

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

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

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

Thank you all for attending today, and I appreciate the applause when I walked in. I don't usually get that, but I certainly appreciate it from the audience.

VOICE. I didn't hear that.

Senator RISCH. You didn't hear it? You should have been here, Senator. It was wonderful.

In any event, we have a robust calendar today, and we will get to that in a minute.

First of all, let me say that the usual protocol is in effect. We welcome our guests here. We have a zero tolerance for interruptions, as you know.

And Secretary Rubio, every time you show up seems to be when we have those issues, and we were fortunate enough to have bilingual protests while you were here, on occasion. So we are glad to have you back, but we will see if we can avoid the excitement today.

With that, we do have a number of nominees to hear today, and we are going to have some introductions of those.

And I know, Secretary, you have a busy calendar, so I am going to give you the floor to start with. You are welcome here, and we are always glad to have you back in the committee.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary RUBIO. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Ranking Member, to all of the members for the opportunity to be here today. We feel that we have before you a very good panel, an excellent panel of four ambassadors to important places, to the Bahamas, where we have not been able to have a representative in almost 9 years, maybe longer. It has been quite a while. On the bureau that deals with population, refugees, and migration, which

is clearly an issue that has impacted the country, but also has impacts on our neighbors in the region and around the world. And then in Jordan, which I do not need to explain what an incredibly important relationship that is for the United States.

I am here to introduce a fellow Floridian and someone who I have known for a very long time, Sergio Gor, who is the nominee to India, which is, I would say, one of the top relationships the United States has in the world today in terms of the future, what the world is going to look like.

I said it when I appeared before you as a nominee to the position I currently hold, as well, and I do not mean archivist, when I was here in the position for Secretary of State, and I repeated again that the 21st century, the story is going to be written in the Indo-Pacific. In fact, it is so important we have actually changed the name of the combatant command to the Indo-Pacific. India is at the core of that.

And we are in a period of extraordinary transition in that relationship with India. We have got some really important issues coming up that we need to work with them on and work through, that implicate what is happening in Ukraine but also implicate what is happening in the region.

It is my view, and I hope it will be your view, that it is important that the United States be represented at that post with someone who has the direct ear and confidence of the President of the United States. And I know of no one, over the last, certainly period of time during this Administration but going back 4 or 5 years, no one who has had a better or closer working relationship than Mr. Gor, someone who I have known since his time working here in the Senate, by the way, one of our colleagues, and since then has gone on to do different things. But he is very, very close to the President, has the President's confidence.

And I can tell you that when you interact with these countries—in fact, I have already seen it—when you interact with these countries, having a representative in a place like India, that has direct access to the Oval Office, to the President, and who they know can get things done, both in the Administration and through the Oval Office is critically important. And I do not know of anyone out there that is better positioned to do that than Sergio Gor.

I would add one more footnote, and that is that, in all of this, is that in addition to that, I have also seen his administrative abilities. Ninety-five percent of the people working in the government now, from political appointees, came through a process that he set up and had to operate. I do not know if we fully appreciate how hard it is to staff up a new Administration, and he ran that process with a small group and a small team, and I thought did an excellent job. So I think it shows his administrative abilities, as well.

So he is an excellent nominee. They are all excellent nominees, and I hope you will give them your full consideration. And thank you for the opportunity to address that this morning.

Senator RUSCH. Thank you, Secretary. You are certainly welcome to stay with us, but I know you have got a busy schedule, being archivist and all these other things that you deal with every day. So we will certainly excuse you, and thanks so much for joining us today.

Well, I was going to go to Senator Hagerty, but I see he has got other things on his mind right now.
So Senator Cruz, how about you?

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

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is my privilege to introduce my friend, Herschel Walker, as President Trump's nominee as the Ambassador to the Bahamas. Now, most Americans know Herschel as a legend on the football field. At the University of Georgia he became one of the greatest college players of all time, ultimately winning the Heisman Trophy in 1982, and the national championship. He went on to a remarkable professional career with the USFL and then the NFL, where he played for the Minnesota Vikings, the Philadelphia Eagles, the New York Giants, and most importantly, the Dallas Cowboys. And Herschel still tells me, and it always brings a smile to my face, that no matter where life takes him he will always be a Dallas Cowboy. And Texans are grateful for that and quite proud of him.

Herschel's story is much bigger than football. He represented our country as an Olympian in the 1992 Winter Games, competing as part of the U.S. bobsled team. He has built successful businesses that supply products to schools, to the military, and to communities across America. And he has dedicated his time and energy to mentoring young people, to supporting charities, and promoting health and fitness across the United States.

While I have always been impressed with Herschel's achievements, both philanthropic and athletic, I have an even deeper appreciation of his character. He is a man of great faith, discipline, dependability, and resilience. Indeed, when it comes to discipline, one of the things I have learned about Herschel is he does not eat breakfast, and he does not eat lunch. He only eats dinner. And I will say, speaking for myself, I don't know if anyone else on the panel, but I could do to skip a meal or two, and there is a reason you become a world class athlete when you have that kind of discipline.

Herschel embodies the characteristics many Texans hold dear—determination, humility, and true patriotism. And I believe his voice and his perspective will be an asset to this nation. I am proud to call Herschel Walker a friend, and I look forward to his testimony today.

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, Herschel Walker will make a terrific United States Ambassador to the Bahamas, and I encourage everyone on this committee to vote to confirm him.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Cruz. We appreciate that.

And Senator Hagerty, do you have something for the good of the order?

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

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen. I appreciate you having this hearing today with my distinguished colleagues.

And I think you know, it is a unique honor for me to introduce friends, particularly to do such a critical job to serve as ambassador to any nation, to represent the greatest nation in the world, and that is the United States. And today it is my great honor to introduce my friend, Sergio Gor, to be Ambassador to India, an absolutely critical relationship, and Sergio is absolutely perfect for this role.

He is a proven leader across business and media, and was a senior staffer here in the Senate. On top of all of this, Sergio has delivered results in one of the toughest and highest stakes arenas in Washington. That is the White House Presidential Personnel Office. At PPO, Sergio has maintained a record setting pace for hiring. He has staffed nearly 4,000 key roles across the government, including over 1,000 appointments on day one of the Administration, frankly, an amazing task. It did not happen by accident. It took vision, discipline, and frankly, a relentless work ethic.

But beyond the resume, Sergio Gor has achieved something that no resume can really underscore enough, and that is the complete trust of President Donald J. Trump. Sergio has stood by the President's side as a loyal and trusted advisor. In fact, Sergio is one of the absolute go to people for President Trump. He has helped shape key strategies. He has delivered tough messages. He has ensured that the America First agenda is not just a slogan but a governing reality. President Trump has called Sergio, quote, "a great friend and someone I trust completely to deliver for the American people."

Our relationship with India is now more important than ever, and if you think about the criticality of this, issues like trade, technology, defense, and regional stability are all at the fore in this vital relationship. And at this critical time, we need someone who can speak with clarity, who can act with conviction, and importantly, who has a direct line to the President of the United States.

Sergio Gor is that person. When he speaks, New Delhi will know that he speaks not just for the State Department but for the President himself. And I strongly urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Hagerty. I appreciate that.

And with that, first of all I would like to welcome Judge Jeanine Pirro with us today. Glad to be here and glad to have you here. Thank you so much for coming.

The way this is going to work is I am going to make a few opening remarks. I am going to turn to the distinguished Ranking Member to do likewise. And then we will hear about 5 minutes from each of the four nominees that we have. And then we will open it up to a round of questions.

However, with today being the day that it is, I would like to take a moment to remember the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attack and their families. This moment changed our country forever. We will never forget the lives lost and irreversibly altered that day. Please join me in a brief moment of silence in honor of the victims of September 11.

[Pause.]

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

Senator RISCH. With that we will turn to our agenda, I have a few remarks to open, and then I will yield to Senator Shaheen.

First of all, I want to thank, obviously, the nominees here today and importantly, their families for being with us here today, for your willingness to serve. Obviously, there is a sacrifice involved in that, and we are certainly appreciative that you are willing to make that sacrifice for your country.

I am going to start with Mr. Veprek, as Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration. You will work alongside President Trump and Secretary Rubio to secure our borders and make American foreign aid targeted and in service of our interests. I look forward to learning more about these plans, and about the bureau's new organizational structure, which will include elements of the former Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance at USAID.

As part of the much needed State Department reorganization, I hope you will work to ensure that PRM delivers assistance with a "project and needs based approach." In previous Administrations, PRM has contributed almost exclusively to U.N. agencies to deliver aid. And we all know the U.N. is certainly not the most effective way to make change or help those in need.

I look forward to hearing your plans to keep America safe while getting aid to the places it is needed and where it is most advantageous to the United States.

Mr. Walker, as President Trump's nominee for Ambassador to the Bahamas, you would be the first U.S. Ambassador in the country since 2011. President Trump and Secretary Rubio understand that the Bahamas is an important economic and security partner of the United States and will work to improve this relationship. After all, the Bahamas is just 50 miles from U.S. shores and shares our democratic values and our economic and security interests.

As China looks to increase its foothold in the Bahamas, through its operation of the Freeport Container Terminal, its outsized diplomatic presence, and Huawei's near monopoly of local telecom networks, we must push back. You have your work cut out for you. I hope you can help us understand how you would go about strengthening our bilateral relations with the Bahamas.

Mr. Gor, as you know, India is a key partner, and our two countries have many opportunities to strengthen our cooperation on defense, technology, and trade. I really cannot add much to what Secretary Rubio said, either about you or about the relationship with India. Both are incredibly important. As partners in the Quad, India and the U.S. play an important role in maintaining a free, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

While our relationship has its frictions, we cannot ignore that our countries are strategically aligned on the need to counter China's unfair economic practices and malign influence in the region. At the same time, you must balance those strategic priorities with difficult conversations. India's close energy relationship with our adversary, Russia, is incredibly troubling.

President Trump has taken action to address India's dangerous purchases of Russian oil, and I hope you will double down on these

efforts, making clear to your Indian counterparts that the United States will not tolerate support for Putin's war machine.

Mr. Holtsnider, the United States and Jordan have a strong, longstanding relationship guided by our shared goal of a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Middle East. His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan is a close friend of this committee and its members, and there is not any world leader that meets with us more frequently.

Last fall, our ally Israel and Jordan celebrated 30 years of peace, but this relationship is facing strong headwinds. Anti-Israeli sentiment among Jordanians is on this rise, and this sentiment has only deepened in the years since Hamas's brutal October 7 terror attack.

You have had a distinguished career of service across the Middle East in both the State Department and the Marine Corps. As ambassador, it will be your responsibility to look out for Americans in Jordan, and to work with your counterparts to combat extremism and promote stability in the region. I look forward to hearing your plans to do so.

Thank you again to all our witnesses here today, our nominees, and for your willingness to serve.

With that, the distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen.

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our nominees and to all your friends and families who are here with you today.

Unfortunately, historically, both Republican and Democratic Administrations have struggled with the Senate's slow confirmation process. Sometimes delays have been political. Other times they reflect legitimate concerns about the nominees themselves and their potential impact on American security.

Senator Risch and I have spoken about the importance of advancing career nominees at our first business meeting of this Congress.

And Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that you have continued to push for more career nominees as part of that commitment. Thank you as well for agreeing to postpone consideration of the nominee for Kuwait as we wait for more information on his background.

All this is to say that I, too, have been frustrated by the slow consideration of nominees. But I also believe that when a nominee requires further scrutiny, either for policy reasons or because of their backgrounds, that the Senate must do its job.

Now, the nominees before us today, like all of our nominees, require careful scrutiny. Take India, for example. Both Democratic and Republican administrations, including the last Trump administration, have made serious investments in our relationship with India. India is not only a major power in the region, its work force will help drive the future of technology and economic growth, and we heard both from the Chairman and Secretary Rubio how important that relationship is.

