

NOMINATIONS

TUESDAY, JULY 29, 2025

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:36 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bill Hagerty presiding.

Present: Senators Hagerty [presiding], Ricketts, Daines, Scott, Shaheen, Murphy, Van Hollen, and Rosen.

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

Senator HAGERTY. I want to welcome everybody here today.

We are here to consider the nominations of Ambassador Richard Duke Buchan, III, nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Morocco; Mr. John Giordano, nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Namibia; Mr. Michael Issa, nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon; Mr. Sean O'Neill, nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Thailand; and Ms. Julie Stuft, nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan.

As we begin today's agenda I want to remind everyone of the ground rules for these committee hearings. We have very important work to do and a limited amount of time in which to do it.

As a result, we will not tolerate demonstrations or disruptions of the committee's business. If you do choose to interrupt our proceedings you will be removed and barred from attending these public hearings for 12 months.

I appreciate your understanding. I look forward to a productive hearing.

Before continuing, I would like to take a moment of Chairman's privilege to introduce two nominees whom I have gotten to know very well over the years.

First, I would like to introduce Ambassador Duke Buchan, President Trump's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, and then Mr. John Giordano, President Trump's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Namibia.

First, let me begin with Ambassador Buchan. Duke is someone who brings both gravitas and humility to every role that he takes on. With decades of success in global finance and diplomacy, he is an outstanding choice for this critical post.

He has experience in over 50 countries including Morocco. After beginning his career in investment banking, Duke founded Hunter Global Investments LP. His firm built a strong record in global

asset management, doubling the performance of the S&P under his leadership.

His track record in the private sector speaks not only to his business acumen but also to his ability to navigate complex international environments. Duke's "servant leadership" style, which is rooted in his relationships and his results, was on full display during his tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra from 2017 to 2021.

At Mission Spain, Ambassador Buchan negotiated an historic U.S.-Spain tax agreement that advanced trade and job creations on both sides of the Atlantic. It is clear Duke is a patriot with a deep appreciation for education, service, and tradition.

As one example, in 2011 he and his family established the Buchan Excellence Fund at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to support faculty and students studying Romance languages and the arts.

Today, in addition to his work in the finance sector, he continues also to manage the family farm in North Carolina where he was raised, land that has been in his family for generations.

Above all, Duke is a devoted husband and father. He and his wife Hannah are proud parents to three remarkable children, all of whom are Eagle Scouts, which speaks volumes about the values that they have instilled at their home.

If confirmed, Duke will bring his strategic vision and principled leadership to Morocco, one of America's oldest allies and a vital partner at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

Morocco's role in regional security, counterterrorism, economic development, and the Abraham Accords makes this post critically important.

Duke, I look forward to learning more about your plans to capitalize on our historic relationship with Morocco and strengthening our cooperation on many issues.

Now let me turn to my friend John Giordano, President Trump's nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Namibia. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to witness John's professionalism, his integrity, and his unwavering dedication to public service.

John brings a uniquely qualified background to this position, combining prosecutorial rigor, expertise in environmental and energy policy, and international legal experience.

This multidisciplinary foundation is precisely what is needed for America's Ambassador to Namibia. John's credentials are extensive, and he has served in senior roles at the U.S. Department of Energy and also at the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division where he worked on issues ranging from energy security to international wildlife trafficking.

In 2019, he was appointed by President Trump to represent the United States at the 74th United Nations General Assembly. There he addressed global threats including human trafficking and counterterrorism.

Most recently John served as the 64th United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey. In that capacity he led Federal prosecutions against violent gangs, cartel linked drug trafficking networks, and human trafficking operations.

His tenure reflected not only sharp legal judgment but also a clear focus on protecting American communities. Namibia is a strategically important U.S. partner in southern Africa. It is one of the continent's most stable democracies, and it holds significant potential for cooperation on issues such as critical minerals, energy development, and environmental stewardship.

However, it also sits at the center of growing geopolitical competition as China seeks to expand its influence in Namibia and across the entire region.

Mission Namibia faces opportunities and challenges that require the leadership of a clear eyed and experienced person to address them, and John is just the person to do that.

John is a true patriot and public servant. He possesses the legal insight, policy depth, and diplomatic sensibility to succeed in this critical post. I am confident he will represent our Nation with purpose, discipline, and humility.

I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce both of these outstanding nominees, and I urge this committee to support their nominations.

Before we turn to Senator Murphy's opening statements and to our panelists for their introductory statements I would like to begin by thanking all of you for your willingness to serve in the United States as diplomats.

If confirmed, each of you will represent American interests at a time of both profound challenge and opportunity in the world. Morocco, Namibia, Lebanon, Thailand, and Kazakhstan all occupy unique and strategic roles in their respective regions.

We will need your steadfast leadership at these posts to safeguard U.S. interests, promote American values, and deliver results for the American people and our partners.

Senator Murphy, over to you for your opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Hagerty.

Thank you to all of our nominees, your families, for appearing before the committee today.

Mr. Buchan, congratulations on your nomination to serve once again as a U.S. Ambassador. As you know, our relationship with Morocco is strong. It is important. It is resilient.

We look to Morocco as a leader in the region. This is a very important post.

Mr. Giordano, you are headed to the other side of the continent to Namibia. It is one of 10 African countries that is ranked free by Freedom House. That is important.

Namibia has got huge economic potential, new oil discoveries that could triple the country's economy over the next decade. That is a plus and a minus.

It is, obviously, a real opportunity, but it is a situation that is also ripe for corruption.

Mr. Issa, if confirmed you are going to take the helm in Beirut. I have spent a lot of time in Beirut over the years. I am, frankly, more optimistic about that country's future than I have been in years.

The election of my friend Joseph Aoun in the formation of Lebanon's first government since 2022, it has put the country on a promising path. But they cannot survive without our support, so we need to capitalize on this early success, keep pushing through economic reforms all the while, while nurturing this really precarious ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Mr. O'Neill, Thailand is a longtime treaty ally, economic partner of the United States, but coming off this recent outbreak of violence with its neighbor Cambodia, we know how important it is for us to remain engaged with Thailand in this delicate part of the world.

And finally, Ms. Stuft, you are nominated to lead our post in Kazakhstan, an increasingly important partner for the United States.

Just a note that Senator Daines and I are working to remove a longstanding irritant in our relationship with Kazakhstan and that region in general, by repealing the outdated Jackson-Vanik trade restriction that remains on the books from the Soviet era.

Chairman Risch and Senator Shaheen are supportive of this proposal. I appreciate that, and I hope that we can also count on your support.

Stepping back, Mr. Chairman, a little bit, while I wish you all well in your work if you are confirmed I will just say that the Trump administration is sending you to these posts, largely, unarmed and defenseless.

You will not command the military. What you will be in charge of is coordinating America's nonmilitary national security tools. But you are going to find when you get there that they, largely, do not exist any longer. Our aid programs have been shuttered.

President Trump is closing down organizations that expose Chinese and Russian propaganda and corruption. Thousands of diplomats, the people that you would have relied on to do the work of protecting our nation, are being fired not for cause but just to shrink our capacity to protect America.

I will give you a concrete example that impacts the posts that you will be going to in Morocco and Namibia. Trump recently terminated for no good reason tens of millions of projects that help upgrade Africa's power grid.

Now, China knows how Africa's economy is going to boom in the next 50 years, so they want Chinese companies, not American companies, to have relationships. They know that many of the critical minerals that are going to be powering AI and defense systems come from Africa.

So what happened? When Trump pulled back on this \$80 million commitment to help Power Africa, China stepped immediately into the void, announced \$50 billion in financing for economic development and infrastructure in Africa.

It was a self-defeating policy that delights our adversaries, and we see it happening over and over again.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, given that this is my first chance to be a Ranking Member on one of these nominations committee's hearings, just a word on the nominations process itself.

The way in which President Trump is choosing ambassadors is without precedent, and we need to talk about it on this committee.

Mr. Chairman, I think political ambassadors can be really effective and impactful in the right places and if they are the right people.

Under every Administration before this one the percentage of Ambassadors that were political as opposed to career Foreign Service mostly hovered between 25 and 40 percent. In President Trump's first term it got up to close to 50 percent.

But it has normally been in that 25 to 40 percent range, and this is really important because in addition to just the reality that many posts need to be led by a career diplomat because of the need for deep experience and knowledge, keeping a percentage of posts reserved for career diplomats is also essential to keeping qualified people in the diplomatic corps.

If you think you are never going to become an ambassador then really good people are just going to leave. But that seems to be the entire point of President Trump's nomination policy, to force mid-career diplomats to leave.

As his OMB director said, the Administration wants civil service employees to live, quote, "in trauma." Thus far in Trump's second term the percentage of political nominees is not 40 percent. It is not 50 percent. It is not 70 percent. It is 95 percent. Fifty-eight out of the 61 nominees have been political.

There have been three career nominees, and two of them are on this panel. That is unacceptable. That is bad policy, and this committee should not endorse this dangerous policy of giving nearly every single ambassadorial post to friends and political supporters of the President.

I look forward to this nominations hearing. Again, thank you all for appearing.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Ranking Member Murphy.

And I would just remind you that every one of our ambassadorial appointments has been put through the cloture process through maximum resistance, and it is just requiring a tremendous amount of time to get people at their post, and the focus on political appointees is because we are desperate to try to get these people into their positions.

The career ambassadorships, I think, will come, and I hope that there will be an issue where—an area where we can cooperate and move people through, hopefully, on a unanimous consent basis.

Senator MURPHY. Yes. I think if there were more career people I think those folks who would probably move more quickly I think.

Senator HAGERTY. We are making progress on that today.

And with that, I would like to open the floor for our nominees to make their opening comments. I would like to ask you all to keep your comments to 3 minutes each.

I will start with you, Ambassador Buchan.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BUCHAN III, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

Ambassador BUCHAN. Thank you, Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am deeply grateful to President Trump and humbled to be nominated to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco. I am also grateful to Secretary Rubio for his support throughout the process.

Recent events around the world show that President Trump knows how to make America strong, safe, and prosperous. History shows that peace through strength works.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to represent the interest of the United States and Morocco by advancing those proven policies.

Each of us has followed a unique path to public service. As a tenth generation North Carolinian who grew up on a tobacco and cattle farm, I know that I am here because of the people and the land that nurtured me.

I would like to recognize two members of my family who are with me here today—my wife Hannah and my daughter Cate. Their support and others that could not join us has been invaluable to me.

The opportunity to serve my country for a second time is a dream come true. My years as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain and the Principality of Andorra and four decades of work across the globe have taught me the importance of listening to and learning from others to forge solutions and advance U.S. interest.

My academic background in languages and business, along with my professional experience, has prepared me to strengthen ties with Morocco.

My family and I developed a deep appreciation and respect for the people and culture of Spain during our years of service there. If confirmed, we look forward to doing the same in Morocco.

I have been traveling to Morocco for over 40 years. It is a beautiful, fascinating, and strategic country. I know that our diplomatic team in Morocco, Americans and Moroccans, is outstanding.

If confirmed, I look forward to learning from and leading them as we make the bilateral relationship even stronger.

Morocco is one of our oldest partners. Our Treaty of Peace and Friendship dates back to 1786. For almost 240 years our bilateral relationship has made Americans and Moroccans safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Our human connections to Morocco are historic, deep, and meaningful. Many Americans travel to Morocco each year to explore its rich culture and beautiful landscape.

If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of American citizens in Morocco including our fantastic American and local team at U.S. Embassy Rabat and U.S. Consulate General Casablanca.

King Mohammed VI is a valued leader and a friend of the United States. Morocco is a pillar of stability, and its strategic location makes it critical to American national security.

