also generally respected and valued.

Namibia has been a stable democracy since independence from South Africa in 1990, and its elections since independence have met international standards for free and fair administration. It has a democratically elected parliament, an independent judiciary, free media, and a military that is fully subordinate to civilian leadership. President Hage Geingob was re-elected to his second and final five-year term in free and fair elections held peacefully in November 2019. His party, SWAPO, is the only political party to lead Namibia in its 32-year history.