I was very concerned, as I am sure others on this committee were, when I saw Prime Minister Modi standing alongside Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping at the summit in Beijing earlier this

month. But I worry that that meeting should not come as a surprise for those who have read the committee's minority report, *The Price of Retreat*. China has been working diligently to capitalize on this moment of America's retreat. And pushing India into a closer relationship with China is a serious setback to U.S. interests.

Mr. Gor, you have been nominated to serve as Ambassador to New Delhi. I hope you will speak about what you would do, if confirmed, to rebuild that critical U.S.-India relationship.

Mr. Walker, if confirmed you will serve as Ambassador to the Bahamas. This nation is a close American neighbor off our coast of Florida, and China has long sought to expand its influence there. I would like to hear from you what are your plans are to advance American interests in the Caribbean as China pushes deeper into the region.

Mr. Veprek, you have been nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration. In the past this was a bureau that was focused on helping asylum seekers, ranging from Russian journalists to Afghan women. Under President Trump, rather than supporting asylum seekers, the bureau has too often prioritized resettlement of groups like Afrikaners from South Africa. It is also supporting the Administration's efforts to deport people to countries where they have no ties, including to El Salvador, South Sudan, or Rwanda. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the U.S. is not sending people to places where they face torture, trafficking, or sexual exploitation?

And finally, Mr. Holtsnider, if confirmed, you will serve as Ambassador to Jordan. Jordan, as already has been outlined, is an important American partner in the Middle East. I was glad to visit there last month. I met with King Abudallah and saw some of the operations in Jordan that are very important to the United States. They work closely with our U.S. military and intelligence community and host thousands of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. I am pleased the Administration has nominated someone with experience and a long diplomatic career to this critical post.

So, I look forward to hearing from all of you. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, and I certainly concur on your remarks regarding the advice and consent constitutional obligation of this committee. It is one of the heritages we have gotten from the Founding Fathers. This committee obviously takes that seriously. And I want to thank the President and Mr. Gor, who is here today, who worked closely with me as we have worked through the nominations. There is always some give and take on those, and I really appreciate the openness with which we have had those discussions.

So we will now hear from our nominees, and Mr. Gor, we are going to start with you. Five minutes, and we hope everybody will keep it to about 5 minutes. If you have lengthier statements we will be more than happy to include those statements in the record for this hearing.

But at the moment, 5 minutes each.

Mr. Gor.

STATEMENT OF SERGIO GOR, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Mr. GOR. Thank you, sir. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, thank you for having me here today.

Before I get started, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the senseless killing of one of my closest friends yesterday. Charlie Kirk. Charlie cared about our nation, loved his beautiful family, and was always there if you needed anything. Charlie was an optimist. Our prayers are with his beautiful wife Erika, and her two young children. Rest in peace, Charlie.

Members of the committee, it is truly an honor to be here. For those of you I have yet to meet, my name is Sergio Gor and I currently have the honor of serving as Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Personal at the White House. I can proudly report that under the President's leadership, the Office of Presidential Personnel has filled over 95 percent of jobs at record speed, beating every other Administration in American history. I also want thank this committee for the incredible work you have done to confirm so many of our nominees, often in a bipartisan effort.

I have also spent many years here on Capitol Hill, including working for members of this very committee. It is especially humbling to walk these halls today as President Trump's nominee for Ambassador to India.

Serving at the pleasure of President Donald Trump has been the greatest honor of my life, and if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to serving the United States abroad, in India. We are fortune to have a President who has made bringing peace around the world a top priority. I would like to take a moment and thank President Trump for his trust and confidence in me.

India is a strategic partner whose trajectory will shape the region and beyond. Under President Donald Trump's strong leadership, I am committed to advancing America's interests and this important partnership.

India's geographic position, economic growth, and military capabilities make it a cornerstone of regional stability and a critical part of promoting prosperity and advancing the security interests that our nations share. As Secretary Rubio noted, India is one of the most important relationships our nation has in the world. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work to deliver on the President's agenda and advance U.S. interests by increasing our defense cooperation, ensuring fair and beneficial trade, deepening energy security, and furthering technology.

If confirmed, I will prioritize deepening defense and security cooperation with India. This includes expanding joint military exercises, advancing co-development and co-production of defense systems, and concluding critical defense sales. These efforts will enhance collaboration between our forces while supporting American defense manufacturers and making America more prosperous.

India's population of over 1.4 billion and its rapidly growing middle class present immense opportunities for America. From artificial intelligence to pharmaceuticals to critical minerals, the poten-

tial for collaboration is vast. However, in the past, India's protectionist policies and regulatory barriers have prevented us from fully realizing this partnership.

If confirmed, I will work to advance trade that is fair, reciprocal, and beneficial to American workers and businesses. I will advocate for reforms that will make India's markets more accessible and transparent.

I will also work toward President Trump's ambitious goal, dubbed Mission 500, to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, which will expand American exports, creating jobs and prosperity for our citizens.

Improving U.S.-India trade ties will not only bolster U.S. competitiveness but also reduce China's economic leverage over other nations. I will encourage Indian investments in U.S. manufacturing capacity, and we will also be furthering—with Indian investments in the United States, we will also be furthering our strategic pharmaceutical supply chain and create more jobs right here at home in the United States.

India is also a strategic partner in advancing critical and emerging technology. The U.S.-India TRUST initiative, launched in February by President Trump and Prime Minister Modi, lays out a path to leverage the impressive capacity of the U.S. tech sector to out compete China on the development of AI, quantum, semiconductors, and other critical and emerging technologies. I will advance this Administration's AI Action Plan which will ensure the dominance of American AI technology in India and globally.

Our technology cooperation will require significant energy resources, another area where the United States and India can work together. If confirmed, I will work to increase American energy exports to India, establishing the United States as a leading supplier of crude oil, petroleum products, and liquefied natural gas.

Finally, India's role in ensuring the stability and security of the region cannot be understated. A stable South Asia is in the interest of the United States and all the nations.

Under President Trump's leadership, the U.S.-India partnership will define the 21st century. It is only by working together that we can make that aspiration a reality. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work to ensure the United States remains a global leader while fostering a partnership that benefits both nations.

I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals. 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: Sergio CORDERO
Date: 9/11/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gor follows:]

Prepared Statement of Sergio Gor

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee thank you for having me here today.

Before I get started, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the senseless killing of one of my closest friends yesterday—Charlie Kirk. Charlie cared about our nation, loved his beautiful family, and was always there if you needed anything. Charlie was an optimist. Our prayers are with Erika, and her two young children. Rest in peace Charlie.

It's truly an honor to be here. For those of you I have yet to meet, my name is Sergio Gor and I currently have the honor of serving as Assistant to the President and Director of the Presidential Personal Office at the White House. I can proudly report that under the President's leadership, the Office of Presidential Personnel has filled over 95 percent of jobs at record speed—beating every other Administration in American history. I also want to thank this committee for the incredible work you have done to confirm so many of our nominees, often in a bipartisan effort.

I've also spent many years here on Capitol Hill, including working for members of this very committee. It's especially humbling to walk these halls today as President Trump's nominee for Ambassador to India.

Serving at the pleasure of President Trump has been the greatest honor of my life, and if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to continue serving the United States abroad, in India. We are fortunate to have a President who has made bringing peace around the world a top priority. I would like to take a moment and thank President Trump for his trust and confidence in me.

It is an honor to appear before you as the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to India at this pivotal moment in our bilateral relationship. India is a strategic partner whose trajectory will shape the region and beyond. Under President Trump's strong leadership, I am committed to advancing America's interests while strengthening this important partnership.

India's geographic position, economic growth, and military capabilities make it a cornerstone of regional stability and a critical part of promoting prosperity and advancing the security interests that our nations share. As Secretary Rubio noted, India is one of the most important relationships our nation has in the world. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work to deliver on the President's agenda and advance U.S. interests by strengthening our defense cooperation, ensuring fair and beneficial trade, deepening energy security, and furthering technology development for the 21st century.

If confirmed, I will prioritize deepening defense and security cooperation with India. This includes expanding joint military exercises, advancing co-development and co-production of defense systems, and concluding critical defense sales. These efforts will enhance interoperability between our forces while supporting American defense manufacturers and making America more prosperous.

India's population of over 1.4 billion and its rapidly growing middle class present immense opportunities for American businesses. From artificial intelligence to pharmaceuticals to critical minerals, the potential for collaboration is vast; however, in the past, India's protectionist policies and regulatory barriers have prevented us from fully realizing this partnership.

If confirmed, I will work to advance trade that is fair, reciprocal, and beneficial to American workers and businesses. I will advocate for reforms that will make India's markets more accessible and transparent, and labor standards higher, ensuring that American companies can compete on a level playing field. I will also work toward President Trump's ambitious goal dubbed Mission 500 to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 which will expand American exports, creating jobs and prosperity for our citizens.

Strengthening U.S.-India trade ties will not only bolster U.S. competitiveness but also reduce China's economic leverage over other nations. Of particular note, if confirmed, I will encourage Indian investments in U.S. manufacturing capacity for active pharmaceutical ingredients. India already provides 40 percent of all generic drugs purchased in the United States. With Indian investments in this sector in the United States, we can further secure our strategic pharmaceutical supply chain and create jobs in the United States.

India is also a strategic partner in advancing critical and emerging technology. The U.S.-India TRUST initiative, launched in February by President Trump and Prime Minister Modi, lays out a path to leverage the impressive capacity of the U.S. tech sector to out-compete China on the development of AI, quantum, semiconductors, and other critical and emerging technologies. If confirmed, I will advance the

Trump Administration's AI Action Plan which will ensure the dominance of American AI technology in India and globally.

Our technology cooperation will require significant energy resources, another area where the United States and India can work together. If confirmed, I will work to increase American energy exports to India, establishing the United States as a leading supplier of crude oil, petroleum products, and liquefied natural gas.

Finally, India's role in ensuring the stability and security of the region cannot be understated. A stable South Asia is in the interest of the U.S. and all nations.

Under President Trump's leadership, the U.S.-India partnership will define the 21st century. It is only by working together that we can make that aspiration a reality. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work to ensure the United States remains a global leader while fostering a partnership that benefits both nations. I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Gor. And on behalf of the committee, of course, we extend our condolences to you personally on the loss, and of course, to the Kirk family for this senseless tragedy that happened yesterday.

With that, Mr. Walker, you have the floor.

STATEMENT OF HERSCHEL WALKER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

Mr. WALKER. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing. It is a privilege for me to be with you today.

Those of you who don't know me personally must be wondering what qualifications do I bring to the table that would help me to serve with distinction as U.S. Ambassador to the Bahamas. Throughout my life, many people have underestimated me, in academics, athletics, and business, and I have always proven them wrong. I have done it through discipline, determination, and by outworking everyone in every task, large or small.

No one has ever questioned my work ethic. If confirmed, I will apply that same work ethic to my role as ambassador. The country that I love deserves no less.

I also have been blessed with the gift of being able to relate to people from all walks of life. I build trust through compassion and humor and by finding things that unite rather than divide.

Although I have never held the official title of "ambassador," I have spent decades serving as an informal ambassador to our youth, encouraging them to get a good education and to stay physically fit. I have been an ambassador to our men and women in the military, stressing the importance of mental health. I have traveled to hundreds of military installations around the world, making sure our servicemembers feel comfortable seeking mental health counseling and treatment. I have also served as an ambassador to the athletic world through the United States as an Olympian and a professional athlete.