Morocco has long been a key security counterpart, hosting AFRICOM's largest joint military exercise, African Lion, and serving as a capable and reliable partner in combating terrorism, particularly in Africa.

If confirmed I will work to strengthen our long standing security relationship as we confront common challenges.

As I know firsthand from my years in international business and finance, Morocco is also a model economic partner. The United

States and Morocco have a robust trade relationship characterized by a significant U.S. trade surplus.

My career has been built on finding and pursuing opportunities. If confirmed I will strive to increase opportunities for U.S. businesses throughout Morocco where America can offer world class technology to support Morocco's ambitions to build its technology, transportation, agriculture, and energy sectors.

On April 8 Secretary Rubio reiterated that the United States recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and supports Morocco's serious, credible, and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute.

He reaffirmed President Trump's urging for the parties to engage in discussions without delay, using Morocco's autonomy proposal as the only framework to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution.

If confirmed, I will facilitate progress toward this goal.

In 2020 Morocco reestablished relations with Israel and a historic peace alliance that continues to grow and inspire.

In the wake of Hamas's horrific October 7 terrorist attacks against Israel, Morocco has sustained vital channels with Jerusalem and has been a powerful voice for the path forward in Gaza, where Hamas must be fully removed from power so it can never threaten Israel again.

If confirmed, I will work to strengthen and expand the Abraham Accords with our Moroccan partners.

Distinguished Senators, thank you again for your time. My family and I have been blessed in so many ways, and we owe so much to the United States of America.

If you honor me with this confirmation I pledge to give my all to strengthen and advance the partnership with our long term and unwavering friend Morocco.

I welcome your comments, questions, and a continued relationship. Thank you and God bless America.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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

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

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

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

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

Richard Duke Buchart III

Printed Name:

~~Richard Duke Buchart III~~

Date:

July 29, 2025

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Buchan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Richard Buchan III

Thank you, Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Trump and humbled to be nominated to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco. I am also grateful to Secretary Rubio for his support throughout this process. Recent events around the world show that President Trump knows how to make America strong, safe, and prosperous. History shows that peace through strength works. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to represent the interests of the United States in Morocco by advancing those proven policies.

Each of us has followed a unique path to public service. As a 10th generation North Carolinian who grew up on a tobacco and cattle farm, I know that I am here because of the people and the land that nurtured me. I would like to recognize two members of my family who are with me here today: my wife, Hannah, and my daughter, Cate. Their support and others that could not join us has been invaluable to me.

The opportunity to serve my country for a second time is a dream come true. My years as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain and the Principality of Andorra and four decades of work across the globe have taught me the importance of listening to and learning from others to forge solutions and advance U.S. interests. My academic background in languages and business, along with my professional experience has prepared me to strengthen ties with Morocco. My family and I developed a deep appreciation and respect for the people and culture of Spain during our years of service there. If confirmed, we look forward to doing the same in Morocco. I have been traveling to Morocco for over 40 years. It is a beautiful, fascinating, and strategic country. I know that our diplomatic team in Morocco—Americans and Moroccans—is outstanding. If confirmed, I look forward to learning from and leading them as we make the bilateral relationship even stronger.

Morocco is one of our oldest partners. Our Treaty of Peace and Friendship dates back to 1786. For almost two hundred and forty years, our bilateral relationship has made Americans and Moroccans safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Our human connections to Morocco are historic, deep, and meaningful. Many Americans travel to Morocco each year to explore its rich culture and beautiful landscape. If confirmed, my highest priority will be the safety and security of American citizens in Morocco, including that of our fantastic American and local team at U.S. Embassy Rabat and U.S. Consulate-General Casablanca.

King Mohammed VI is a valued leader and a friend of the United States. Morocco is a pillar of stability, and its strategic location makes it critical to American national security. Morocco has long been a key security counterpart, hosting AFRICOM's largest joint military exercise, African Lion, and serving as a capable and reliable partner in combating terrorism, particularly in Africa. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen our long-standing security relationship as we confront common challenges.

As I know firsthand from my years in international business and finance, Morocco is also a model economic partner. The United States and Morocco have a robust trade relationship, characterized by a significant U.S. trade surplus. My career has been built on finding and pursuing opportunities. If confirmed, I will strive to increase opportunities for U.S. businesses throughout Morocco, where America can offer world-class technology to support Morocco's ambitions to build its technology, transportation, agriculture, and energy sectors.

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In 2020, Morocco re-established relations with Israel in a historic peace alliance that continues to grow and inspire. In the wake of Hamas' horrific October 7 terrorist attacks against Israel, Morocco has sustained vital channels with Jerusalem and has been a powerful voice for the path forward in Gaza, where Hamas must be fully removed from power so it can never threaten Israel again. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen and expand the Abraham Accords with our Moroccan partners.

Distinguished Senators, thank you again for your time. My family and I have been blessed in so many ways, and we owe so much to the United States of America. If you honor me with this confirmation, I pledge to give my all to strengthen and advance the partnership with our long-term and unwavering friend, Morocco. I welcome your comments, questions, and a continued relationship. Thank you, and God Bless America.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, and I will remind our nominees to please limit your remarks to 3 minutes.

Mr. Giordano.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN GIORDANO, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF NA-
MIBIA**

Mr. GIORDANO. Thank you, Chairman Hagerty, for the kind introduction, your enduring friendship over the years, and your service to this country.

Ranking Member Murphy and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to serve as the first political United States Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia.

I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence President Trump has once again placed in me, and I am grateful for the support of Secretary Rubio.

If confirmed, I will advance the President's agenda with resolve, uphold American sovereignty, and deliver results that strengthen our nation's position globally.

I would like to recognize my father, Frank Giordano, whose presence here today reflects the foundational values my parents instilled in me—faith, discipline, hard work, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

And although my mother Dorothy could not be with us here today, she is proudly watching from home on her 76th birthday.

Public service is deeply rooted in my family's legacy. As a twelfth generation American whose maternal ancestors arrived in Pennsylvania in 1682 and served in every American war through World War II, I was raised to prioritize country above self.

That legacy, and my own experience as a Federal prosecutor, cemented a lifelong commitment to the law, justice, and the principle that America must always lead.

Namibia represents an extraordinary opportunity for the United States. It is a young democracy rich in resources and potential and governed by a new Administration that shares many of our key priorities: transparency, rule of law, private investment, and strategic independence.

Working together, our nations can forge a modern partnership that drives shared prosperity and security. As such, if confirmed I will lead our mission in Windhoek to advance President Trump's "America First" policy priorities to ensure that America is the preferred partner for Namibia.

First, I will pursue peace through strength, protecting our interests and safeguarding our citizens abroad. More than 30,000 American tourists travel to Namibia each year, and their safety is not just a priority, it is a core responsibility of the U.S. mission.

If confirmed, I will ensure that our consular operations remain vigilant, responsive, and fully aligned with the State Department's highest mission, protecting the lives and welfare of Americans wherever they may be in the world.

Second, I will promote commercial diplomacy. Namibia is well positioned to serve as a springboard for American commerce across Africa.

If confirmed, I will make it a top priority to expand bilateral trade, champion American businesses, and work with Namibian leaders to foster a business climate grounded in fair competition.

In short, I will reinforce American leadership in a region where our values and investment must remain paramount.

Third, I will prioritize energy and resource security. Namibia is home to significant reserves of critical minerals. It is on track to become the world's second largest producer of uranium and a top 15 global oil producer by 2035. U.S. companies are already establishing a presence in Namibia's oil and gas sector.

If confirmed, I will work to expand that footprint. Strengthening American leadership in energy and critical mineral supply chains is essential to our national security and our industrial competitiveness.

I will never shy away from difficult conversations. As I have learned throughout my career, candor and conviction are essential to building a foundation of trust, promoting accountability, and advancing enduring partnerships.

At the Department of Energy, the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, I fought to advance U.S. interests and protect American citizens, from advancing U.S. energy security priorities to countering human trafficking, terrorism, and transnational corruption.

I never wavered in defense of American principles. As a Federal prosecutor I had the honor of standing on the front lines of justice, ensuring public safety, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring that those who threatened our security were held accountable.

There is no greater professional reward than ending each day knowing that you have made the world a safer, more just place.

That experience also taught me that while justice may require firmness, leadership demands diplomacy. Strategic engagement, clear communication, and respect for different perspectives are instruments of strength.

These tools have enabled me to build trust, diffuse tensions, and drive outcomes in complex, high stakes environments.

If confirmed, I will bring that same resolve, focus, and discipline to my service as ambassador. I will lead the mission with strength, purpose, and humility, always seeking to protect American interests, promote prosperity, and project the values that define our great nation.

Distinguished Senators, thank you for the extraordinary privilege of appearing before you today. If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to once again serve the United States of America.

Thank you again, and I welcome your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

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4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes



Printed Name: John Giordano
Date: July 29, 2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Giordano follows:]

Prepared Statement of John Giordano

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to serve as the first political United States Ambassador to the Republic of Namibia in decades. I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence President Trump has once again placed in me, and I am grateful for the support of Secretary Rubio. If confirmed, I will advance the President's agenda with resolve, uphold American sovereignty, and deliver results that strengthen our nation's position globally.

I am also thankful to Senator Hagerty for his generous introduction and enduring friendship.

I would like to recognize my parents, Frank and Dorothy Giordano, whose presence here today reflects the foundational values they instilled in me—faith, discipline, hard work, and an unwavering commitment to public service.

Public service is deeply rooted in my family's legacy. As a 12th-generation American whose maternal ancestors arrived in Pennsylvania in 1682 and served in every American war through World War II, I was raised to prioritize country above self. That legacy—and my own experience as a Federal prosecutor—cemented a lifelong commitment to the law, justice, and the principle that America must always lead.

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seeking to protect American interests, promote prosperity, and project the values that define our great nation.

Distinguished Senators, thank you for the extraordinary privilege of appearing before you today. If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to once again serve the United States of America.

Thank you again. I welcome your questions.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.

Mr. Issa.

STATEMENT OF MICHEL ISSA, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC

Mr. ISSA. Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished members of the committee, it is the honor of a lifetime to sit before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon.

My presence here is a testament of the enduring promise of the American dream, which allowed a young man born in Beirut to become a banker, a businessman, and now a public servant.

If confirmed, I will devote myself fully to advancing American interests and values in Lebanon.

I was born in Beirut and educated in France, but I have spent most of my adult life in the United States. I understand firsthand the complexity of Lebanese society.

My deep knowledge of the country's intricate sectarian composition, its communities, its history, and its tensions will guide my effort to build bridges, promote unity, and support democratic institutions that serve our Lebanese citizens.

If confirmed, it will be an honor to return to the land of my birth to serve the United States, the nation that gave me every opportunity.

I have remained closely connected to Lebanon over the years and have witnessed its people's resilience despite being too often undermined by corruption, economic mismanagement, and the violent influence of Hezbollah and its Iranian backers.

Today we stand at the crossroad. The recent war between Israel and Hezbollah, while devastating, has opened a narrow but meaningful window for progress.

Since the United States successfully brokered the cessation of hostilities last November we have seen promising development—a president and a prime minister who are independent, reform minded, and committed to charting a different path for their country.

The Iran-Israel escalation is a reminder of how delicate an opportunity this is that could be squandered if Iran drags Lebanon back down to the path of conflict.

The government has made clear it will not tolerate any violation of the cessation of hostility, and since implementation they have begun to curb Hezbollah's influence.

But more must be done urgently. The full disarmament of Hezbollah is not optional. It is essential. The time to act is now.

The United States must also continue to lead efforts to seize a real historical opportunity to demarcate the boundaries between Israel and Lebanon and to bring about the normalization of ties between Lebanon and Israel.