As the owner and CEO of two successful businesses in the food service industry, I know firsthand what it takes to start and run a business. I understand the importance of tourism and trade. In addition to hard work, the secret sauce is relationship building. That is my strength and my passion.

As you know, there has not been a Senate confirmed U.S. Ambassador to the Bahamas since 2011. The American and Bahamian

people deserve better. As ambassador, it will be my highest priority to keep American tourists and residents safe and secure. I will work closely with the Bahamian government on all matters pertaining to our mutual security.

Having an ambassador in place is more important than ever. China is trying to increase its influence in the region. It has built nearly a \$3 billion deepwater port in the Bahamas, and has made other moves that can threaten our national security.

There is a rise in the drug smuggling there, in the Bahamas, and this is a real danger to the United States. The threat to American lives cannot be overstated. Tackling this serious problem requires leadership and cooperation between our governments. Through Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, the United States works collaboratively with the northern Caribbean to disrupt illegal trafficking. If confirmed, I will see that this initiative continues to be strong.

The nearest islands of the Bahamas are only 50 miles from the United States. The United States is the Bahamas' largest trading partner. If confirmed, I will advise American business community of trade and investment opportunities that exist in the Bahamas. I will also make sure the Bahamian government is a welcoming environment for the U.S. to invest so we can advance American's prosperity.

As ambassador, I will strive to build lasting relationships with the Bahamian-American community in the United States. Bahamian-American traditions and contributions are an important part of America's story. If confirmed, I will deepen our economic and cultural ties with the Bahamian people. I will also showcase American excellence through sports diplomacy.

Last, I will make sure that the Bahamian people are included in our 250th Independence Day celebration.

In closing, if confirmed, I will partner with the people and government of the Bahamas to advance our shared interests. I will work with the elements of the U.S. Government, including and especially members of this committee, to promote American interests in the Bahamas and throughout the region.

It would be my honor to serve my country as ambassador and to strengthen ties between the United States and the Bahamas. I will always ensure that my staff and I represent the people of the United States to the best of our abilities.

I thank President Trump, Secretary of State Rubio, and my wife. Thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

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Answer: Yes

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Answer: Yes

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: Herschel Walker

Date: 9/11/2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Walker follows:]

Prepared Statement of Herschel Walker

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time in meeting with me and for holding this hearing.

Those of you who don't know me personally may be wondering what qualifications I bring to the table that would enable me to serve with distinction as U.S. Ambassador to The Bahamas. Throughout my life, people have underestimated me—whether in academics, athletics, or business. I have ALWAYS proven them wrong. I have done it through discipline and determination and by outworking everyone in every task, large and small. NO ONE has ever questioned my work ethic. If confirmed, I will apply that same work ethic to my role as Ambassador. The country that I love deserves no less.

I also have been blessed with the gift of being able to relate to people from all walks of life. I build trust through compassion and humor and by finding things that unite rather than divide.

Although I have never held the official title of “Ambassador,” I have spent decades serving as an informal Ambassador to our country's youth—encouraging them to get a good education and to be physically active. I have been an ambassador to our men and women in the military—stressing the importance of mental health. I traveled to hundreds of military installations around the world, making sure our service members feel comfortable seeking mental health counseling and treatment. I also served as an ambassador to athletes in the United States and abroad through my participation in the Olympics and professional sports.

As the owner and CEO of two successful businesses in the food service industry, I know firsthand what it takes to start and run a business. I understand the importance of tourism and trade. In addition to hard work, the secret sauce is relationship-building. That is my strength and my passion.

As you know, there has not been a Senate-confirmed U.S. Ambassador to The Bahamas since 2011. The American and Bahamian people deserve better. As Ambassador, it will be my highest priority to keep American tourists and residents safe and secure. I will work closely with the Bahamian government on all matters pertaining to our mutual security.

Having an ambassador in place is more important than ever. China is aggressively projecting power and malign influence. It built a nearly \$3 billion deepwater port and has made other investments in sensitive sectors that could have implications for U.S. national security. An uptick in drug smuggling through The Bahamas harms Americans. The threat to American lives cannot be overstated. Tackling this serious problem requires leadership and cooperation between our governments. Through Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, the United States works collaboratively with the northern Caribbean to help disrupt illicit trafficking. If confirmed, I will see to it that we make this collaboration even stronger.

The nearest islands of The Bahamas lie a mere fifty miles from the United States. The United States is The Bahamas' largest trading partner. If confirmed, I will work with the American business community to advise them of the abundant trade and investment opportunities that exist in The Bahamas. I will also work with the Bahamian government to maintain and promote a welcoming environment for U.S. investors to advance American prosperity.

As Ambassador, I will strive to build lasting relationships with the Bahamian-American community in the United States. Bahamian-American traditions and contributions are an important part of America's story. If confirmed, I will work to leverage the ingenuity and creativity of Bahamian-Americans to deepen our economic and cultural ties with the Bahamian people. I will also energetically showcase American excellence, including through sports diplomacy and the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

In closing, if confirmed, I will partner with the people and Government of The Bahamas to advance our shared interests. I will work with all elements of the U.S. Government, including and especially members of this Committee, to advance American interests in The Bahamas and throughout the region.

It would be my honor to serve my country as Ambassador and to strengthen ties between the United States and The Bahamas. I will always ensure that my staff and I represent the people of the United States of America to the best of our abilities.

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

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Walker.
We will now turn to Mr. Veprek.

The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF ANDREW VEPREK, OF LOUISIANA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION

Mr. VEPREK. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As you did, Chairman, I would like to start by recalling the September 11 attacks. It is fitting that we remember the Americans who lost their lives 24 years ago today as well as the service and sacrifices of many others in the years since to safeguard our country.

Senators, President Trump has nominated me to lead a bureau charged with addressing what is, in my view, our country's greatest challenge: migration. I thank him and Secretary Rubio for entrusting me with this important task.

I would also like to thank my family. Over 23 years ago I entered the Department of State with the first Foreign Service orientation class after the September 11 attacks, and since then I have had the privilege of serving my country in a variety of capacities all around the world. My family has supported me throughout, graciously accommodating many moves and long absences.

Members of the committee, during President Trump's current administration, we have seen a significant reduction in border encounters and a reversal of migratory flows into the United States. These are important achievements. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration helps sustain the President's whole of government effort to giving Americans the secure borders they deserve and to ensuring the sovereignty of our nation.

U.S. diplomacy is an important part of that effort. Whether it is ensuring that foreign countries facilitate the repatriation of their nationals who have no right to remain in the United States, negotiating arrangements to accept the transfer of illegal aliens removed from American communities, or working with the Department of Homeland Security to facilitate cost effective voluntary removals, the Department of State has a leading role. And the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration should be at the forefront.

Regrettably, in previous years, the bureau took the opposite approach in the policies it promoted and the foreign assistance programs it managed. Instead of protecting our borders, they facilitated mass migration into the United States. That will not recur on my watch. If confirmed, I will direct the bureau to support the voluntary re-migration of those who have no right to be in our country, and support other countries that help us achieve our immigration enforcement goals.

On that point, let me speak about foreign assistance generally. I share Secretary Rubio's vision for an America First Foreign Assistance that aligns with Administration policies and advances concrete U.S. national interests. I believe that to be a common sense approach for good stewardship of public funds. If confirmed, I would seek to apply it in the foreign assistance programs managed

by the PRM bureau. That means streamlining staffing, consolidating programming where possible, and getting other countries to step up so that the United States does not carry an outsized load. Also, we cannot engage in so called “forever aid.” That open ended, blank check approach can have the perverse outcome of prolonging humanitarian crises.

Finally, for our strategic assistance, there must be a clear and direct connection with U.S. foreign policy goals.

In concluding let me return to my opening theme, the need to answer the challenge posed by migration. Perhaps the most important “root cause” of mass and illegal migration today is the abuse of refugee and asylum systems. The current framework of international agreements and norms on migration developed after the Second World War in a completely different geopolitical and economic context. It cannot be expected to function in our modern world, and indeed, it does not. The need for reform has been clear for a number of years.

Under President Trump, we finally have a leader willing to consider it. If confirmed, I will seek to work with other countries to build the support needed to reform this broken system. I will aim to ensure the principles of national sovereignty and rule of law get proper consideration in the global migration regime.

Members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to be here. I look forward to answering your questions.

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Answer: Yes



Printed Name: A. VEPREK

Date: 9/11/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Veprek follows:]

Prepared Statement of Andrew Veprek

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. President Trump has nominated me to lead a bureau charged with addressing what is, in my view, our country's greatest challenge: migration. I thank him and Secretary Rubio for entrusting me with this task.

I also want to thank my family. Over 23 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, I have had the privilege of serving my country in a variety of capacities, all around the world. My family has supported me throughout, graciously accommodating many moves and long absences.

Members of the Committee, during President Trump's current administration, we have seen a significant reduction in border encounters and a reversal of migratory flows into the United States. These are important achievements. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration helps sustain the President's whole-of-government effort to giving Americans the secure borders they deserve, and to ensuring the sovereignty of our nation.

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That means streamlining staffing; consolidating programming where possible; and getting other countries to step up so that the United States does not carry an out-sized load. Also, we should not engage in so-called "forever aid"; that open-ended, blank-check approach can have the perverse outcome of prolonging humanitarian crises. Finally, for our strategic assistance, there must be a clear and direct connection with U.S. foreign policy goals.

I conclude by returning to my opening theme: the need to answer the challenge posed by migration. Perhaps the most important "root cause" of mass and illegal migration today is the abuse of refugee and asylum systems. The current framework of international agreements and norms on migration developed after the Second World War, in a completely different geopolitical and economic context. It cannot be expected to function in our modern world—and indeed, it does not.

The need for reform has been clear for a number of years. Under President Trump, we finally have a leader willing to consider it. If confirmed, I will seek to work with other countries to build the support needed to reform this broken system. I will aim to ensure the principles of national sovereignty and rule of law get proper consideration in the global migration regime.

Senators, thank you again for the opportunity to be here. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Veprek.
Mr. Holtsnider, you are up.

STATEMENT OF JAMES HOLTSNIDER, OF IOWA, 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 HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Mr. HOLTSNIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As we are here on September 11, I would like to acknowledge those who died 24 years ago. Never forgotten.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. I would also like to thank the Senators on this committee for their focus on the bilateral relationship, including recent travel to Jordan by the Ranking Member and other members of this committee.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and the rest of the Congress to advance U.S. foreign policy interests in Jordan.

As I have done previously before this committee, I again want to thank my family. My wife Nana and our children Maud and Henry for their unwavering support and sacrifice throughout my career, especially during my time in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to work on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. From my earliest engagements as a young, enlisted Marine in the 1990s to my most recent overseas assignment in a leadership role at our U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, I understand the importance of getting policy right in the region.

The U.S. strategic partnership with Jordan, a major non-NATO ally, spans seven decades, and is rooted in our security relationship. Our military and law enforcement cooperation with Jordan helps us combat terrorism, deter illicit narcotics flows, and counter malign actors. With a Defense Cooperation Agreement and bilateral Memorandum of Understanding, we have important opportunities to update and enhance our security partnership. If confirmed, I commit to strengthening our security partnership and prioritizing support for our U.S. military colleagues throughout the region, as I have done in previous assignments.

As we execute President Trump's decision to give the new Syrian government a chance, our partnership with Jordan is especially critical. Jordan's leadership has also been instrumental in helping blunt the impact of Iranian adventurism this year. Jordan has also demonstrated receptivity to U.S. concerns regarding Chinese tech companies' involvement in Amman's 5G infrastructure and other critical digital infrastructure and is aligned with the United States in mitigating the risks of China's technological expansion in the country.

As the committee knows, Jordan is an important multilateral partner on many issues. If confirmed, I will encourage the Jordanian government to continue to play an important and constructive role as a regional leader and advance the President's efforts for peace in the region.