But opportunity cannot wait without transparency. Lebanon's economy has been decimated not only by war and instability but also by OPEC's financial practices and a lack of public trust.

Rebuilding Lebanon must go hand in hand with serious reform that ensures the transparent distribution of aid and investment. The country does not need more donor dependency. It needs honest governance that attracts real, sustainable investment.

If confirmed, I will work closely with our international partners to promote financial accountability and support long term economic recovery and growth.

The estimated \$11 billion required for reconstruction must not repeat the failure of the post-2006 period when Hezbollah and its leaders hijacked rebuilding efforts to expand their grip on the south.

This time we must empower the legitimate Lebanese state and civil institutions to rebuild responsibly with integrity and without interference from malign actors.

The Lebanese Armed Forces will be central for this mission. Over the years the LAF has proven itself a reliable partner. Thanks to U.S. support it is now taking tangible steps to enforce the cessation of hostility and dismantle Hezbollah's infrastructure in the south.

More is needed, but these efforts show the value of our continued security cooperation. If confirmed I will work with President Aoun, the Lebanese government, and the LAF to ensure Lebanon's sovereignty is fully restored.

Let me be clear. My commitment to this mission and to serving the United States is absolute. To avoid any potential conflict of interest and to demonstrate that my loyalty lies solely with the United States, I have voluntarily renounced my Lebanese citizenship.

This decision was not made lightly. It was not only a matter of legal compliance, but a personal testament to my duty to serve the American people and uphold the interests of the United States above all else.

Finally, I would like to close on a personal note. None of this would be possible without the unwavering love and support of my family.

My wife of 45 years, Lillian, present here with me today, has been my anchor and my partner through every chapter of our lives. My two sons, Sebastien and Gabriel, have inspired me with their strength and character. Their belief in me has carried me to this moment. I am here today because of them.

I thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the American people at such a pivotal time for Lebanon, the region, and our shared future.

Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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

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

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



Printed Name: MICHEL JESSA

Date: 07/29/2025



[The prepared statement of Mr. Issa follows:]

Prepared Statement of Michel Issa

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished Members of the committee, it is the honor of a lifetime to sit before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon. My presence here is a testament to the enduring promise of the American dream, which allowed a young man born in Beirut to become a banker, a businessman, and now, a public servant. If confirmed, I will devote myself fully to advancing American interests and values in Lebanon.

I was born in Beirut and educated in France, but I have spent most of my adult life in the United States. I understand firsthand the complexity of Lebanese society. My deep knowledge of the country's intricate sectarian composition—its communities, its history, and its tensions—will guide my efforts to build bridges, promote unity, and support democratic institutions that serve all Lebanese citizens.

If confirmed, it will be an honor to return to the land of my birth to serve the United States, the nation that gave me every opportunity. I have remained closely connected to Lebanon over the years and have witnessed its people's resilience despite being too often undermined by corruption, economic mismanagement, and the violent influence of Hezbollah and its Iranian backers.

Today, we stand at a crossroads. The recent war between Israel and Hizballah, while devastating, has opened a narrow but meaningful window for progress. Since the United States successfully brokered the Cessation of Hostilities last November, we've seen promising developments: a President and a Prime Minister who are independent, reform-minded, and committed to charting a different path for their country. The Iran-Israel escalation is a reminder of how delicate an opportunity this is, that could be squandered if Iran drags Lebanon back down the path of conflict. The government has made clear it will not tolerate any violations of the Cessation of Hostilities and since implementation they have begun to curb Hizballah's influence, but more must be done urgently. The full disarmament of Hizballah is not optional; it is essential. The time to act is now.

The United States must also continue to lead efforts to seize a real historical opportunity to demarcate the boundaries between Israel and Lebanon, and to bring about the normalization of ties between Lebanon and Israel.

But opportunity cannot come without transparency. Lebanon's economy has been decimated, not only by war and instability but also by opaque financial practices and a lack of public trust. Rebuilding Lebanon must go hand in hand with serious reforms that ensure the transparent distribution of aid and investment. The country does not need more donor dependency; it needs honest governance that attracts real, sustainable investment. If confirmed, I will work closely with our international partners to promote financial accountability and support long-term economic recovery and growth.

The estimated \$11 billion required for reconstruction must not repeat the failures of the post-2006 period, when Hizballah and its backers hijacked rebuilding efforts to expand their grip on the south. This time, we must empower the legitimate Lebanese state and civil institutions to rebuild responsibly with integrity, and without interference from malign actors.

The Lebanese Armed Forces will be central to this mission. Over the years, the LAF has proven itself to be a reliable partner. Thanks to U.S. support, it is now taking tangible steps to enforce the Cessation of Hostilities and dismantle Hizballah's infrastructure in the south. More is needed, but these efforts show the value of our continued security cooperation. If confirmed, I will work with President Aoun, the Lebanese government, and the LAF to ensure Lebanon's sovereignty is fully restored.

Let me be clear: my commitment to this mission, and to serving the United States, is absolute. To avoid any potential conflict of interest and to demonstrate that my loyalty lies solely with the United States, I have voluntarily renounced my Lebanese citizenship. This decision was not made lightly. It was not only a matter of legal compliance, but a personal testament to my duty to serve the American people and uphold the interests of the United States above all else.

Finally, I would like to close on a personal note. None of this would be possible without the unwavering love and support of my family. My wife of 45 years, Lillian, has been my anchor and my partner through every chapter of our lives. My two sons, Sebastien and Gabriel, have inspired me with their strength and character. Their belief in me has carried me to this moment. I am here today because of them.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions and am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the American people at such a pivotal time for Lebanon, the region, and our shared future.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.
Mr. O'Neill.

STATEMENT OF SEAN O'NEILL, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Mr. O'NEILL. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and grateful for the trust and leadership of President Trump and Secretary Rubio.

I am joined today by my wife, Sachiyo, who has been with me throughout our nomadic Foreign Service career. We have been a team through many moves across the Indo-Pacific and back, and I am very grateful for her love and her support.

I would also like to recognize my two god-daughters out there, Kara and Sienna, and my extended family, many of whom are watching today, many back in New York, and all of whom have been a tremendous source of support and love over the years, and happy birthday to my cousin Ken.

Finally, I would not be here today or anywhere without the guidance and love of my parents, Jim and Keiko O'Neill. They both passed away but I know they are with God, and the example they set for me guides me to this day.

One of those examples is service. I began my professional career as a capital markets attorney in New York, but I joined the Foreign Service in the wake of 9/11 to serve our country.

I recognized then that American strength and defense of our interests around the world is essential to the security and prosperity of our country.

Diplomacy is an important component of American strength, and the purpose of any U.S. diplomatic mission is to promote American interests.

If confirmed, it would be my honor to work with the men and women of Mission Thailand and our Thai partners to promote Secretary Rubio's objectives of making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Making America safer means, first, serving and protecting the well being of the over 80,000 American citizens who live in Thailand and over 1 million who visit each year.

Combating transnational crime is also essential to American and Thai safety. The rise of cyber scam centers in Southeast Asia threatens American citizens and those of our Thai allies and many other countries.

If confirmed, I will focus on strengthening our already robust law enforcement cooperation with Thailand to shut down these scam centers and continue to go after narcotics and human traffickers.

Our alliance with Thailand makes America stronger. Thailand is one of five treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific and our only ally in mainland Southeast Asia. All of this improves our interoperability and deterrence in defense of our nations.

If confirmed, finally, I would promote American prosperity through robust commercial diplomacy and promoting President Trump's objective of making our trade relationships fair, free, and reciprocal.

Trade has been an important part of our relationship with Thailand since our two countries first entered into a Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1833, and I am very optimistic that we can build on what President Lincoln described as our great and good friendship to forge a balanced and fair trade relationship that benefits both American and Thai citizens.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, if confirmed it would be my privilege to work with the men and women of Mission Thailand.

I have served two tours in Thailand during my Foreign Service career, and I have seen firsthand the dedication and skill of our American and local colleagues as they work each day to keep us safe, strong, and prosperous.

It would be my honor to rejoin them as the United States Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of this committee, I am deeply honored to be nominated, and I am grateful to this committee for its consideration.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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



Printed Name: Sean K. O'Neill

Date: July 29, 2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. O'Neill follows:]

Prepared Statement of Sean O'Neill

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and a grateful for the trust and leadership of President Trump and Secretary Rubio.

I am joined today by my wife Sachiyo, who has been with me throughout our nomadic Foreign Service career. We have been a team through many moves across the Indo Pacific and back and I am grateful for her love and support.

I'd like to recognize my two goddaughters Kara and Sienna, and my extended family, many of whom are watching today and all of whom have been a tremendous source of support and love over the years.

Finally, I would not be here without the guidance and love of my parents Jim and Keiko O'Neill. They have both passed away, but I know they are with God and the example they set for me guides me to this day.

I began my professional career as a capital markets attorney in New York and Tokyo, but joined the Foreign Service in the wake of 9/11 to serve our country. I recognized then that American strength in defense of our interests around the world is essential to the security and prosperity of our country.

That is not an academic concept for me. I literally would not exist if it were not for American strength and leadership in the Indo-Pacific. My mother was born in Japan and my father in America, both before World War Two. As children, they witnessed that war from opposite ends of the Pacific. But as an adult, my mother moved to New York to begin her career. She and my father met there, married and raised a family. My parents loved this country and gave me a great life. That would not have been possible were it not for American strength and the peace and prosperity it guaranteed.

Diplomacy is an important component of American strength, and the purpose of any U.S. diplomatic Mission is to promote American interests. And I know from my two tours in Bangkok and Chiang Mai that America has some very significant interests in Thailand. If confirmed, it would be my honor to work with the men and women of Mission Thailand and our Thai partners to promote Secretary Rubio's objectives of making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Making America safer means first serving and protecting the well-being of over 80,000 American citizens who live in Thailand and over one million who visit each year. That was my first priority as Consul General in Chiang Mai and if confirmed it would be my first priority as Ambassador.

Combatting transnational crime is also essential to American and Thai safety. The rise of cyber scam centers in Southeast Asia threatens American citizens and those of our ally Thailand. It is estimated these transnational criminal enterprises scammed Americans out of \$10 billion in 2024 and these criminals traffic Thai and other citizens into their compounds where they are forced to engage in criminal activity. If confirmed, I will focus on strengthening our already robust law enforcement cooperation with Thailand to shut down these scam centers and continue to go after narcotics and human traffickers in the region.

Our alliance with Thailand makes America stronger. Thailand is one of five treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific, a major non-NATO ally, and our only ally in Mainland Southeast Asia. We participate in numerous joint military exercises and exchanges with Thailand including COBRA Gold, the largest joint and combined exercise in the Indo-Pacific. Thailand purchases U.S. military equipment and employs U.S. military doctrine. All of this improves our interoperability and deterrence in defense of our two nations.

If confirmed, I would promote American prosperity through robust commercial diplomacy and promoting President Trump's objective of making our trade relationships fair, free and reciprocal. Trade has been an important part of our relationship with Thailand since our two countries first entered into a Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1833. Unfortunately, our trade relationship with Thailand and so many other nations has fallen out of balance in recent decades, but I am optimistic that we can build on what President Lincoln described as our "great and good friendship" to forge a balanced and fair-trade relationship that benefits both American and Thai citizens.

Finally, if confirmed it would be my privilege to work with the men and women of Mission Thailand. I have served two tours in Thailand during my Foreign Service career and have seen firsthand the dedication and skill of our American and local

colleagues there as they work each day to keep us safe, strong, and prosperous. It would be my honor to rejoin them as the United States Ambassador.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to be nominated and am grateful to this committee for its consideration. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.

Ms. Stuftt.

STATEMENT OF JULIE STUFFT, OF OHIO, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you.

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished members of this committee, I am honored to appear before you today and I am grateful to President Trump and to Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance U.S. interests in Kazakhstan.

I am deeply grateful to my husband, Tim, who is the greatest diplomat in our family, my son, Oliver, and my daughter, Amelia, both here today.

Foreign Service family members are heroes who sustain the service and stand right along beside us to represent America. Our daughter, Nora, began her own journey in public service this month at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Go Bravo Squadron.

My wonderful parents, Hal and Nancy Leach, are also here today, and I am grateful to them for inspiring me to imagine a big world from our little farm in Wayne County, Ohio.

I have been lucky to serve alongside the most courageous and dedicated force for diplomacy in the world, the men and women of the United States Foreign Service.

As a career consular officer, I have seen firsthand their selfless commitment to protect Americans and protect American interests abroad, a sacred duty that predates our Constitution.

If confirmed, my top priority will be to ensure the safety and security of all Americans in Kazakhstan, including my embassy and consulate teams.

The government and people of Kazakhstan have appreciated America's support since 1991 when we were the first country to recognize their independence.

We helped Kazakhstan eliminate Soviet nuclear and biological weapons and infrastructure, and soon after U.S. energy companies made multibillion-dollar investments that still benefit both countries.

Today we are on the threshold of a new era of commercial cooperation with Kazakhstan, a global leader in uranium production, a major oil exporter, and holder of vast reserves of critical minerals.

If confirmed I will work with the State Department, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, U.S. EXIM Bank, and the private sector to make the United States more prosperous by fostering deeper bilateral economic ties including through U.S. investment in energy, technology, and infrastructure.

But our partnership with Kazakhstan goes well beyond commercial interest. Russia looms over Kazakhstan across the world's longest land border with China trying to dominate the telecommunications and extractive sectors.

The United States benefits from a Kazakhstan that is stable, independent, and prosperous. Kazakhstan is a solid partner in other areas, improving export controls to curb Russian sanctions avoidance and making essential contributions to the C5+1 diplomatic platform.

Senators, if confirmed I pledge to work closely with you to support America's growing strategic partnership with Kazakhstan, and I look forward to welcoming you there, and I welcome your questions.

Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

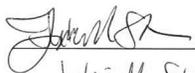
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Answer: Yes

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Answer: Yes

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


Printed Name: Julie M. Stutz
Date: 7/29/25

[The prepared statement of Ms. Stuft follows:]

Prepared Statement of Julie Stuft

Chairman Hagerty, Ranking Member Murphy, distinguished Members of this committee. I am honored to appear before you today, and I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence. If confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance U.S. interests in Kazakhstan.

I'm deeply grateful to my husband, Tim, who is the greatest diplomat in our family; my son, Oliver; and my daughter, Amelia, here today. Foreign Service family members are heroes who sustain the Service and represent the United States beside us. Our daughter Nora began her own journey in public service this month at the U.S. Air Force Academy. My wonderful parents, Hal and Nancy Leach, are here today—I'm grateful to them for inspiring me to imagine a big world from our little farm in Wayne County, Ohio.

I've been so lucky to serve alongside the most courageous and dedicated force for diplomacy in the world: the men and women of the United States Foreign Service. As a career consular officer, I've seen their selfless commitment to protect Americans and American interests abroad—a sacred duty that predates our Constitution. If confirmed, my top priority will be to ensure the safety and security of all Americans in Kazakhstan, including my Embassy and Consulate teams.

The government and people of Kazakhstan have appreciated America's support since 1991, when we were the first country to recognize their independence. We helped Kazakhstan eliminate Soviet nuclear and biological weapons and infrastructure. Soon after, U.S. energy companies made multi-billion-dollar investments that still benefit both countries.

Today, we're on the threshold of a new era of commercial and energy cooperation with Kazakhstan, a global leader in uranium production, a major oil exporter, and holder of vast reserves of critical minerals. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, U.S. EXIM Bank, and the private sector, to make the United States more prosperous by fostering deeper bilateral economic ties, including through U.S. investment in energy, technology, and infrastructure.

But our partnership with Kazakhstan goes beyond commercial interests. Russia looms over Kazakhstan across the world's longest land border, with China trying to dominate the telecommunications and extractive sectors. The United States benefits from a Kazakhstan that is stable, independent, and prosperous. Kazakhstan is a solid partner to the United States in other areas, including improving export controls to curb Russian sanctions avoidance and making essential contributions to the C5+1 diplomatic platform.

Senators, if confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you to support America's growing strategic partnership with Kazakhstan, and I look forward to welcoming you there. I welcome your questions.

Senator HAGERTY. Thanks to all of you for your remarks.

We are now going to begin a round of questions, 5 minutes each. I will kick us off with the process here, and I will start with you, Ambassador Buchan.

I would like to talk with you about bringing the United States, Israel, and Morocco closer together. During your tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Spain you strengthened U.S. engagement in southern Europe and more broadly across the Mediterranean.

In Spain you built relationships that supported diplomatic security and private sector priorities. As you know, Morocco's normalization with Israel under President Trump's Abraham Accords has generated tangible benefits for the United States and for our partners.

Since that breakthrough we have seen promising cooperation between Morocco and Israel including joint defense exercises, growing investment in agricultural technology, and rising bilateral trade.

One of President Trump's goals is to expand the framework to include additional countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

So, Ambassador Buchan, my question is if you are confirmed how would you work with Moroccan leaders to highlight the success that they have enjoyed under the Abraham Accords in a way that would encourage other countries to participate?

Ambassador BUCHAN. Senator Hagerty, thank you for—again, for presiding over this hearing today, and thank you for that question.

As we all know, both Israel and Morocco are tremendous partners, allies, and friends of the United States, and I think it is really important to recognize that Morocco and Israel reached a normalization of relations in 2020. Those relations are economic, they are diplomatic, and they are people to people.

I think we all know that once upon a time there were over 300,000 Jews living in Israel, and that continues to be the case, although in smaller numbers.

I also understand there are 50,000 Moroccan Jews who live in Israel at the moment. So that people to people relationship is certainly there.

Morocco provides agricultural products to Israel, as I understand. There is a lot of discussion about having direct flights between the two countries. Israel has sent very senior diplomats to Morocco after the agreement—the Abraham Accords agreement—and again, these are all data points.

My goal is, really, to bridge that and encourage Morocco and Israel to do more together. I think Morocco is viewed as a leader in North Africa and the region, and I would encourage Morocco to encourage others as well—other countries—to bring relations forward with Israel.

Senator HAGERTY. I think the success there and the fact that you can highlight it will actually make a material difference as we seek to expand the accords.

Mr. Giordano, I would like to come to you. Namibia's economy depends heavily on natural resource exports—uranium, diamonds, beef, and fish—most of which flow to China, which is one of its largest trading partners.

China's expanding influence includes strategic infrastructure projects such as the Port of Walvis Bay's container terminal.

That terminal was built with Chinese state owned firms. These developments raise concerns about potential dual use capabilities, particularly as China seeks to deepen its maritime reach across Africa.

Mr. Giordano, given China's growing presence at critical infrastructure nodes like Walvis Bay how would you leverage your background to engage Namibian officials on the security implications for U.S. national security interest?

Mr. GIORDANO. Senator, thank you for that question on a very important issue.

China's malign influence on the continent, particularly when it comes to economic stability and interest in military capabilities cannot be understated, and those ports certainly play a significant part.

As I mentioned, I will pursue commercial diplomacy that fosters a broad based prosperity, not just for profit but ensuring our engagement uplifts communities while advancing our strategic goals both economically and militarily.

China's presence on the continent, not just in Namibia, but China's presence is, particularly when it comes to critical minerals, solely extractive.

It is exploitative, whereas our interests, and I believe through my background and my experience in the national security space, in the energy and environmental space, will allow me to in depth and credibly engage with the Namibian government, directly with the president, in presenting how the United States, through entrepreneurship, through believing that people, profit, and planet do not need to be mutually exclusive really sets us apart from the Chinese operations in Namibia.

And I believe, as Secretary Rubio has said, our values—our values win every time. So engaging with the government, directly with the president, I intend to present these things as an alternative to China on the continent.

Senator HAGERTY. I would encourage you, Mr. Giordano, if you are confirmed to work closely with my team to understand what happened in Subic Bay.

When I was ambassador the project that we basically blocked the Chinese from taking over—the U.S. stepped in—you will need to get the details of that because I think it can stand as a glowing example of what we can do.

Working with organizations like the Development Finance Corporation I think you can bring a lot to bear in this relationship, and you are going to have a great deal of pressure coming from China in this important region. So I wish you the best of luck.

Ranking Member Murphy.

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

Mr. Giordano, you served for a short period of time as the U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey. The day after you were sworn in you asked a judge to put on hold for 180 days a bribery case against a New Jersey company that was accused of paying \$2 million to an Indian government official in order to obtain a construction permit in India.

I assume, given that it was your second day on the job, you had not had the opportunity to do a full review of the merits of the case.

Am I correct in assuming that you asked for that suspension of the case because of the President's executive order requesting the suspension of enforcement of the Corrupt Foreign Practices Act?

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

And it was an absolute honor to serve as the—

Senator MURPHY. Just the—I do not need a full predicate. Just is that the reason you asked for the suspension of the case?

Mr. GIORDANO. Senator, it was the executive order coupled with my experience as a Federal prosecutor in knowing that it is important to have a complete overview, a complete understanding of a case when moving forward.

As it was my second day I had not been read in on the matter and needed to request that time.

Senator MURPHY. Yes, I understand that, but most U.S. attorneys do not ask for every single pending case to be suspended while they review it. You move forward with important cases.

Let me ask you about the consequences here because, as I mentioned, Namibia is in the process of potentially ushering in a really great expansion of their natural resource extraction capabilities.

But we are not currently enforcing the Corrupt Foreign Practices Act. So if a Namibian government official demanded that, say, Chevron or Exxon pay them millions in dollars in bribes in order to get permits would you be OK with that?

Or should we have law that is enforced that restricts the ability of U.S. companies to pay bribes to foreign officials?

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

Africa, the government—they understand the need for a strong regulatory framework and stability for investment in the country. They understand the need for rooting out corruption. In fact, the government and the president—

Senator MURPHY. Again, I do not need a predicate. Just do you believe that we should have laws preventing American companies from paying bribes to foreign governments, given that this is, I think, potentially directly relevant to your post in Namibia?

Mr. GIORDANO. Thank you, Senator, and I appreciate that.

Senator, we do have those laws, and I believe strongly in the rule of law and enforcing such.

Senator MURPHY. But we do not currently enforce the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. So do you believe you can do your job if we are not enforcing the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act? Do you support the suspension of enforcement of that act?

Mr. GIORDANO. Senator, I do believe that I can do my job, and I will work closely with the Justice Department on anything that I may see in Africa, particularly in Namibia, that flies in the face of the rule of law and how U.S. companies need to operate.

Senator MURPHY. So you do not believe it is critical or important to have the enforcement of the Corrupt Foreign Practices Act restarted?

Mr. GIORDANO. Senator, as I mentioned, I have yet to get on the ground there, but when I do I will look to see what may fly in the face of the rule of law and work with the United States Department of Justice.

Senator MURPHY. I understand you are in a tough position here, but you are probably the first nominee to not publicly support the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in asking for a position in a key post overseas.

Mr. Issa, tell me a little bit about the importance of the Lebanese Armed Forces. We have a bipartisan consensus on this committee that this is a very important institution for the preservation of peace.

Even though there is not new funding in the President's budget, my hope is that as we tend to do Republicans and Democrats will come together to support the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Tell me what you understand is their contribution to the preservation of peace and the protection of democracy as fragile as it is inside Lebanon.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Senator, for this very important question regarding Lebanon.