Thousands of Americans live in Jordan, and many others visit as tourists or as participants in U.S. Government exchange programs. If confirmed, I will ensure assistance to U.S. citizens in Jordan continues to be a top U.S. priority for the embassy team.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the dozens of people in the Department of State and on your congressional staffs who as-

sisted with the nomination process. I would also like to thank the members of this committee again for their sustained focus on our Middle Eastern partners.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

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Answer: Yes

Printed Name: James Holtzinger
Date: 9/11/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Holtsnider follows:]

Prepared Statement of James Holtsnider

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee and Congress to advance U.S. foreign policy interests in Jordan.

As I have done previously before this committee, I again want to thank my family—my wife Nana and our children Maud and Henry—for their unwavering support and sacrifice throughout my career, especially during my time in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to work on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. From my earliest engagements as a young, enlisted Marine in the 1990s to my most recent overseas assignment in a leadership role at our U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, I understand the importance of getting policy right in the region.

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you very much, and we appreciate again all of you.

We are going to do a round of questions, 5 minutes per Senator to start with.

And I want to start with you, Mr. Gor.

I think most people are aware of how close you are to the President and how important that is, obviously, in an ambassadorial post. I think nothing underscores it more than the fact that he not only appointed you as the Ambassador to India but also as an Envoy for South and Central Asian Affairs. And I wonder if you could talk about that for a minute and elaborate on that. That is a great honor. You know, Tom Barrack—it is not a usual thing. Tom Barrack is making it work right now, obviously in Turkey and

Syria and Lebanon. Also a Rubik's Cube, but you are going to face the same thing in Central Asia. Tell us about it.

Mr. GOR. Thank you for your question, Chairman.

As you mentioned, we do have a handful of envoys that represent this White House. Tom Barrack is an excellent example, along with Steve Witkoff. And in that capacity, I will be able to work with 12 additional nations, at the direction of the President, on issues that might arise to that level. I am not nominated to be an ambassador to 12 nations. I am here as the nominee to India. So I am a Special Envoy to those 12 nations to complement the ambassadors that we have there, the career staff that we have at those embassies.

Should we have an issue that arises to a certain level, from those posts or from the White House, I have the unique ability, along with other envoys, to be able to directly get the President of the United States and raise it to that level.

And so that is a good thing. I am there to complement. I am not there to subtract anything from those careers, from those ambassadors. Should they need my help on anything, it will be an open door policy, and we will take it back to the White House.

Senator RISCH. Fair enough. Good explanation.

Mr. Veprek, I want to turn to you for a minute. You are in a really interesting and important role at the Department. You know, President Trump ran on, as one of his signature promises, to close the back door with the illegal immigration we were having, and the American people responded and were very clear that they wanted that stopped. And he very quickly slammed the back door, and there is nobody coming through.

I think now there is another side of that coin, and that is legal migration. And it is not getting any attention, and it should. I think most Americans are not particularly focused on the fact that we have had a long, proud history for all of our time as a nation, of having legal migration to this country. There has been a steady stream over recent years. And I think probably it does not get the attention because it does not cause trouble. Indeed, it complements the United States, and we welcome it.

I think we are in a particularly important position right now to be examining that because as we have closed the back door we have closed what has been an opportunity for our agricultural community, for our homebuilding community, for a number of communities here that use migrant labor.

So I think we need to really focus on that, make sure that these industries get a steady flow of workers that are needed. There is no doubt at all that these workers are needed in this country, and it can be handled, and it can be handled very well. It has been for the many years that we have had legal migration into the country.

So I would like to hear your thoughts on that and how you might be addressing what is a real need here in America.

Mr. VEPREK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If I could address, in part, the role I would play, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, that bureau does have responsibility over one part of the legal migration flow that you talked about, and that is refugee admissions to the United States.

Now at the Department of State, the bureau that would cover, I believe, most of the flows that you are talking about would be the Bureau of Consular Affairs, including for certain forms of temporary work visas. And of course, the Department of State works in conjunction with the Department of Labor and Department of Homeland Security, more broadly, in order to operate these programs.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that, and I guess I should have refined the question a little bit more. The refugee issue is as important as the migration issue, and it really needs coordination between the two offices. Do you want to speak to that for a minute?

Mr. VEPREK. Yes, sir. Thanks for the opportunity to address that.

In the past I have worked with, in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, working very closely with Department of Homeland Security, and particularly U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. And so if confirmed for this role, I would anticipate again close coordination with DHS and USCIS to conduct U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in accordance with the President's determination for the populations to be admitted to the United States.

Senator RISCH. Yes, I appreciate that, and again, I hope you will, along with coordinating, raise the issue, because it really is not getting much attention, and it does need attention because these industries that use this kind of labor, they are in dire need. And it is going to take coordination, as you have described, undoubtedly. But the issue itself needs to be raised. So thank you very much.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gor, I want to start with you, because it has been reported that this Administration has conducted loyalty tests for individuals who are seeking jobs in government and that those people who are not deemed as loyal are purged and that there is retribution against those people who are believed to have been disloyal to the President.

Now, if confirmed, you would oversee one of the largest U.S. posts abroad. You would manage a team of career personnel. Do you commit to not pursuing retribution or retaliation against anyone under your purview across the government for their personal or political beliefs?

Mr. GOR. Senator, thank you for your question, and I enjoyed our meeting yesterday.

I do commit to that. Not only do I commit to that, in fact, the State Department is uniquely positioned, and we have some incredible talent in the Foreign Service, and that is a unique skill that they bring over many decades of service there. We do not have that across every other department. The Foreign Service is uniquely positioned to bring that expertise to our posts, to our missions, to our embassies.

So I very much look forward to working with those careers and enhancing the America First agenda abroad with them.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I appreciate that response.

One of the things we talked about in our meeting yesterday was India's reaction to tariffs on their buying oil from Russia, which helps to fuel the war in Ukraine. And given that China is the

world's largest purchase of Russian oil, how will you explain the distinction to the Indians about why they have been spared the same kind of tariff treatment from the Administration?

Mr. GOR. So three points, Senator, on that. We are actively negotiating with the Indians right now. In fact, the President has invited their Commerce and their Trade Ministers to come visit us next week, and they will be meeting with Ambassador Greer here in Washington. Part of that will include a hopeful deal. We are not that far apart right now on the deal. In fact, they are negotiating the nitty gritty of a deal.

Second, look, we hold our friends to different standards. Frankly, we expect more from India than we do sometimes from other nations. I do think it will get resolved over the next few weeks.

And finally, we commend you and the Chairman. You are both cosponsors of Senator Lindsey Graham's bill which seeks to impose 500 percent tariffs. So the President has imposed 25 percent tariffs. The bill that almost every single member of this committee is a cosponsor of goes much higher. So I think we are all in agreement on that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly agree with that, and I hope that you will encourage that we treat China in the same way as we treat India, given what they are doing to fund Russia's war machine.

Mr. GOR. Not only that, Senator, but as you know with the President, he is very much open to that. He has spoken about that. In fact, he is encouraging our European allies to do the same. So I think we are on the same page.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Veprek, did I understand you to say in your opening statement that you believe the cause of migration is the refugee and asylum system that we have in the United States and in other countries?

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, thank you very much for the opportunity to address that.

In my view, one of the biggest root causes of mass and illegal migration, the phenomenon that we are seeing around the world, is the current migration regime, that is to say the framework of international agreements and norms, that was built after the Second World War for a completely different world.

We live in a different world now, with quick international travel, rapid international communications. It is easier for people to retain their connections back home. It is not like people have to migrate and sever all connections with back home.

So now we have a system where it is possible for people who are seeking to migrate for economic purposes to exploit the current system of refugee and asylum protection, not just in the United States but in other countries around the world.

We hear from some of our other partners that they perceive this same problem, and so if confirmed one of the things I would want to work on is working with them to try and reform the system.

Senator SHAHEEN. But you do understand that the root causes of migration are in most cases famine, starvation, climate change, war, conflict in all its forms, drug cartels, violence, that that is what drives refugee populations to look for asylum and to try and

take advantage of opportunities that may allow them to get away from those kinds of disasters. You do understand that, I assume.

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, thanks for the opportunity to address this a little further. For migration writ large, I think there are as many different motivations as there are migrants in the world. Everybody has his own reason for wanting to leave his home country and move to another.

Now for refugees we are talking about a narrower set of motivations. The definition of refugee is set in our law and is set in certain international—

Senator SHAHEEN. I am not asking about the legal explanation for refugees. I am asking you about whether you understand the root causes that force people to leave their homes. I have had an opportunity to meet with many refugees, not only in the United States but around the world, and what I hear consistently from them is that they want to go home. The reason they have fled is because they are facing violence at home, because they are facing starvation, because they have no economic opportunities and cannot support their families. That is the question that I am asking you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. I appreciate that. Senator Hagerty.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gor, I would like to start with you, if I might. I would like to talk about the relationships that exist between the United States and India. I do not think there are—there are few relationships that are as critical for our national security and for our economic relationships as the relationship that we enjoy with India.

And I have been fortunate, I would say, to be in the presence of both President Trump and Prime Minister Modi at the same time, on multiple occasions. I can say this—there is a great relationship between the two leaders, there is a relationship that I can see of mutual trust, and I think it is a wonderful foundation.

I also see an issue, and I think it is very clear that President Trump is dead serious about resolving the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. He is dead serious about bringing this to an end. And India can play an important role in this. You and I have talked about that, that India can play a critical role. I think my colleagues are aware of this, but there is sort of a circular transaction network, where India buys Russian crude at a discount, they refine it, and they sell it back to the Europeans. We need the Europeans to be buying American energy. We need Russia's flow of funds to be shut down. We need to bring this conflict to an end.

You have a unique and strong relationship with President Trump. Could you comment on how you would leverage that deep personal relationship with leadership in India to help bring the conflict in Ukraine to an end?

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

Our President has a deep friendship with Prime Minister Modi, and that is something that is unique. In fact, if you have noticed when he has gone after other nations, he tends to go after their leaders for putting us in that position and for the United States imposing those tariffs. When the President has been critical of

India, he has gone out of his way to compliment Prime Minister Modi. They have an incredible relationship. I have been with them in the same room. We are not that far apart on a deal already on these tariffs.

To your point, getting India to stop buying Russian oil is a top priority for this Administration. Bringing peace around the world is a top priority to this Administration. This President has engaged in trying to resolve wars and conflicts all over the world, from Africa to the Middle East, to Ukraine, and even Southeast Asia.

So I agree with you wholeheartedly. I think the time will arrive upon us in the next few weeks, in the next few months, for all of this to get resolved.

Senator HAGERTY. You know, I think we all saw the display in Beijing when we saw Prime Minister Modi and other leaders join Xi Jinping in China. A lot of pearl clutching going on here in America about—what does that mean? Is India drifting away? I would just highlight this, that China and India have a long history of grievances and distrust. Barely 5 years ago, China and India were fighting over a disputed border, and China used an electromagnetic weapon. They did not use bullets, but they used an electromagnetic weapon to literally melt Indian soldiers.

So I think that it is clear to me, and I think it is clear to all of us, that international relations are a lot more than a photo opportunity. They really run deep.

Mr. GOR. You are 100 percent right. Look, India shares a lot more in common with us than they do with China, and for far too long we have not had that personal touch. And not only will I be able to bring that to New Delhi, but the President is also extremely personally engaged. Just earlier this week he had a compliment to Prime Minister Modi. Prime Minister Modi responded in kind the next day. We have a great foundation that I hope, if I am confirmed, to build upon.