The LAF, or Lebanese Armed Force, is now the only maybe institution in Lebanon that still has some notoriety, and it is multi-sec-

tarian, that everybody still consider probably the only savior in what have left from Lebanon as we know it today.

And obviously, lately they have been working hard and doing a great job by applying, let us say, the—by being in the south of Lebanon trying to work on this displacing Hezbollah from the south and taking ground over there to be between—on our border.

So it is important for us to consider the aid that we give for LAF that has been going for a long time still going on because they are doing a great role into creating stability that is very well needed in Lebanon. So—

Senator MURPHY. I agree with you. I know Senator Risch shares that view, and I appreciate you sharing those sentiments with the committee.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Ranking Member Murphy.

Turn to Senator Daines, please.

Senator DAINES. Senator Hagerty, thank you.

Let us start with Kazakhstan. I am pleased to see a career nominee here this morning that will be on her way to Kazakhstan.

When I speak with ambassadors from Central Asian countries when they come to visit me and when I have gone over there to visit them they refer to a part of the world of living in a submarine submerged.

When you think about to the north Russia, certainly to the east China, you have got Iran and Afghanistan there to the southeast and to the southwest, very strategic, important part of the world.

I am very pleased that, if confirmed, you will be headed over there. As you know, Kazakhstan is a country rich in natural resources, important to the United States and the global economy.

Sizable deposits of uranium, lithium, copper, zinc, rare earth elements, at a time when it is difficult to get a mining permit here in the United States.

I have been fighting for 35 years to get a copper mine permitted in Montana. So these deposits in other countries where we could develop a relationship with and get secure supply chains with can be very important to our country.

As the U.S. and its allies seek to diversify supply chains and ensure consistent supplies of these materials, important for technology, for defense, manufacturing, I think Kazakhstan and Central Asia more broadly offers a very unique opportunity for joint investment and development.

Ms. Stuftt, if confirmed how could you be a conduit for further U.S. investment in Kazakhstan?

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you very much for the question, Senator.

I really enjoyed our meeting yesterday, and I really appreciate your focus on the strategic issue and to the region and look forward to working with you more, if confirmed, on this issue.

You are absolutely right. Kazakhstan is very critical not only as a business partner for the United States, but in the case of critical minerals it is not just a commercial diplomacy issue—it is a national security issue, and as you noted, geographically Kazakhstan has very close relationships, both trade and other, with their neighbors Russia and China.

And my goal as ambassador, if confirmed, would be to make sure that U.S. companies have an even playing field so that they can do investment in Kazakhstan, and also that U.S. companies are the partners of choice in Kazakhstan instead of Chinese or other companies.

Thank you.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. I am also working with this committee, in fact, with Senator Murphy in a bipartisan way on a pathway to end the outdated Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions.

It is almost embarrassing, I think, to many of us that they exist from ancient days of the past of the Soviet era, and in many ways I think it has hindered our economic partnership with Kazakhstan.

How would normalized trade relations allow our two countries to build a more comprehensive economic partnership and encourage American investment in Kazakhstan?

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you, Senator.

Yes, I believe that Secretary Rubio has said that Jackson-Vanik is a relic of a past era. The government of Kazakhstan has been able to get waivers like other countries in the region for many years, but I would certainly support efforts by the Senate and Congress to do away with that and be happy to support your efforts on that.

Certainly, anything that allows a better environment for investment by U.S. companies is something that I would pledge to pursue as ambassador, if confirmed, in Kazakhstan.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

Mr. Issa, I want to talk a little about Lebanon. I was one of the last Senators to meet with Bibi Netanyahu in Jerusalem prior to the October 7 Hamas terror attack.

In fact, I was taken up to the Hezbollah terror tunnels on the border between Lebanon and Israel, followed an IDF soldier down 80 feet into the ground to see these hand dug tunnels had been worked on by Hezbollah for over 10 years. In fact, spray painted on the inside of one of the tunnels it said "On our way to Jerusalem" in Arabic.

As you know, one of the most important priorities for the new Lebanese government is restoring state administration in the south where Hezbollah continues to operate outside of government control.

President Aoun has made clear that no militia should hold the exclusive right to define national defense. This is a principle the United States strongly supports, yet with continued backing from Iran Hezbollah maintains military dominance in the south, as you know, presenting serious challenges to the government's credibility and authority.

Mr. Issa, how can the United States, in coordination with our regional partners, support the Lebanese government in reasserting control in the south while continuing to counter Iran's proxy networks and help Lebanon restore full sovereignty over its territory?

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Senator, for this question.

As we know, the cessation of hostility lately when it was signed between Hezbollah and the Israeli government, it was proposing that Hezbollah needs to go out of the south of Lebanon and give their arms, not only from the south but as the entire country.

It has been going on as we speak. The Lebanese Armed Force have been deployed, obviously, in the south of Lebanon, and they are doing a good job. This is why I think we should support them to continue that job.

I mean, it is challenging for the new government in Lebanon, for President Aoun in particular, that to almost take over an institution that has been for over 30 years in Lebanon, dominating most of Lebanon in all sectors, to come within 4 to 6 months to take them out completely.

We were lucky lately that what happened in the whole region between, first, the Israeli and Hezbollah direct confrontation, and then the problem that we see in Syria that Assad is no more there, and then now the war between Israel and the Iranians.

It cut that line that used to be direct feed to Hezbollah from Iran, Iraq, Syria to Lebanon. It has been now almost nonexistent.

So it is helping a lot to diminish the power of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and in that case probably with time I believe that Hezbollah—they are realizing that they are not anymore a superpower.

And then, hopefully, with a lot of help from the Americans and the partners we can have the government take over and eventually bring some prosperity back to Lebanon.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Daines.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate my colleagues letting me go next.

Congratulations to each of our nominees today, and welcome to your families and supporters who are with you.

I would like to begin by noting that we have our first two career nominees for ambassadorships on the panel today. I hope that this is the beginning of more career nominees to come.

Career members of the Foreign Service are needed as chiefs of mission because of the expertise and experience that they bring to the table.

Ms. Stufft and Mr. O'Neill have each served in the U.S. State Department for 25 years. Ms. Stufft has served as deputy chief of mission in Moldova and Djibouti, and Mr. O'Neill as consul general in Chiang Mai.

Ms. Stufft received the Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank Award, the highest award granted to a civilian Federal employee, and four Meritorious Honor Awards.

Thank you for your service.

Mr. O'Neill has received two Department Superior Honor Awards and five Meritorious Honor Awards.

Thank you also for your service.

I hope, as I said, that this is the beginning of what will be more career ambassadors nominated by the Administration.

I actually want to begin with Mr. Giordano because at the June U.S.-Africa Business Summit held in Angola, Namibia's minister for international relations and cooperation called for the renewal of AGOA as the trade preference. Creates significant returns for the U.S. and Namibian businesses and economies.

So can you talk about any concerns that you might have about moving forward with renewal of AGOA and how we can help make that happen, especially given the challenging trade environment that we are in right now?

Mr. GIORDANO. Senator, thank you for that question, and thank you for the opportunity to meet with your staff recently. I very much enjoyed our conversation, particularly with regard to AGOA and PEPFAR as well as some other things.

I also appreciate your leadership on the malign influence that exists through what China is doing in Africa. I very much enjoyed the China report. Although it only mentioned Namibia in a footnote it was an important footnote that focused on the economic and military logistics capabilities that they are seeking.

Senator, with regard to the AGOA I am certainly familiar, as I mentioned, with the legislation, and I understand the authority expires on September 30.

I will continue to watch the space closely. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating, again, with your office and with this committee on ideas and tools to increase bilateral and regional economic investments of mutual interest.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

The report that you referred to is the China report. It was put out last week or 2 weeks ago by the Democratic members of the committee.

It is called “The Price of Retreat” and it highlights how the Administration’s actions in its first 6 months have undermined national security and our ability to compete with China.

So I would urge each of you to look at it because it shows the particular challenges that we are facing with China.

Mr. O’Neill, we just had a ceasefire agreement between Cambodia and Thailand signed. Can you speak to what you might be able to do if confirmed as ambassador to see that that ceasefire becomes a long term peace agreement between Cambodia and Thailand?

Mr. O’NEILL. Thank you very much, Senator, for that question. It is very timely, of course.

First off, I was troubled, as I think all of us were, by the loss of civilian life—the needless loss of civilian life along the Thai-Cambodian border, and I am very grateful that the two countries have entered into a ceasefire and are now talking.

I also would like to commend President Trump’s leadership and Secretary Rubio’s leadership, which I think is an important part of what we can do, and if confirmed as ambassador I think the first thing I would do is to point out to Thailand, which is one of our only treaty allies in Asia, that wars like this—conflicts like this—do nothing to help their people.

They do nothing to strengthen our alliance. They do nothing to address the challenges that both of our countries face.

They are just a needless waste of life and treasure, and I think many times what is important in this president—the way President Trump approaches these issues is to be very clear about what American interests are, and I would like to encourage other countries to include Thailand to be very clear about what their interests are and to make decisions based on their own interests.

And I think if they were to look at it through that lens—I think anyone who looks at it through this lens would conclude that a border skirmish like this, that has wasted unnecessarily so many lives, is not in the interest of the Thai people.

Thank you, ma'am.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS [presiding]. Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Well, first off, congratulations to each of you. You are going to really enjoy being ambassadors. It is a wonderful job. You can have a pretty big influence on what goes on in your area and around the world. So congratulations.

First, Ambassador Buchan, I saw the incredible job you did in Spain during the President's first Administration and I was encouraged to see your nomination to serve as Ambassador to Morocco.

Morocco has served as a reliable security partner in North America and an inaugural member of the Abraham Accords. So what are your priorities? What would you like to accomplish in Morocco after your success in Spain?

Ambassador BUCHAN. Thank you, Senator Scott, for that question.

As I alluded to earlier, Morocco is one of our longest and most enduring partners. They are a partner. They are an ally. They are great friends. King Mohammed VI does a tremendous job leading his country, and we are very grateful that they are such great allies.

First and foremost, given my experience in Spain, the primary job of a U.S. ambassador is to really keep U.S. citizens safe and secure. So that would be a priority.

Certainly, my time in Spain—over 3 and a half years—we focused on that as one of the highest priorities. Things got particularly complex during COVID, and I think our team did a tremendous job of really keeping those Americans safe and secure, particularly during COVID.

So there are some good lessons learned from that, and I hope to transfer that knowledge, if confirmed, to Morocco. Advance our economic opportunities would certainly be at the top of the list.

"American First" policies, really focus on things that create jobs and higher wages in the U.S. and advance our manufacturing base would be a priority.

Our security relationship with Morocco both on the military side and counterterrorism is tremendous. Really would hope to advance that even further.

In addition, advance Morocco's autonomy proposal would be a very high priority. I think Secretary Rubio came out in April and reiterated that himself.

And finally, but as you mentioned advance the relationship between Morocco and Israel, and really advance the Abraham Accords not only between Morocco and Israel but throughout the region.

And there are a lot more other things to do, but I will stop at that.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Ms. Stuftt, what will be your priorities?

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you, Senator.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Congratulations, first off.

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you very much, Senator.

In addition to the commercial diplomacy aspect, which is big with our bilateral relationship with Kazakhstan, which would include making sure that there is an even playing field for U.S. investment in Kazakhstan and that American companies are the partner of choice, I would also want to support, if confirmed, independence and sovereignty of Kazakhstan.

That really relies—it depends on them having economic diversity and how they can move products, in particular. Right now, most goods coming out of Kazakhstan transit Russia by necessity, and we would very much like to help them find an alternate route for that.