Senator HAGERTY. I think you are going to see a wonderful opportunity there, and I look forward to the results, because having someone with your close personal ties to the President, and a Prime Minister, as Prime Minister Modi is tend to appreciate that tie, I think you are going to find a very receptive audience there at a time where we really need it. So I appreciate that.

Can I turn, in the final moments here, to Pakistan. Another critical relationship is the one between India and Pakistan. There is a rivalry that has been going on there for ages. Both nations are nuclear equipped. In May this really erupted into open conflict, and President Trump and the Administration stepped in to keep the fighting from further escalation. You are in the White House. You are familiar with the situation. I would just like for you to comment in the moments that remain about how you are thinking about the situation in Pakistan and how you might address it.

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

I am here nominated to be Ambassador to India. With that said, as I indicated earlier, this President is heavily engaged in bringing peace around the world. And no matter where that is, whether it is Africa, Europe, or the Middle East, he very much likes to be hands on. And he feels like he has an obligation. If he can bring peace anywhere around the world, that is what he wants to do.

Senator HAGERTY. Well, having been in the position that you are hopefully—and I encourage my colleagues to support this—that you are confirmed for, I will say this. Your relationship with the President is going to prove to be an invaluable asset, particularly in a country like India that is so critical, so vital to our strategic ties. And the relationship that is already there, at least the foundation that is there with Prime Minister Modi, I think is going to be invaluable to us, and I look forward to seeing your success.

Mr. GOR. Thank you.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE.

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

Senator RISCH. Before you start, for the information of the panel, we have got members coming and going. It is out of no disrespect to you, but we have votes going on. So they either send the bailiff up to arrest us or we go down and vote. So excuse us as we come and go.

So with that, Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments that you were making right as I walked in, about the sadness over Mr. Kirk's death. I put out yesterday, as many of us did, a comment, praying for his family and for the university community. But I was struck when I walked into the Armed Services Committee meeting today that many of my colleagues knew him. I never met him. So for many in this body, and I think many who are here, he was an acquaintance or a friend.

I know how devastating it was to Senators Klobuchar and Smith when their friends were killed a couple of weeks ago. So this is something that is not just in the news, but it is something that is personal to people in this place. And it is just too common. It is just too common.

You know, we have a colleague in the Senate, Mark Kelly, whose life was radically changed by political violence. We have a colleague in the House, Steve Scalise, whose life was radically changed by political violence. President Trump survived an assassination attempt, and another assassination plot was foiled. There have been 300 instances of political violence in the United States since January 6, 2021. Some known individuals, some officials, some personalities, but also neighbors who are targeted with political violence, by neighbors who do not agree with them.

And I bring it up to express my sadness for colleagues who were personally affected, because they know Mr. Kirk, but also in a Foreign Relations Committee meeting, one thing that is a little bit sad, and I suspect all of us have this experience, we travel, as members of this committee, or the Armed Services Committee, and we meet with people overseas. And they just think this is who we are. You know, I do not think this is who we are, but when we meet with people abroad and they sort of think this is who we are, it is sort of hard to mount the evidence and make the counter argument.

So I do not have any answers. I have got a real sober sense of sadness today, especially for colleagues of mine who are personally affected by this.

Mr. Gor, I have got a question for you. Bill Hagerty is a Senator who really knows a lot about diplomacy, and he was asking you about the sort of photo op of Modi and Xi recently, and said there has been some pearl clutching about it. Pearl clutching suggests that maybe it is not that serious a thing. But I am struck that we often said the same thing about Russia and China. They cannot get along together. They have had a border dispute, and they have been at odds for a very long time.

I have been in many hearings over the course of my 13 years here, especially in the Armed Services Committee, where officials of both the Trump, Biden, and Obama administrations have sort of pooh poohed the notion of deep cooperation between Russia and China, on the grounds that they have had a lot of historical enmity, so there is going to be a limit to what they can do together. And yet what we are seeing is Russia and China, and now together with Iran and North Korea, forming a tighter and tighter alliance against the U.S. and our democratic allies.

So I think it is worthy of worry, and I know that you talked about, you know, how do you balance, should you be confirmed, how do you balance being tough on India where we need to be tough, whether it is tariffs or markets not open to U.S. products, but also being mindful of the notion that the U.S.-India relationship has been a very important one—the world's oldest democracy, the world's largest democracy. And it has not only been important for the two nations but it has also been important in the Indo-Pacific region, as a little bit of a check again China sort of writing the rules for everybody.

So how do we be tough when we need to be, but balance that with a real understanding that we want to be close to India, and we do not want to push them in the wrong direction.

Mr. GOR. Thank you, Senator, for your question, and I commend you on what you had to say about Charlie Kirk. I was actually in touch with him about 2 hours before, and he said, "I'm going on a college campus, and I'll be in touch with you later this evening." And I was actually with Senator Shaheen in her office when my phone started blowing up with what was happening.

To your question, I do agree with you. I will say I think we have a lot more in common with India than we do with Russia or China. Being the largest democracy, at \$1.4 billion, we share a lot more common values with the Indians.

Second, we have a President who is extremely direct, and so you know where you stand with this President. I think the Indians appreciate that. Far too often we have seen some of our partners from Europe say one thing in front of a camera and another thing behind closed doors. With this President, people know where you stand. The Indians have appreciated that. They have consistently reached out to us. And as I mentioned earlier, there are active negotiations to resolve these trade imbalances, so we look out for our interests from the United States. And should I be confirmed, I will make it a top priority to ensure that they are pulled in our direction, not away from us.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS [presiding]. Right. Thank you, Senator Kaine. I appreciate your comments also about Charlie Kirk. He was

known to many of us, and I appreciate talking about the political violence, as well, and how horrible it is in America. It is very anti-American. So thank you for your comments on that.

And Mr. Gor, I also want to pick up a little bit on the important relationship with India, as well. And I certainly agree with Senator Kaine's comments that we do not want to take that relationship for granted, and it is a very important relationship. And we want to make sure that we are continuing to work with the Indians on all of our areas of common interest. And I agree that we do have more in common with them than they have in common, say, with China or that we have in common with Communist China.

And in fact, I have had a chance to talk to the Indian ambassador and talk about getting the trade relationship right, which I know that is one of the things that you are going to continue to work on, as well. And also how important it is for somebody such as you, who is close with the President, to be nominated to India. And they recognize the importance of that and what that means from this Administration to nominate you to this position. So I think it is very, very important what you are going to be doing here, so I am looking forward to, and encouraging my colleagues to support your nomination.

I want to talk a little bit about one of the areas that is shared interest here. You know, we have got Indian troops that work with us. We developed relationship. One of those areas is the Quad, and since the start of this Administration, both President Trump and Secretary Rubio have committed to deepening the cooperation with the Quad to counter Communist China and its effort to dominate the Indo-Pacific. I am co-chair of the Senate Quad Caucus, along with Senator Duckworth, and I have been particularly pleased to see this focus on streamlining the Quad to deliver tangible results.

You know, despite our trade negotiations with India, the fact remains that Communist China remains the greatest geopolitical threat to both India and the United States. This reality is what revived the Quad during President Trump's first term, and will ensure the Quad's relevance and resilience going forward. For security cooperation, shaping the regional technology standards, to infrastructure investment, to securing supply chains, the Quad countries have too much to gain to let bilateral differences stifle continuing progress.

Mr. Gor, if you are confirmed, what actions will you take to strengthen the U.S.-India cooperation on the Quad?

Mr. GOR. Thank you for the question, Senator. Two points. The Quad is vitally important. In fact, after Secretary Rubio was sworn in and clapped in at the State Department, 1 hour after his first meeting at Foggy Bottom was meeting with the foreign ministers of the Quad. The President is committed to continual engagements with the Quad. In fact, there have already been talks on a trip for the next Quad meeting.

Earlier this year, I traveled to Japan and had the chance to meet with the Prime Minister of Japan. They are part of the Quad. And they have also emphasized the important relationship that we must continue to build on.

On your earlier point of joint troop exercises, those continue to occur, and we would fully encourage that to grow. Just last week,

500 Indian troops trained with our troops in Alaska. That is a great thing. So in spite of this little hiccup that we have had over tariffs, our relationship is much stronger. It is built on many more decades. And so I will do everything in my power, should I be confirmed, to enhance that.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you. And you know, I would say, certainly in my conversation with the Ambassador, that the Indians understand that this is a trade negotiation and that we are trying to work out a deal that satisfies both countries. So I would encourage the Administration to continue to work forward on that.

You know, getting a successful resolution on this will really help pave the way for Quad leaders to move forward. My understanding is that there is scheduled to be a Quad meeting later on this year, in India, and I would ask for your commitment to getting the trade relationships worked out but also continuing to push forward at that meeting. Can you make that commitment, and can you tell me how you think that summit might work out?

Mr. GOR. Without committing to exact dates, Senator, the President is fully committed to continue to meet with the Quad and strengthening it.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Fantastic. We would love to see that continuing.

One of the other things, too, that is important for my State, talking about the trade relationship with India, is that we are an agricultural State. India has been one where they have had high barriers to agricultural products that are going into India. I think that we have got a lot to offer them when it comes to that. With the trade negotiations restarting, do you agree that getting India to reduce their tariffs on U.S. agriculture should be prioritized as part of the overall finalized trade agreement?

Mr. GOR. One hundred percent, and in fact, I got a briefing on this. Ambassador Greer is literally working on individual items that in the past tariffs and barriers have made it prohibitive to be imported into India. That will hopefully be changing soon, over the next few weeks.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. And just as my time is running out here, a friend of mine was just in India. He sells popcorn. And he was telling me that since independence they have apparently had a rule that you can only own two acres of land as a farmer. So, consequently, you have 11,000 farmers farming 22,000 acres. And clearly, to me, that is not even subsistence farming.

So I do think there is a lot that we can offer India with regard to how they can improve agricultural production for their country. And with that I believe, Mr. Murphy, you are up.

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

Mr. Veprek, when you were the Deputy Assistant Secretary for this bureau you were engaged in a discussion at the U.N. Human Rights Council around what had previously been a deeply uncontroversial resolution titled, "The Incompatibility Between Democracy and Racism." It was normally adopted without a vote, same language every few years. But in 2018, you raised serious concerns about that document, apparently suggesting and questioning whether political leaders actually do have a duty to condemn racism. My understanding is that much of our learnings, es-

pecially from the Holocaust, is that without a sense of proactive obligation by political leaders to speak out against hate speech it can grow and metastasize, and end up turning into large scale violence.

So this idea that leaders do not have a duty to condemn hate speech or incitement sounds like a really dangerous viewpoint. Do you want to spend just a minute explaining why you took that stance in 2018?

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, thanks very much for the opportunity to address this. If memory serves, in 2018, we withdrew from the U.N. Human Rights Commission because the President determined that it was not a good use of U.S. resources to engage in this forum that itself spent a great deal of time in anti-American and anti-Israel activities. And I understand that is the same reason why the President decided to withdraw us again.

Senator MURPHY. I do not want to litigate that issue. That is a separate issue. I only have 3 minutes. Just stay tight on the question I asked you.

Mr. VEPREK. Yes, sir. And so this was referring to the comments that I made on a draft resolution that was being circulated for clearance at the State Department, so I understand the thing we are talking about.

Senator MURPHY. Do you believe that leaders have a duty to speak out against racial hate speech or incitement?

Mr. VEPREK. I believe that is a judgment for political leaders to make, and that is part of the reason why we elect them to be leaders.

Senator MURPHY. You don't believe they have moral—

Mr. VEPREK. If memory serves, the draft resolution, the language was somewhat stronger, a duty to do it all the time. Sir, I can't police Twitter all day. I do not think any of us has time to police Twitter all day. We all have jobs to do. So the idea that the U.N. Human Rights Council is saying that we have duties to condemn these things all the time—

Senator MURPHY. Well, that is a red herring. I do not have a duty to speak out against speech that I do not see. But if encounter hate speech I think I have a moral duty to speak out against it.