Also, we would like to increase defense cooperation with Kazakhstan and make sure that we have a partner in that region that we can cooperate on a defense level and security level with.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Kazakhstan has vast reserves in critical minerals. Is there an opportunity to work with them in that area?

Ms. STUFFT. Yes, Senator, there is a very big opportunity. Almost half of the critical minerals deemed by USGS to be critical to U.S. economic and national security are found in Kazakhstan, and one of my major goals as ambassador, if confirmed, would be to make sure that U.S. investment in critical minerals can occur and replace, hopefully, Chinese investment, which is increasing in the region.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Giordano, Namibia stands in a region where communist China is aggressively expanding its influence. How can we counter their efforts in Namibia?

Mr. GIORDANO. Thank you for that question, Senator. It is an important question.

One of the main issues here is they were there first, and we are we are playing catch up. But as I mentioned before, not only commercial diplomacy and connecting U.S. export ready businesses with Namibian businesses and Namibian government, but promoting our values, and again, China's influence in the region is really marked by them being exploitative, solely extractive, whereas again ours is—and they can see this.

They can look how we have operated around the world, particularly in the United States per se when—with regard to drilling for our critical mineral resources. We put people, planet, and profit on the same plane. These things are not mutually exclusive.

So, Senator, our values are what really is going to win the day again. They win every time, and it is promoting those values to the Namibian government, directly to the president, who in fact is a conservationist.

Namibia is the first country in the world to enshrine environmental protection into their constitution. By engaging with them, by using my background, my experience, to engage with them in depth and also with credibility, it will help us separate ourselves and stand shoulders above the Chinese in the area.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.
 Congratulations to each of you. You are going to love it.
 Mr. GIORDANO. Thank you, Senator.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chair Ricketts, and of course, I appreciate you holding this hearing. I would also like to thank our witnesses of course—I know your families are here today—for testifying and for your willingness to serve and for your service in the past.

I would like to build on Senator Hagerty's question on the Abraham Accords, and of course, Ambassador Buchan, you just stated your goals for Morocco.

We want to talk a little bit about the Abraham Accords because, as you know, Morocco is one of the six members of the Negev Forum, and so in addition to Israel, Bahrain, UAE, and Egypt and the United States.

And through the Abraham Accords the forum convenes working groups to build common bonds across all six countries and bring the benefits of regional stability directly to the people.

As one of the co-founders and co-chairs of the Senate Abraham Accords Caucus, I firmly believe that the Negev Forum was a really great vehicle for regional integration and thus transformation.

The horrific events of October 7 and the war in Gaza have put the Negev Forum on hold, but I believe we must reconvene the forum as soon as possible.

So, Ambassador Buchan, do you believe in the importance of Morocco's participation in the Negev Forum and the areas of cooperation that they can work on between all the countries?

Ambassador BUCHAN. Thank you for that question, Senator.

Absolutely. It will be one of my highest priorities to advance those discussions and really get Morocco to step up even more.

Again, I mentioned earlier two great allies, Israel and Morocco, and the United States. I think we can do fantastic things, continue to do better things together and really advance not only the relationship between those two countries but also in the region as well.

So it would be a very high priority.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I visited Morocco in 2023, and they really spoke about the importance of shared cooperation in health care, cyber security, energy, water, power—all of the things, not just defense—and so they were very hopeful for that. So I hope you do do that.

I want to move on to Iran's influence in Africa because in recent years Iran has expanded its diplomatic, economic, and religious outreach in North Africa. It is a threat not only to the region but also to the Middle East, to Europe and U.S. in particular.

Iran and Algeria have signed several bilateral agreements. A partnership—more than concerning the deeper ties between these two countries could undermine the stability of Morocco.

Again, when I was there they talked about this extensively. When I visited Rabat in 2023 and before my visit it was reported Iran had transferred throughout Algerian mediation kamikaze drones to the Polisario Front.

So, again, Ambassador Buchan, what steps would you take to address Iran's support for the Polisario?

Ambassador BUCHAN. Senator, as a private citizen I have not been read into all the details of those relationships. I do understand that Morocco has no relationship with Iran, and again, I would use as a guideline—Senator Rubio reiterated this in April—that we support Morocco’s autonomy proposal. I would certainly try to understand the details of that.

Senator ROSEN. Around—in the countries surrounding them and in the region there is a lot of pressures and partnerships. As we know, Iran, leading state sponsor, exporting terrorism is their number one export. So Morocco is feeling that and I hope you will come back and talk to us about that.

Ambassador BUCHAN. Absolutely.

Senator ROSEN. I want to move on to Kazakhstan and Israel, please, because Kazakhstan and Israel have a mutual interest in maintaining security in the region and advancing counterterrorism efforts.

There is a tremendous opportunity to deepen cooperation and to deepen partnerships. For example, in April President Tokayev expressed his desire to enhance trade and investment ties with Israel and promote cooperation in water resource management, and so I am optimistic that the deepening cooperation between the two nations could help set Kazakhstan on a path to join the Abraham Accords.

So, Ms. Stuftt, if confirmed how would you work to deepen Kazakhstan’s relationship with Israel and help widen the scope of the Abraham Accords?

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you very much, Senator, for that important question.

I look forward to learning more about that as I get into the role, if confirmed, and look forward to working with you and your staff to learn more about that.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

And I guess—well, I am the last one so I have one last thing for Kazakhstan then. China’s role in Kazakhstan—we have seen PRC. We are talking about it all the time, their growing presence.

Kazakhstan has been followed—there is anti-Chinese sentiment there. We know that. PRC is going to great lengths to improve its reputation in Kazakhstan by investing in humanitarian initiatives, education, cultural exchanges.

Why is it so important for us to maintain our engagement with Kazakhstan to kind of push back on the PRC, if not—and many other things as well?

Ms. STUFFT. Thank you, Senator. I look forward to playing a role in that if confirmed.

China is a big partner of Kazakhstan’s in many ways. We want the United States to be that chosen partner.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY [presiding]. Thank you.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would reiterate my gratitude to all of you who want to continue to serve this great nation in these ambassadorial posts and especially the folks who are our career Foreign Service.

As a former Governor I traveled on trade missions, and I got to tell you, the staffs that we have in our embassies around the world are just fantastic.

So thank you for your service and being willing to spend time away from your friends and family overseas representing the United States. And of course, all of you are continuing to do that now and your families will need to support you as you take up those roles.

Hezbollah has been holding Lebanon hostage for decades—Iranian weapons, foreign money, total disregard for Lebanese sovereignty—and after suffering devastating losses at the hands of Israel, Hezbollah now faces a choice.

They can either disarm or collapse. But what it appears instead of laying down their arms they are doubling down to continue to create problems in southern Lebanon.

According to recent reports the group has flatly refused to disarm even if Israel withdraws from the south. At the same time, Ambassador Barrack has made three trips to Lebanon in the past 2 months pressing for Hezbollah's disarmament and frankly, receiving very little in return.

We do not have a time line. We do not have a road map. We do not have a commitment. It is not disarmament. What we see is Hezbollah is a proxy for Iran, and really, it is a facade of sovereignty for Lebanon in that area.

What we need to do is make sure that we get this disarmament done.

Mr. Issa, if confirmed, what specific steps will you help take to push for Hezbollah's disarmament?

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Senator, for the question. It is one of the most important in the history of Lebanon lately.

Hezbollah—I think they really realize that they lost the war. But I believe, always imagining, like, the big bear that is injured, bleeding, but they still have power to bite and to make harm to people.

My feeling that Hezbollah is gaining time for two reasons. There is an important, maybe, in their mind election next year, 2026, and they believe if they disarm now in front of their people they may lose some votes. They are playing on that game. I think it is not a good game for them.

And also I have a funny feeling also that Hezbollah itself do not decide. It is Iran that still gives them the orders to do whatever they need to do.

Their allegiance, it looks to me, is never for Lebanon. It was always for Iran, and Iran does not care what happens to the Lebanese people.

So there is this combination that is happening over there that is putting this whole area and this whole situation into a big question mark. They know that if they do not disarm there is something that is going to happen.

I do not know what is going to happen, but something needs to happen, and it looks like the government, they may be—I am hearing in the news that they are going to probably meet soon, the Lebanese government, and take a decision about some kind of timing for disarmament, and maybe that would create some pressure, and hopefully it will solve the situation.

But Hezbollah needs to go. Hezbollah needs to be disarmed to bring some kind of hope to Lebanon.

Senator RICKETTS. Yes. I hope you will keep pushing the Lebanese Governor on that because you are exactly right, they need to go.

And the Lebanese Armed Forces, you know, historically either have been unable or unwilling to push Hezbollah out of southern Lebanon, and UNIFIL has been less than useless on that.

What more specifically can we do to support the Lebanese Armed Forces in being able to be prepared to disarm Hezbollah? Are there things that we can do—more support we can provide to them?

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, again, for the question.

For 20, 30 years, Hezbollah was in the area, dominating everything. They have arms that are 10 times more powerful than what the Lebanese arms would have in their possession. They have the support of Iran military, the support of Iran financially, the support of Iran even in training.

While the Lebanese Armed Force, the government did not even have money to give them any salary, so it was like a survival, and I hear that sometimes they did not have enough money to get to their post anyway.

So there is a lot of history that played against the LAF. Today, we have an opportunity that if we grab it we can help the LAF, and I believe they are ready to do whatever they need to do to take over and to become the sole military power for the Lebanese government, and hopefully the world would be more positive for Lebanon.

Senator RICKETTS. Well, Mr. Issa, you are going to be going to Lebanon at a time that is a huge opportunity for us. You know, Iran is at the weakest point it has ever been probably since the 1980s, maybe ever, with what has happened, and we see Hezbollah being decimated, Hamas.

Under the first Trump administration maximum pressure put on Iran was able to drive down their foreign reserves for \$122.5 billion to under \$14 billion. They did not have the money to support these terrorist organizations.

I am hopeful that we will see from this second Trump administration the same sort of thing to weaken Iran's support for groups like Hezbollah.

So if you are confirmed you are going to be in a very critical position to make sure that we really get rid of Hezbollah forever because that is the only way we are going to get to some peace in the region. So thank you very much for your willingness to take on this task.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Ricketts, and I want to thank everybody for their time here today. I think from the—

Senator RICKETTS. Van Hollen is—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chairman, I—

Senator HAGERTY. Oh, I am sorry, Chris. I did not see you come in.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Snuck in on you.

Senator HAGERTY. I am sorry about that.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

Congratulations to all of you, and I really just want to pick up, actually, where Senator Ricketts left off, and I know Senator Murphy and others, with respect to Lebanon, Mr. Issa.

And I want to second the comments that have been made about the need to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces. In my view they are an indispensable entity to ensure the central government has sovereign control over the entire territory, and I take it you agree.

Mr. ISSA. I agree, definitely. I mean, this is the only hope for them.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes. I do believe that right now that the UNIFIL forces are an important—play an important role. Their mandate is set to expire next month. Do you believe that the Administration should support the renewal of that mandate?

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

The UNIFIL has been in Lebanon since the 1970s, I believe, and their role in Lebanon was a monetary—monitoring the borders between Lebanon and Israel.

At that time, it was a very important role because they were watching what can happen. Lately with the war between Israel and Hezbollah and then the fact that Hezbollah has been removed from the south and hopefully removed from most of the territory in Lebanon, the UNIFIL role now is changing because the LAF—Lebanese Armed Forces—is taking over the south and their role is going to be exactly maybe as legitimate now army between the country on the border. It will be the damper that would create some kind of, let us say, security for northern Israel.

So the role of UNIFIL is kind of changing now—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. If I may, and I am sorry to cut you off, but I have—want to get to some questions.