News was sent to this committee overnight that the Administration is going to put a cap of 40,000 to 60,000 on refugee resettlement for the coming year, and that almost the entirety of that quota will be met by resettling 40,000 to 60,000 Afrikaners. That is an extraordinary break with precedent and an extraordinary message to send to the world that the United States is only going to allow for white people to be processed through the refugee program. Don't you worry about the very dangerous message that sends, and why, in your understanding, is our entire refugee program this year going to be limited to white Afrikaners?

Mr. VEPREK. Well, Senator, I have not been involved in the process of determining or making recommendations to the President on which populations would be admitted as refugees.

Senator MURPHY. Is that something you would support?

Mr. VEPREK. Well, sir, if I am confirmed for this policy, excuse me, confirmed for this position, then I anticipate that I would be involved in making recommendations up to the President. Now why the President has selected to give this group priority in refugee ad-

missions, I think he has articulated very well in the executive orders, where he as described a situation on South Africa.

I would mention also that throughout our history, the United States has prioritized certain groups for refugee resettlement. For example—

Senator MURPHY. Well, you believe—

Mr. VEPREK [continuing]. During the cold war people from the Eastern Bloc were selected, among other reasons, to make a political statement, vis-à-vis our relationship with the Soviet Union—

Senator MURPHY. Well, that is true, we have prioritized. We have never, ever before filled the entire quota with one ethnic or racial group. So why is it that we believe that no one, with the exception, apparently, of 300 Afghans, are meritorious of resettling in the United States other than white Afrikaners?

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, anyone who is admitted to the United States as a refugee will have been adjudicated as a refugee by USCIS, which has the legal authority to do so. So they are all refugees, according to our law.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

It is good to have all of you here, and I am very grateful that you are willing to serve.

Mr. Gor, we will start with you. I have known you for many years. We have traveled together, spent a lot of time together, and I have really appreciated your service on behalf of the Administration. I think it is an exciting thing for the United States Ambassador to India, a major power, a major economic force in the world, and one with potentially increasing significance to the United States. That ambassador is going to be somebody who has got a close relationship with the President, and I think that is wonderful.

I think it also an added plus that in a large embassy like that one, a lot of personnel, they have got a personnel expert, somebody who is head of the Office of Presidential Personnel, and also someone who seems to know every man, woman, and child in America. I have never known anyone who knows as many people as Sergio Gor.

Since taking office, President Trump has reinvigorated the economic statecraft in a way that has enabled us to exert more power as a country. And to that end I have commended his use of his authority over tariffs and trade matters, in order to secure more favorable terms for the United States, both as it relates to tariffs on our products and also as it relates to what very frequently surfaces as non-tariff trade barriers, sort of below the surface trade restrictions that often go overlooked. And I remain hopeful, very optimistic, that President Trump will continue to use this in a way that will make for a more robust trade environment on better terms for the United States.

In the past 9 months, that approach has paid some significant dividends, bringing allies and some competitors alike to the table, in a way that they have not been brought to the table in the past. This has also resulted in a lot of bilateral trade discussions, with an eye toward bilateral trade agreements, which I think are good for us. Multilateral trade agreements may have their place, but

they have not always worked out as well for us. Just yesterday, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi committed to reopening trade negotiations with this in mind.

So in this vein I want to ask you a little bit about India and about the energy sector in India, in particular. India continues to purchase Russian oil, of course. That is a fact. And it is also a fact that actors like Russia and Iran leverage their energy exports in order to constrain our allies' freedom to maneuver and to fuel regional destabilization. That is not ideal, to put it very mildly. And the best way to reduce that kind of vulnerability is for the U.S. energy exports to dominate the international market. We want to be sufficient at home. We want to be exporting in significant quantities, enough so that we can exert a significant degree of dominance there.

So as trade talks reopen, how do you see U.S. energy exports as being part of the conversation, and what are some of the things you think you could do as ambassador to try to facilitate those conversations?

Mr. GOR. Senator, thank you for your question.

I think it is vitally important that we do have reciprocal open trade, and fair trade, frankly. For far too long it has been one-sided all of the world, and it took President Trump coming in there and saying, "You know what? This has been working one way but not the other way." We currently have a \$45 billion deficit with our trading partners in India. So we will make it a top priority, as I had mentioned earlier, on LNG, on petroleum products, and we will endeavor to make sure that we have access to those markets.

To your earlier point on hiring personnel, I want to thank the majority committee, the majority members of this committee, because we have been able to successfully hire a lot of individuals from every single member, I think, on this committee. We took Senator Cruz's Chief of Staff, took Senator Scott's GC. I think we have taken 20 individuals from Senator Hagerty. So we appreciate that. And I think we have taken from you also, Senator Lee. So we have a great bench across the Federal Government because we were able to utilize these incredible individuals that have worked here in the Senate.

Senator LEE. What are some of the other areas of sort of mutual interest between us and India that you look forward to exploring, after, of course, you become fluent in at least Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and two or three others?

Mr. GOR. Thank you, Senator.

I think the biggest priorities, of course, are U.S. economic and business interests, the security and stability, advancing security and stability, expanding U.S.-India cooperation in defense, energy, strategic technology, and also enhancing diplomatic and cultural ties. We have an incredible diaspora, a lot of individuals in Texas. It is an incredible diaspora. It is something that should be fostered and grown.

Senator LEE. Great.

I see my time has expired. Thank you very much. Thank you all for your service, and thanks for answering my questions, Mr. Gor.

Senator RISCH [presiding]. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chair Risch, and I want to thank you and Ranking Member Shaheen for holding this hearing today, and all of our witnesses, your families I see are here, your willingness to serve.

I want to start with you. I am actually going to stay with you for my time here this morning, Mr. Veprek. I want to talk about the Lautenberg Program, because I am disturbed by the persecution of Jews, Christians, Bahais, and other religious minorities living in Iran. For more than 20 years, the Lautenberg Program has provided a safe and legal pathway for Iranian religious minorities to settle in the United States as refugees, with only two exceptions—during the first Trump administration when the program was suspended in February 2017, and right now, due to an executive order.

As the walls close in on the Iranian regime, these religious minorities, well, they need more help for the struggles they are facing, their increasingly severe state backed repression.

So could you explain what efforts, if any, you made as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for PRM in the first Trump administration to reopen the Lautenberg Program, and what role you would intend to play in supporting this program, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary as PRM?

Mr. VEPREK. Thank you, Senator Rosen. I appreciate the opportunity to address this.

When I worked in PRM before, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary, one of the portfolios I had was refugee admissions, and in that capacity oversaw the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, including the Lautenberg Program under it.

Before I had come on the job there, the Lautenberg Program, which worked to resettle Iranians who were suffering persecution from Iran to the United States via an intermediate European country, had been interrupted due to some logistical problems, that probably I would have to go into in a different environment.

Senator ROSEN. Yes.

Mr. VEPREK. While I was Deputy Assistant Secretary I worked on that, trying to get that process restarted for about 2 years. The principal issue was, say, overcoming some reluctance on the part of European partners. At the point that I left that position in, it would have been spring of 2020, I thought we were fairly close to getting there, but that was at the very beginning of COVID, and then I moved on to a different job and did not have the opportunity—

Senator ROSEN. I have some other questions to ask you, so will you be willing to come work with us on reviewing this program and helping, now that we hope Iran is on its back foot, weakest point in decades, and we know that there is a burgeoning movement there for some freedom, and we want to protect those religious minorities.

And I am going to kind of build on Senator Murphy's question, because I want to talk about vetting of Afrikaners and anti-semitism as we think about persecution. Because despite President Trump's indefinite suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admission Program, reports suggest that, of course, we know, white Afrikaners

have been resettled in rapid fashion, with some being approved to travel to the U.S. in just weeks.

So we are going to talk about the vetting. One of the very first Afrikaner refugees resettled is openly antisemitic, including on social media. And the irony of this situation is that the Administration has used the pretext of combating antisemitism to attack individuals and institutions it does not agree with.

So combating antisemitism and other forms of hate, wherever it manifests, absolutely necessary, but why is this expedited admission of an Afrikaner refugee with a documented history of antisemitic social media posts, it is both unacceptable and offensive.

So how do you think this individual slipped through the cracks? And if confirmed will you commit to vetting future Afrikaners to the same high standards applied to other refugee applicants?

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, thanks very much for the question. Not working in PRM now, I am not in a position to talk about how the vetting works, or what might have happened in this case.

Senator ROSEN. What will you do going forward?

Mr. VEPREK. But indeed, if I am confirmed and in place I can commit to ensuring that all refugees are vetted and screened to the highest possible standard.

Senator ROSEN. And so you would agree that someone who has antisemitic social media posts and continues to do this would not be a person you would—may consider clearing?

Mr. VEPREK. Just to be clear on the process for refugee admission, it is USCIS that makes the determination for who is a refugee and who gets refugee status to be admitted to the United States in that way. So that would not be a decision that I would be able to make personally.

Senator ROSEN. Well, you will be committed in the fight against antisemitism with all of us, and bringing these folks in, maybe not necessarily the best idea. Just generally.

Mr. VEPREK. Indeed, I am quite committed to the fight against antisemitism.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator CRUZ.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Walker, I am extremely alarmed by China's encroachment across the Western Hemisphere. Just a couple of weeks ago, I traveled to El Salvador, Panama, and Mexico, and met with leaders who all echoed the same concern. This is dangerous, and it is the result of bipartisan failure stretching back decades.

As you noted in your testimony, we have had no Senate confirmed Ambassador to the Bahamas since 2011, under both Republican and Democrat administrations. That has left an enormous vacuum, allowing China to make inroads in the Bahamas for over a decade, pouring billions into a deepwater port and other critical sectors of the economy.

The Bahamas is just 50 miles off the coast of Florida, and serves as a key regional gateway. The proximity makes any major foreign investment or infrastructure project directly relevant to American

national security. The United States should work with our partners to curtail China's growing influence in the Caribbean and the broader Western Hemisphere, and your role will be vital in advancing this critical partnership.

What policy approaches, in your judgment, should we pursue to help the Bahamas resist Chinese pressure?

Mr. WALKER. Well, thank you for your question, Senator.

You know, first of all I cannot set policy, and it is set by the President. But what I see China doing now is they are doing a lot of influencing in the Caribbean. And one of the things that I feel that I would do to get China to—is continue to work with the Bahamian people, to make sure that we become the partner of choice, being so close, because of being 50 miles in proximity from the United States. Just to work with the Bahamian people and the Bahamian government to make sure that we become their partner of choice.

And at the same time, work with a lot of the American companies to come to the Bahamas and see the key investments that they can make down in the Bahamas, to combat against China. Because I think they are coming down with a lot of money. So if we get other American companies to come down to invest as well in the Bahamas that will be a starting point.

Senator CRUZ. I fully agree. Thank you.

Mr. Gor, congratulations. Good to see you. You and I go back a long, long time. Indeed, just the other day we were laughing at 13 years ago when a former colleague of ours, John McCain, labeled you then boss, Rand Paul, and Mike Lee and me collectively “Wacko Birds.” And as you know, although I could not find it, I have a baseball cap in my office, given to me by a grassroots supporter with Daffy Duck, labeled “Wacko Bird.” And I remain a proud Wacko Bird. I feel pretty confident Senator Lee and Senator Paul do, as well.

You are going to be terrific in India. India, as you know, is quite literally on the front line against Chinese expansion. The U.S. and India are both acutely threatened by Chinese expansionism. President Trump and Modi undeniably respect each other and have signaled again and again that the United States and India are natural allies.

Nevertheless, our relationship with India is far from perfect. You have talked about that in several different ways today, in your testimony and in response to questions. I would like to ask you to talk a little more specifically about how India views Chinese expansionism and aggression and what that means for U.S.-Indian relations.

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

Look, India is very concerned. I mean, they have openly spoken about this, as I think it was Senator Hagerty who pointed out, just 5 years ago they were in open conflict. So while we might have our moment of hiccups right now, we are on the track of resolving that. Our relationship with the Indian government, with the people of India extends many more decades, and it is a much warmer relationship than they have with the Chinese. Frankly, they are concerned by Chinese expansionism, and Chinese expansionism is not just on the border of India. It is all over the area.

So we share a lot in common, and we share a lot of the same concerns that other nations in the region do. So should I be confirmed, we will make that a top priority that India is pulled into our side and away from them.

Senator CRUZ. I fully agree. Another area that remains under-discussed is cooperation with India specifically on energy. India has the world's largest population, a booming economy, and it is on track to become the world's largest economy in future years. President Trump is committed to American energy dominance, and obviously my home State of Texas is a powerhouse when it comes to energy.

Talk a little bit about the possibilities for U.S.-India energy cooperation.

Mr. GOR. Look, the possibilities are endless, Senator, as you pointed out. We fully intend, in these trade talks that are ongoing right now, to open the markets to crude oil, petroleum products, liquefied natural gas. You are talking about a population of 1.4 billion individuals there. Their middle class, by our definition, is larger than the entire United States of America. And so we have countless possibilities to expand into those markets, and we fully intend to do that.

Senator CRUZ. Excellent.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Gor, first off, congratulations to all of you, and I know each one of you is going to be dedicated and do a great job.

Mr. Gor, India's purchase of Russian oil is a significant issue for our foreign policy. As our next Ambassador to India, how do you view India's choice in light of U.S. tariffs and our strategic goals?

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

President Trump has been crystal clear on this. They must stop buying Russian oil. And I believe almost every single member of this committee has cosponsored Senator Graham's legislation, which has proposed a 500 percent tariff on secondary purchase and reselling of Russian oil. The President has only imposed a 25 percent tariff, and he is fully encouraging also European partners and others around the world to stop that.

Our tariffs work if our partners around the world are on the same page. If we are unilaterally putting tariffs on someone but they are able to buy the same oil and resell the same oil through China, through India, through Brazil, that is a problem. And so we fully intend on fixing that.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. India is a vital counterweight to Communist China in the Indo-Pacific, so our relationship is very important. I am concerned that India is a member of the BRICS organization, alongside some of our biggest adversaries. So how are we going to deal with that?

Mr. GOR. Senator, I share those concerns with you. With that said, the Indians have been on our side on various issues within BRICS, including several individuals in BRICS, Brazil, China have pushed for years to move away from the U.S. dollar. India has been the stopgap for that. India is much more willing and open to en-

gage with us than with some of those other individuals that are in BRICS.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Walker, what would you consider a clear measure of success at the end of your time as ambassador? How would you like to leave the U.S.-Bahamas relationship after your term as ambassador?

Mr. WALKER. Sir, thank you for that question, Senator. And you know, I feel a true measure of success because the Chargé d'Affaires, Kim Furnish, and her group in the Bahamas have done an excellent job. And a true measure of success, if I can contain and let the Bahamian people know that we are their country of choice. Which China making a large influence in the Caribbean, and we are able to keep China from being too close to the United States because that can become a security risk, and letting the Bahamian people know that we are the country of choice, I think that will be a measure of success for me.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Veprek, for years I have opposed the United Nations Relief and Works Agency choice to categorize Palestinian Arabs as refugees, decades after the conflict that created the refugee situation. No other refugee population is treated this way, and I have yet to be told the reason behind this decision. This means Palestinian refugees have to live in camps that become cauldrons of terrorism and violence, and they are never, ever resettled or recategorized. This allows Israel's enemies to falsely accuse Israel of violating international law and demanding the use of land that threatens Israel's security. What plans do you have to address this situation?

Mr. VEPREK. Senator, you raised a very interesting and important point, which is that the definition of refugee that UNRWA applies with regard to certain Palestinians is not the same as the definition of refugee that is applied more generally when it comes to other international instruments.

I would note that the United States has drastically adjusted its engagement with UNRWA recently, and so when it comes to looking at whether and how the United States will continue to assist in Gaza and Palestinian territories, we are going to have to consider what partners we engage with there.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Holtsnider, keeping our focus on the Middle East, the U.S.-Jordanian relationship is clearly important, but given the current regime's instability and the pressures from our enemies on Jordan, it is also a difficult one. Do you believe this relationship can be improved, and can Jordan become more stable and less at risk from its own population and terrorist threats?

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

I do believe the relationship can always be strengthened. The relationship between the United States and Jordan is good. It is very strong, and again, thanks to many members of this committee who have invested in that relationship over many, many decades.

I do think there is always more work to do to strengthen the bilateral relationship, particularly given the important role that Jordan plays in the region right now, and it has for many, many

years, particularly as we look at implementing the President's policy on Syria and activities going on in Israel.

So if confirmed, I look forward to working with Ambassador Huckabee, with Special Envoy Tom Barrack, and others to do the very best that we can do to strengthen that relationship and support the Jordanian government.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gor, if I could begin with you. And I think Senator Shaheen raised this issue. I just want to make sure we get it on the record.

I co-chair the Bipartisan Foreign Service Caucus here in the Senate, along with Senator Sullivan. And one of our goals has been to make sure that we have a Foreign Service that upholds the highest ideals of our country, that recognizes that they have to follow the policies of the President but also recognizes their duty to the Constitution. You agree that those are all important considerations for Foreign Service officers, right?

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

Not only do I agree, I think it is vitally important that we rely on some of those experts that we have there. The State Department has incredible talent that has been built over many decades. And when we are able to combine that with the President's vision, I think we can have incredible success around the world.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that. Obviously, if you are confirmed to be Ambassador to India, it is going to be very important that all those employees, Foreign Service officers and others, be treated, I think, with the respect that they deserve. And I am only raising this issue because there have been a number of reports about how, in your current position, you have applied essentially Trump loyalty tests, not just to political appointees but to some of the career folks at the National Security Council. Is that true? Have you insisted on loyalty to the President as part of that screening process?

Mr. GOR. Two points, Senator, and I thank you for the question.

First of all, I do not hire the National Security Council. That is outside of my purview. Most of the jobs within the White House do not fall under my portfolio. So I have not hired, I have not fired anyone within the National Security Council.

On your second point of the individuals that we do hire across the Federal Government and across the different agencies, the President was elected by 78 million people. He was given a mandate by the American people for a certain agenda. And so we do hire individuals that agree with that agenda. If you are a butcher, you are not applying to go work at PETA, and we believe we want to hire the best qualified individuals but also individuals that, frankly, do agree with the President's agenda and are able to implement that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I got it. I understand. And of course, but you have got a lot of Federal employees already working on behalf of the United States, and they understand that their responsibility

is to implement the President's agenda, but they also recognize a duty to respect the rule of law and the Constitution.

In any event, I understood your answer to Senator Shaheen, and I think it is going to be very important that you signal very early on—

Mr. GOR. A hundred percent. If I can add one last thing to that. The President has sent several nominees for ambassadorship that are career, including the gentleman to my left. And just last week we nominated 400 promotions within the State Department to different levels of counselor and officer. So we fully intend to continue doing that.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

So Mr. Veprek, let me ask you, and I know you have had some questions about the situation with South Africa, because early on the President issued an executive order, essentially saying he was going to penalize South Africa because of what he has described as genocide against Afrikaners, against white South Africans.

I do not know to what extent you have been involved in those decisions, but I do have a very simple question. Do you agree with what I think is an outrageous claim that the government of South Africa is engaged in genocide against the Afrikaners?

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

With regard to the President's executive order and his comments in it that make it possible for certain ethnic minority groups in South Africa—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. My question, sir, was very specific. Do you agree that the government of South Africa is engaged in genocide against the Afrikaners? Do you believe that?

Mr. VEPREK. I would refer to the President's executive order, including the reasons that he gave in there for deciding to—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Ok. I am going to stop you there. The notion that South Africa is committing genocide against Afrikaners is sort of laughable on its face, from a legal perspective.

Let me just ask my last question of you, Mr. Holtsnider, and thank you for your service. I just happened to be on a trip a couple of weeks ago that included a stop in Jordan. One of the clear messages we got from the government of Jordan was how they had worked very hard to open what is called the Jordan Corridor to provide humanitarian assistance into Gaza, to help people who are starving in Gaza, and that there were all sorts of obstructions that have been put in their place by the Netanyahu government.

Senator Merkley and I released a report today. I urge you to take a look at it. And I just ask that you work with us to address those issues, should you be confirmed. Do I have that commitment?

Mr. HOLTSNIDER. Senator, thank you so much for the question.

If confirmed, I absolutely commit to work with this committee to do what we can to get the assistance going.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator.

Senator DAINES.

Senator DAINES. Chairman Risch, thank you. I am going to jump right into it.

Mr. Gor, it is good to see you here today. Congratulations on your nomination. There is a lot of talk about India, certainly, as

you will be, if confirmed, the next ambassador, and I am confident you will be the next Ambassador to India.

But you also carry another very important title and role and that is the Special Envoy to the President to both Central Asia and South Asia. I just want to bring Central Asia back into the forefront here in this Foreign Relations Committee. I do not think it gets enough attention and talk. And while we have this moment, I want to jump into the Central Asia, some of the questions there.

We spoke the other day about how U.S. adversaries are really undermining the increased U.S. engagement we are seeing today in Central Asia. And clearly that breakthrough peace agreement that President Trump led between Azerbaijan and Armenia is one of these moments, it has been underreported, in my opinion, underappreciated, but significant geopolitically in the ramification it will have for Central Asia.

The question for you, Mr. Gor, is how important is it to show our allies in Central Asia that the United States is turning the page from the last Administration and now looking toward real investments and a stronger cooperation in the region?

Mr. GOR. Senator, thank you for your question.

It is vitally important, and I want to commend you. You have been one of the few individuals who actually have visited the area. From my understanding, there has not been a Senate delegation of close to a decade there. And so when the President announced me as the Special Envoy to the region, we have actually gotten outreach from some of those foreign ministers, including some of the presidents from those countries, and for far too long, they have felt ignored by both Administrations.

So we are fully engaged with those nations. The President has already spoken to some of those individual leaders over the last week alone. He will be meeting with additional leaders during his time at the U.N. So we are fully committed to bringing them into the fold, and for the longest time they just, they, frankly, have been ignored. So if I am able to do my small part, should I be confirmed, in bringing them in, we would be thrilled by that.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Gor. And having visited all five of the Central Asian countries in the last 18 months—I met with the presidents of each in their respective capitals—there was one common thread. There were several common threads, but one was their great respect and appreciation of President Trump. They truly want to engage. They think so highly of the President. It is a great opportunity for us, and I am grateful to see both the President and yourself engaging more now in Central Asia.

Mr. GOR. I appreciate that, Senator. In fact, we are actively planning a trip, the Deputy Secretary and I, Chris Landau, in October, to visit possibly three or four of those countries. So we are fully committed to that relationship.

Senator DAINES. And one of the specific issues that always gets brought up is certainly the outdated policies of Jackson-Vanik. That was a Soviet era type policy that really serves no purpose today as we move forward.

Senator Chris Murphy and I have been working on this in Congress, in a bipartisan way, to repeal it, and I look forward to working with you, in your Special Envoy capacity in Central Asia, to see

if we can get Jackson-Vanik repealed. We are working with the Chairman, as well. That is going to be one of the top topics. It shows a lot of respect, I think, for Central Asia, and the fact that they have moved on from the Soviet era of the past.