Mr. ISSA. Please go ahead.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Look, obviously, things are in transition, but we are talking about a mandate that will expire next month, and I would hope that until we succeed in fully replacing Hezbollah with the LAF in the south and disarming Hezbollah, my view is they continue to play an important role, and I hope the Administration will recognize that.

If I could turn to you, Mr. Buchan, and with respect to Morocco I second the comments of my colleagues. We were glad to see them join the Abraham Accords.

The question is the price that was paid in order to achieve that, and I just want to read a statement from former Senator Inhofe.

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee who said, “I think that all countries should recognize Israel.” I think he was right.

He goes on to say, referring to the announcement by the White House essentially asserting Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara, he said this: “Today’s White House announcement alleging Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara is shocking and deeply disappointing. I am saddened that the rights of the Western Saharan people had been traded away.”

And he goes on to detail the long period of colonization and U.N. resolutions calling for self-determination.

Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker said, and I quote—of this decision, quote, “An astounding retreat from the principles of international law and diplomacy, jeopardizing our standing across Africa and the world.”

My question to you, because I heard that one of your goals is to advance the Moroccan autonomy plan—my question to you is do you see the U.N. having an important role to play in that process?

Ambassador BUCHAN. Senator, thank you for that question.

As you can appreciate, I am still a private citizen, so I have not been read into all the details. What I will say is this.

I trust President Trump. I trust Secretary Marco Rubio, and I, as you know, if confirmed as an ambassador I execute policy on behalf of the Administration. I do not set policy. So—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Are you familiar with this whole dispute in Senator Inhofe’s views and the statements of Secretary Baker and the concerns expressed? Are you familiar with that?

Ambassador BUCHAN. I am not familiar with that, sir, but I am very happy to research that and get back to you and the committee if appropriate.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK.

Senator, if I may, I have a very quick question for the nominee for Thailand, Ms. O’Neill. We are glad to see the fragile Thai-Cambodian cease-fire holding—Mr. O’Neill. I apologize.

Thailand also plays a very important role with respect to the Myanmar conflict. It hosts approximately 150,000 Burmese refugees. It manages one of the longest and most volatile borders with Myanmar, and increasingly it has become a channel for Myanmar’s arms procurement through Thai banks, as the U.N. Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews spotlighted in a report last year.

So what role do you think Thailand can play in lessening the conflict in Burma, which has been ongoing for a long time at great cost to the people of Burma, and should there be any diplomatic or other consequences if the Thai government fails to prevent companies from using Thai financial infrastructure to enable atrocities in Myanmar?

Mr. O’NEILL. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

I served in Burma years ago in 2007–2009 under the last military regime, and so I saw firsthand—my wife and I were there—we saw firsthand the horrors they inflicted on their population.

I think it is, frankly, worse this time probably because of the violence that has spread throughout the country. This is a significant problem for Thailand, and it is one I think that affects their national interests and those of their citizens.

You raise a good question of what role they can play. I think the first role they can play is to not recognize this regime, not to lend legitimacy to this Burmese regime and its military leadership.

Similarly, I know that it is the department’s position to not encourage them to hold these sham elections that they are looking to hold in the fall, and we are encouraging ASEAN nations, I think, in particular Thailand, and if confirmed I would encourage Thailand not to recognize an election that does not include the partici-

pation of over 50 percent of the country while most of the opposition leaders are in prison.

With respect to your question on the financial networks, sir, if confirmed I think that would certainly be something that we would have to look at very—I would look at very closely.

I would certainly make clear to Thailand that it would not be in their interests or anyone else's for their financial networks to be used to fund ongoing instability inside Burma.

Thank you, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

And again, I would like to thank all of you for your time today. I think your testimony today demonstrates why President Trump has chosen to nominate each of you.

I want to say from personal experience there is no greater honor than to represent the greatest nation in the world anywhere in the world, and the posts that you are going to all will benefit from your expertise, your loyalty, and your patriotism.

So I wish you the very best on the path toward confirmation. I want to say for the information of the members of the committee that the record will remain open until close of business tomorrow, Wednesday, July 30, in order for members to submit questions for the record.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO RICHARD BUCHAN III BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. President Trump has used tariffs to right-size trade imbalances around the world. Morocco's state-owned phosphate and fertilizer company, OCP, has been criticized in the past for unfairly undermining U.S. phosphate and fertilizer companies through subsidies and tariffs, despite the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement. How will you engage with the government of Morocco to advance U.S. interests?

Answer. Since Morocco's FTA with the United States entered into force in 2006, U.S. exports to Morocco have increased approximately elevenfold. U.S. goods exports to Morocco in 2024 totaled \$5.3 billion, while Moroccan exports to the United States totaled \$1.9 billion in the same year, resulting in a \$3.4 billion trade surplus in goods. The United States has consistently run a trade surplus with Morocco since the FTA entered into force.

Morocco possesses over 70 percent of the world's phosphate rock reserves, from which the phosphorus used in fertilizers is derived. Over 50 percent of Morocco's ammonia and sulfur imports—key components of fertilizer production—come from Russia. Morocco's OCP Group is a state-owned enterprise and one of the world's largest exporters of phosphate-based fertilizers and phosphoric acid, with significant market presence across parts of North America. The U.S. Department of Commerce has imposed countervailing duties on OCP of 16.6 percent, as of end-2024, after Florida-headquartered The Mosaic Company (the largest producer in North America) alleged that OCP receives unfair government subsidies.

If confirmed, I look forward to advancing shared priorities in the region, including by building on the Abraham Accords and expanding commercial cooperation to benefit both Americans and Moroccans.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JOHN GIORDANO BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What is your assessment of Namibia's greatest barriers to increased two-way trade and investment with the United States?

Answer. Namibia's economy, while poised for significant expansion due to its potential in the petroleum sector, remains relatively small, limiting its ability to absorb high-end products and services from the United States.

One potential barrier is Namibia's horticultural import substitution program, which requires that—for some goods—importers source a portion of their goods locally prior to importing any similar product. This presents a significant barrier to importing those goods. In addition, Namibia has import restrictions on staple crops like white maize, wheat, and pearl millet, preventing their importation altogether.

Further, Namibia's economy relies on price-sensitive sectors such as mining and diamonds, which constrain its ability to engage in global markets and expand two-way trade with the United States. With a population of only three million, the country faces capacity challenges which limit investment opportunities for U.S. service providers that depend on a workforce with advanced education and technical skills.

Question. What is your understanding of the tools at your disposal as U.S. Ambassador to Namibia, if confirmed, to support commercial diplomacy and addressing barriers to trade and investment?

Answer. If confirmed, I will empower my team to deploy the full array of U.S. Government tools to promote American economic interests, from matchmaking services and trade missions to advocacy cases. We will work to break down economic barriers and attract U.S. investment. The Development Finance Corporation offers unique tools to advance our economic and security interests in Namibia by mobilizing private sector capital for investments that create American jobs and secure U.S. supply chains.

If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to deepen U.S.-Namibia commercial engagement across sectors. These areas include oil and gas, mining, civil nuclear development, agriculture, fishing, education, transportation (including commercial aviation), and the creative arts.

Question. AFRICOM's deputy commander visited Namibia last week. In your view, how can greater U.S.-Namibia engagement contribute to the achievement of U.S. national security priorities and regional stability?

Answer. As stated by the AFRICOM Deputy Commander Lt. Gen. John Brennan, it is in our interest to develop our security relationship with Namibia to promote regional stability. In Namibia, the United States welcomes burden sharing. Additionally, greater U.S.-Namibia engagement will directly counter Chinese and other adversarial economic and security-related objectives. Secure access to trade with the African continent through the deepwater Atlantic port of Walvis Bay, which serves interior landlocked countries in Southern and Central Africa, would be an added benefit to our partnership.

Question. Is there a need for the United States to diversify its partners to focus more on countries like Namibia in Southern Africa?

Answer. We have an extraordinary opportunity to forge a modern partnership with Namibia that drives our shared prosperity and security. Namibia's newly inaugurated president, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, has expressed a desire to deepen ties with the United States, and her administration shares many of our key priorities: rule of law, investment, and strategic independence. Our partnership with Namibia will promote trade and investment, advance U.S. economic prosperity, and counter Beijing's malign influence, to the benefit of both our countries.

Question. What are the U.S. strategic interests in Namibia?

Answer. Oil prospects in Namibia's offshore Orange Basin have the potential to boost the global energy supply, with U.S. firms already leading the developments and creating American jobs to support the oil industry's activities in Namibia. American service providers and U.S. firms with large workforces in the United States are rapidly scaling up their presence in Namibia as they establish oil field service operations.

These efforts will create U.S. jobs and showcase the resilience, technological advantages, and unparalleled competitiveness of American energy sector companies. Namibia also possesses critical minerals that are vital to U.S. industries, from nuclear power to semiconductor manufacturing. Namibia is currently the world's third-largest supplier of uranium, a critical resource for the nuclear power industry, and is poised to become the second-largest supplier as new mines come online.

Question. In your view, how can greater U.S./Namibia engagement contribute to the achievement of U.S. national security priorities and regional stability?

Answer. Namibia presents significant near-term opportunities to advance U.S. economic and national security priorities. Namibia's abundant critical raw materials and its U.S.-led oil production potential are already generating opportunities for U.S. firms.

The country's democratic stability, peaceful ties with its neighbors, and relative ease of doing business further enhance these prospects. A U.S. supply chain strengthened by Namibian critical minerals, a stable supply of uranium to fuel nuclear power that would otherwise go to China, and potentially billions of barrels of offshore oil being developed largely by U.S. firms, underscore Namibia's potential as a critical partner in the region.

Question. How will you practice commercial diplomacy on behalf of U.S. investments in Namibia?

Answer. If confirmed, my mandate will be to advance the policies and priorities of the Secretary and the President. This includes expanding economic opportunities for U.S. companies in Namibia and creating more jobs at home while countering Beijing's malign influence.

I will strive to advance these goals while also amplifying the benefits of U.S. investment, technology, and expertise to the Namibian government and people. We have a receptive audience with Namibia's new president, who has identified economic growth as a top priority of her administration and expressed eagerness in attracting U.S. investment.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JOHN GIORDANO BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Do you agree that PEPFAR HIV/AIDS prevention services are vital and cost-effective services needed to address HIV/AIDS in Namibia and around the world?

Answer. PEPFAR has positioned Namibia to end HIV as a public health threat by 2030 despite its high HIV burden. PEPFAR initiatives have significantly reduced HIV prevalence in Namibia, directly supporting the U.S. goal of fostering stable, healthy populations that can contribute to economic development. It is important for countries to assume responsibility for the health of their people and not rely on the U.S. taxpayer indefinitely.

It is my understanding that Prevention of Mother-to-Child transmission of HIV treatment will continue. Other prevention activities are currently under review to ensure alignment with U.S. foreign policy priorities.

Question. Do you believe the African Growth and Opportunities Act should be reauthorized by Congress?

Answer. As Congress examines the African Growth and Opportunity Act, it should make sure any modernized legislation puts the American economy, the American worker, and our national security first. The Administration's goal of an overall shift from an aid-dependent model to promoting trade and investment in Africa is possible, with rebalanced and mutually beneficial trade practices between the United States and Africa.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHEL ISSA BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Given Lebanon's deep debt and lingering financial crisis, what is the importance of parliament passing financial reforms, to include the gap law, before investors have confidence to invest in Lebanon?

Answer. The Lebanese people continue to suffer through a historic economic collapse born out of decades of corruption and total economic mismanagement. The Government of Lebanon must continue to work quickly and seriously on comprehensive banking sector reform—the full completion of which is needed to restore donor and investor confidence that Lebanon is a safe place for investment. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of Lebanon and private sector partners to ensure these reforms are immediately and effectively implemented and Lebanon is put on the path to recovery.

Question. How important is the US relationship to Lebanon's ability to expand the Lebanese Armed Forces' security presence in southern Lebanon?

Answer. U.S. efforts have been critical in bolstering the country's stability, averting collapse, and supporting the Lebanese people through these challenging times. The LAF has taken historic steps toward implementation of UNSCR 1701 and the disarmament of Hizballah south of the Litani river, but more must be done. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Lebanon to ensure the LAF has the political backing and resources it needs to achieve full implementation of UNSCR 1701 and the Cessation of Hostilities arrangement with Israel.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHEL ISSA BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. As ambassador, how would you help Lebanon implement the needed economic reforms to not only unlock IMF assistance but rebuild confidence in the Lebanese banking system?

Answer. Lebanon has a critical window of opportunity to emerge from its long-standing economic and banking crisis, but significant work needs to be done. Lebanon's Parliament successfully passed amendments to its Banking Secrecy law in April and a Bank Resolution Law in late July, both critical first steps. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to encourage these important reforms. I will also encourage like-minded partners to align behind these priorities.

Question. How should we be ensuring that the LAF are fully resourced and able to deploy throughout Lebanon?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to press Lebanon to fully disarm Hizballah and other malign actors and to undertake and implement critical reforms needed to restore state sovereignty across the country. I will work with the Department and with Congress to ensure our foreign assistance is well calibrated to advance these efforts, and I will also urge partners and allies to align behind these priorities and encourage their support for Lebanon.

Question. Do you consider U.S. support for the Lebanese Armed Forces to be necessary for the full implementation of the ceasefire with Israel?

Answer. With U.S. support, the Lebanese Armed Forces have taken significant steps to implement UNSCR 1701 and the Cessation of Hostilities arrangements, and to deploy in former Hizballah strongholds in the south, but more must be done. If confirmed, I will work with the Department and with Congress to ensure our foreign assistance is well calibrated to advance American interests by supporting Lebanon in disarming Hizballah and other malign actors.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHEL ISSA BY SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK

Question. What is your view on how the United States can support Lebanon and Lebanese institutions to navigate regional pressures without compromising its sovereignty or further entrenching external influence in the country?

Answer. Israel's successful military campaign against Hizballah created a historic opportunity to extend Lebanese sovereignty over the country free of malign external influence. With U.S. support, the Lebanese Armed Forces have made dramatic steps to implement UNSCR 1701, uphold the Cessation of Hostilities arrangement, and deploy in former Hizballah strongholds, but more must be done. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to work with Lebanon on disarming Hizballah and undertaking and implementing critical reforms that empower state institutions and unlock international support.

Question. How can the U.S. best enable the Lebanese Armed Forces to restore sovereignty in southern Lebanon and enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701?

Answer. With the help of increased U.S. security assistance since 2006, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has transformed itself into a professional, capable military able to meet the security needs of Lebanon. The LAF has taken historic steps toward implementation of UNSCR 1701 and the disarmament of Hizballah south of the Litani river, but more must be done. If confirmed, I will continue to work with

Lebanon to ensure the LAF has the political backing it needs to achieve full implementation of UNSCR 1701 and the Cessation of Hostilities arrangement.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MICHEL ISSA BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. How is the Trump administration supporting Lebanon during this crucial time and what role will economic and military assistance play?

Answer. With U.S. support, the Lebanese Armed Forces have made significant steps to implement UNSCR 1701 and the Cessation of Hostilities arrangement, and to deploy in former Hizballah strongholds in the south, but more must be done. If confirmed, I will work with the Department and Congress to ensure our foreign assistance is well calibrated to advance American interests by supporting Lebanon in disarming Hizballah and other malign actors and in implementing critical reforms needed to restore state sovereignty.

Question. If confirmed, what will be your focus as Ambassador in supporting Lebanon toward an economically and militarily stable future?

Answer. Israel's military campaign against Hizballah created a historic opportunity to extend Lebanese sovereignty over the country free of malign external influence. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to work with Lebanon on disarming Hizballah and undertaking and implementing long overdue economic reforms, both of which will be critical to unlocking international assistance to support Lebanon's recovery, empower legitimate state institutions, and enhance regional security.

Question. What more can be done to support Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) efforts to disarm Hezbollah and other armed groups operating in the country?

Answer. The United States has provided considerable support to the LAF, and in recent months, the LAF has made significant progress in upholding the Cessation of Hostilities and establishing its presence in previous Hizballah strongholds. However, more needs to be done to fully disarm Hizballah and other malign groups. If confirmed, I will ensure our foreign assistance is well calibrated to ensure the LAF is successful in undertaking this mission and advancing American interests. I will also support U.S. efforts to engage with partners and allies to encourage their support for Lebanon.

Question. If confirmed, how will you engage with Israel to encourage withdrawal from Lebanese territory and respect for Lebanese sovereignty?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to work with the Government of Lebanon to ensure it can fully disarm Hizballah and other malign groups, an essential step to restoring Lebanon's sovereignty and resolving Israeli security concerns. I will also work closely with the U.S.-led Mechanism, which has served as a critical interlocutor with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to uphold the Cessation of Hostilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with the Lebanese government to advance required reforms, including auditing Lebanon's private banks and the Central Bank, as well as passing the Banking Restructuring Law?

Answer. Lebanon has a critical window of opportunity to emerge from its long-standing economic and banking crisis, but significant work needs to be done. Lebanon's Parliament successfully passed amendments to its Banking Secrecy law in April and a Bank Resolution Law in late July, both critical first steps. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. engagement to ensure these important reforms are implemented. I will also work with likeminded partners to encourage their alignment on these priorities.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SEAN O'NEILL BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The U.S.-Thailand treaty alliance has served both our nations well over the decades. That said, we do need to make sure that it is fit for purpose for today's challenges. If confirmed, what will your priorities be for upgrading our security cooperation with Thailand?

Answer. The U.S.-Thailand Alliance is built on more than 190 years of friendship and shared interests. Our cooperation on defense and law enforcement makes us

stronger and more secure. If confirmed, a top priority of mine will be to work with the Thai government to combat China-linked criminal networks operating in Burma and other parts of Southeast Asia, including those running online scam centers targeting American citizens. These scam centers bilked approximately \$10 billion from American citizens in 2024, though tragically the true cost is likely underreported.

If confirmed, I would also work with the DOD elements at Mission Thailand to improve Thai military capabilities and interoperability through the acquisition of U.S. weapons systems, employment of U.S. military doctrine, and enhancement of bilateral and multilateral exchanges and exercises.

Question. If confirmed, what will your priorities be for pushing back against malign Chinese influence in Thailand, including economic coercion and transnational repression?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the United States and Thailand remain partners of choice in the economic and security spheres. Leading with diplomacy means working with our partners to help defend freedom and sovereignty. If confirmed, I would also work across the U.S. interagency and with the Royal Thai Government to identify capabilities the Alliance needs to deter threats, such as transnational repression, and preserve the sovereignty of Thailand.

If confirmed, I will also work to promote a fair, free, and reciprocal trade relationship with Thailand. The United States has the largest and most dynamic economy in the world. Increasing fair, free, and reciprocal trade and investment between our countries will benefit American business and make Thailand less dependent on the Chinese market and economic coercion.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SEAN O'NEILL BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. How will the dismantling of Radio Free Asia affect our ability to contest the Thai information space with the People's Republic of China, including among Thailand's ethnic Chinese minority?

Answer. President Trump and Secretary Rubio will ensure that every taxpayer dollar concretely advances U.S. national interests. The Secretary has stated every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous? Public messaging in support of American interests is an important tool of diplomacy, and the Secretary has said our messaging must move at the speed of relevance and pursue audiences where we find them. If confirmed, I will work to implement the President's and Secretary's vision of promoting messaging in a manner that ensures every tax dollar we spend concretely benefits U.S. national interests.

Question. What does Thailand's willingness to repatriate 40 ethnic Uyghurs to the PRC in February say about how the Thai government views its respective relationships with the Chinese and U.S. governments?

Answer. As Thailand's longstanding ally, we were alarmed by this action. In February, Secretary Rubio issued a statement condemning in the strongest possible terms Thailand's forced return of 40 Uyghurs to China. Subsequently, in March, the Secretary announced visa restrictions on current and former Thai officials responsible for, or complicit in, the forced return. If confirmed, I will work vigorously to push back on China's malign influence and economic coercion in Thailand and Southeast Asia.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JULIE STUFFT BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. As Ambassador, how will you work with the Government of Kazakhstan and US companies to advance our economic engagement, develop the Middle Corridor, create access to critical minerals and energy resources and offer alternatives to Russia and China as business partners in Kazakhstan and the broader Central Asia region?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to promote economic opportunities for American businesses, highlighting risks of dependency on China or Russia and advantages of the U.S. private sector vis-à-vis competitors. The limited capacity of the

Trans-Caspian Corridor constrains exports, including energy exports, that do not pass through Russia, China, or Iran. If confirmed, I would continue our work to expand the Corridor by providing technical support and seeking U.S. infrastructure investment. I would also support efforts through the C5+1 diplomatic platform to deepen economic ties with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JULIE STUFFT BY SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK

Kazakhstan hosts up to 80 percent of total U.S. investment in Central Asia and serves as a crucial platform for American strategic engagement across the region. In a key region for our geopolitical competition with Russia and the PRC, Kazakhstan has also demonstrated consistent interest in expanding bilateral trade and deepening commercial ties with the United States.

Question. What specific steps will you take as U.S. Ambassador to ensure that Kazakhstan remains a reliable strategic partner of the United States?

Answer. If confirmed, I would build on our track record of productive partnership with Kazakhstan by advocating for greater involvement by U.S. companies, including in the critical minerals and energy sectors. I would urge stronger civilian nuclear cooperation between our countries and remind the government of Kazakhstan of the vulnerabilities of relying on Russia and China to fulfill its energy needs. I would also build on our current security cooperation with Kazakhstan to protect U.S. national security and bolster Kazakhstan's independence and sovereignty.

Question. How do you plan to strengthen Kazakhstan's sovereignty and resilience through increased U.S. economic and security cooperation in the country?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to promote economic opportunities for American businesses, highlighting risks of dependency on China or Russia and advantages of the U.S. private sector vis-à-vis competitors. I would work to maintain and expand our security cooperation with Kazakhstan, including to counter the threat posed to the U.S. homeland by ISIS-K and other terrorist organizations. I would also support efforts through the C5+1 diplomatic platform to deepen economic and security ties with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries.

Kazakhstan produces 19 of the 50 critical materials identified by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Question. Given the Administration's focus on securing and diversifying critical minerals supply chains and reducing strategic dependency on adversarial countries, what role do you see Kazakhstan playing in U.S. efforts to build secure and diversified supply chains for critical minerals, including through the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route?

Answer. Kazakhstan has the potential to become a key provider of critical minerals to the United States. Kazakhstan provides more than 40 percent of the world's uranium, and about 25 percent of the uranium consumed by the United States, showing that it has the willingness and capacity to be a major provider of energy resources. The limited capacity of the Trans-Caspian Corridor constrains exports that do not pass through Russia, China, or Iran. If confirmed, I would continue our work to expand the Corridor by providing technical support and seeking U.S. infrastructure investment.

Question. How would you support Kazakhstan's capacity to develop, certify, and export these materials to the U.S. and allied markets?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to continue support for technical assistance to map and assess critical mineral and rare earth resources, which will help prioritize the materials of the most interest to the United States. I would also pursue technical support and infrastructure investment to help develop the Trans-Caspian Corridor, a burgeoning trade route for Kazakhstan's exports that does not pass through Russia, Iran, or China. I would also work with the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and EXIM Bank to support U.S. financing and investment in the energy sector.