Mr. GOR. You are 100 percent right, and Secretary Rubio has spoken of his willingness and his desire to repeal that, and we will work toward that.

Senator DAINES. All right.

Just to wrap up, Mr. Walker, it is good to see you here today. Thank you for your willingness to serve as Ambassador to the Bahamas. I will cut right to the chase. As you know, as ambassador, you are going to be working to strengthen this relationship with the Bahamas and with our government. Can you work to build an even stronger law enforcement and counternarcotic relationship between the United States and the Bahamas, and work to stem the tide of this poison that is entering our country?

Mr. WALKER. Thank you for your question, Senator.

You know, one of the things that I put a lot of pride in myself is bringing people together and working with law enforcement. And I feel that if you can get law enforcement to communicate with each other and know how important they are, I feel that that is a most important thing, and it makes all the law enforcement feel that they are important. I think they have gotten so much negative that now I let them know that they are important, they are the reason why, and I can build a championship team if we are all working together. And I can commit to that, that I can get them to know how important they will be in the Bahamas and getting things done.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Walker, thank you. I am confident you can build another championship team there in the Bahamas, so thanks for your service.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back to you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Daines, and thank you to our nominees and their families, once again, for your willingness to serve.

We have received letters of support. I am going to order those put into the record.

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

Senator RISCH. For the purposes of the committee, the record will remain open until close of business tomorrow, September 12, at 5 o'clock. If any of you get questions I would urge you to immediately answer them. It will help move the process along.

Again, thanks to the panel. Thank you to the committee for the participation. With that the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SERGIO GOR BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The Taliban has long provided safe haven to terrorists who seek to harm the United States, imposed inhumane restrictions on Afghan women and girls,

and wrongfully detained Americans in attempt to extort the United States for concessions. Will you advocate for Afghanistan to be designated as a State Sponsor of Wrongful Detention?

Answer. In the United States, the Taliban remains a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group. As President Trump has made clear, wrongful detentions are an affront to the rule of law and aim to undermine our leadership on the world stage. I commit to using every tool available to curb this coercive tactic used by foreign adversaries so that the United States can hold such adversaries to account.

Question. The Taliban has long provided safe haven to terrorists who seek to harm the United States, imposed inhumane restrictions on Afghan women and girls, and wrongfully detained Americans in attempt to extort the United States for concessions. Will you keep this committee apprised of your engagements you have with the Taliban, if any?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Pakistan was removed from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in October 2022. However, money laundering and terror financing concerns remain. Ensuring Pakistan has adequate safeguards in place to counter terrorism will be important to your future role, especially given the latest military escalation between India and Pakistan resulted from a horrendous terrorist attack against India in April 2025.

What steps will you take to address counterterrorism financing with Pakistan?

Answer. As Special Envoy for South and Central Asia, I will continue to support the Trump Administration's efforts to ensure that Pakistan fulfills its FATF commitments and takes action against high-level terrorism financiers and terrorist leaders.

Question. What will be your broad strategy for addressing counterterrorism with Pakistan?

Answer. The United States cooperates broadly with—and enhances the capability of—the Pakistani military and civilian institutions, including law enforcement agencies, to protect the U.S. homeland and address terrorism threats. As Special Envoy for South and Central Asia, I will continue to support the Trump Administration's efforts to hold Pakistan to its commitments from the U.S.-Pakistan Counterterrorism Dialogue.

Question. Do you believe Pakistan is a trusted counterterrorism partner?

Answer. The United States and Pakistan have a shared interest in combating terrorism and Pakistan sustains daily casualties combating ISIS-Khorasan and other terror groups. In March 2025, Pakistan assisted in the arrest of ISIS-K operative Mohammad Sharifullah, who plotted the August 2021 Abbey Gate bombing that killed 13 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. While Pakistan has cooperated in working with us against ISIS-K, Islamabad needs to do more to irreversibly dismantle the anti-India terrorist infrastructure on its territory.

Question. What should be the end goal of U.S. efforts to punish India for its Russian oil purchases?

Answer. One of President Trump's most sincere foreign policy goals is to bring peace between Russia and Ukraine. As India is a partner of the United States, it needs to stop purchasing Russian oil. As our partner, India must share our goal of ending the conflict in Ukraine.

Question. Are there other diplomatic or economic levers the U.S. should apply to encourage India to decrease Russian imports?

Answer. If confirmed as Ambassador to India, I will work to ensure that we strongly advocate for U.S. companies and help expand opportunities for India to diversify energy purchases away from Russia. India has already doubled its purchases of American oil year to date. Continuing to encourage this trend will make Russian oil less attractive as well as support U.S. exports.

Question. Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, 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. If confirmed, yes you have my commitment to support both CODELs and STAFFDELS.

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

Answer. The India mission is the second largest mission in the world with over 2,000 employees. If confirmed I will have an open-door policy with all employees. I would describe my management style as collaborative and goal driven. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the talented Foreign Service Officers, Civil Service employees, and locally employed staff members at post.

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

Answer. The relationship between a Deputy Chief Mission (DCM) and the Ambassador is critical. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with my DCM. If confirmed, I plan to rely on my DCM's knowledge and experience in the Foreign Service to help guide my leadership of the mission. It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.

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

Answer. It is my understanding that U.S. diplomats do not engage enough with the host country population.

Question. How will you ensure diplomats know they need to get outside of the embassy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead by example and plan to visit all 28 Indian States, meet with local elected officials, and engage the vast business community across the country.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SERGIO GOR BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. It has been widely reported that as the Director of Presidential Personnel in this Administration, you have conducted loyalty tests for individuals seeking jobs in the government and seek to “purge” the Administration of anyone you view as disloyal to the President. Have you asked potential appointees whether they would be loyal to the President?

Answer. All Presidential appointees in any administration should be in alignment with the President's policy objectives. Potential Presidential appointees go through an interview and vetting process to ensure they are placed within the administration to best utilize their skill sets to advance the President's policy agenda.

Question. In your view, what does loyalty to President Trump mean?

Answer. Presidential appointees should be in alignment with the President's policy objectives.

Question. Do you believe that officials who serve in the U.S. Government should be loyal to President or the Constitution?

Answer. All Presidential appointees take an oath to the Constitution.

Question. Under your tenure at the Presidential Personnel Office, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has seen one of the slowest rates of nominations of career Department personnel. As of September 12, 2025, just eight career officials have been sent to this Committee while by September 12, 2021, President Biden had nominated 42 career officials. Why is this?

Answer. This administration is committed to advancing both political and career personnel within the State Department. The administration believes in placing individuals in positions that will utilize their skill sets, regardless of their political or career status, to make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

Question. During your tenure as Director of the Presidential Personnel Office, did every nominee receive a complete background investigation, and was there any deviation from the background check procedures from the last administration?

Answer. Consistent with the previous administration, a Presidential background investigation was completed for every State Department nominee.

Question. Did the relevant agency completing a background investigation for a nominee or appointee requiring a security clearance determine the individual should be granted a clearance?

Answer. Consistent with the previous administration, a security clearance determination is separate from the background investigation. Security clearance eligi-

bility is finalized after Senate confirmation and Presidential appointment. An individual is granted a security clearance when onboarding into the position.

Question. Do you believe the 2020 election was stolen?

Answer. President Biden was certified and served 4 years as President.

Question. Do you believe Joe Biden was legitimately elected as President of the United States in 2020?

Answer. President Biden was certified and served 4 years as President.

Question. Do you condemn the violence on January 6, 2021?

Answer. There is no place for political violence.

RESPONSES TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SERGIO GOR BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. During your tenure as Director of the Presidential Personnel Office, did every nominee under your purview, including nominees not in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's jurisdiction, receive a complete background investigation, and was there any deviation from the background check procedures from the last administration?

Answer. As with previous administrations, every nominee received a complete background investigation.

Question. Did the relevant agency completing a background investigation for a nominee or appointee requiring a security clearance determine in the affirmative that the individual should be granted a clearance?

Answer. Consistent with the previous administration, a security clearance determination is separate from the background investigation. All nominees or appointees receiving a security clearance have had the relevant agency review their file and the relevant agency has deemed the individual eligible for a security clearance.

Question. You referred to a "Presidential background investigation" in your responses to the first round of Questions for the Record by Ranking Member Shaheen. Can you clarify what a Presidential background investigation entails?

Answer. A Presidential background investigation is conducted by an authorized investigative agency and is aligned with Federal investigative standards. Diplomatic Security is the entity responsible for State Department nominees. The designation of a "Presidential background investigation" applies to an internal process and indicates the individual is being considered for a Presidential appointment.

Question. Is a Presidential background investigation different from a background investigation conducted by a law enforcement agency such as the FBI or Diplomatic Security?

Answer. All background investigations are conducted by an authorized investigative agency in accordance with Federal investigative standards. A Presidential background investigation may be more expansive or have additional checks, as appropriate.

Question. Did every individual nominated by the President during your tenure as Director of PPO receive a background check conducted by a law enforcement agency such as the FBI or Diplomatic Security?

Answer. Yes, every nominee received a background investigation conducted by the authorized investigative agency.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SERGIO GOR BY SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK

Question. What are the Trump Administration's aspirations for India's participation in the Quad and are there emerging areas of interest to India you would like to see these countries integrate further?

Answer. At the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, we announced an agenda focused on four areas: maritime and transnational security; economic prosperity and security; critical and emerging technology; and humanitarian assistance and emergency response. We are working with Quad partners to advance efforts to se-

cure and diversify critical minerals supply chains; strengthen shared airlift capacity to better respond to natural disasters; and mobilize government and private sector investments in quality port infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO SERGIO GOR BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. Given India's growing participation in non-Western security frameworks, what tools does the U.S. still have to shape regional norms and maintain strategic alignment?

Answer. In February, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi affirmed the deep strategic alignment between our countries through our Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology (COMPACT) initiative. Both bilaterally and within the Quad, our countries are driving forward substantive cooperation that advances a free and open Indo-Pacific. This directly contrasts with groupings such as BRICS and SCO, which have not yielded comparable deliverables.

Question. How can the U.S. avoid pushing India further into economic partnership with China and Russia while defending its trade interests?

Answer. President Trump has been clear; India must do more to sufficiently address U.S. concerns about the lack of reciprocity and the goods trade deficit. That being said, our relationship with India goes beyond trade interests and includes space cooperation, developing the next generation of critical and emerging technologies, and a shared commitment to a peaceful Indo-Pacific region. China and Russia are good at holding events but deliver little in terms of substance.

Question. What diplomatic or economic incentives could the U.S. offer to counterbalance India's pivot without escalating tensions or undermining its own strategic posture?

Answer. India knows that if it wants to realize its critical and emerging technology goals, it must partner with the United States. Neither China nor Russia can deliver what the United States can. In sharp contrast to U.S.-India high-level engagements and the QUAD meetings, the BRICS and SCO summits are heavy on optics and light on substance. After President Putin, General Secretary Xi, and Prime Minister Modi recently met in China at the SCO summit, there were no major defense or trade deals announced. After President Trump and Prime Minister Modi met in February, there were 33 paragraphs worth of announcements, including landmark defense sales and technology partnerships. If confirmed, I will advance these projects.

Question. The recent escalation at the India-Pakistan border following the April attack in Kashmir and the retaliation that followed is compounded by the series of flooding in the region that have left many displaced. What is your assessment of the role U.S. diplomacy can play in de-escalating India-Pakistan tensions, especially as climate-related disasters continue to impact the region.

Answer. If confirmed, I would maintain the Administration's support for direct dialogue between India and Pakistan while using our good offices when appropriate to reduce tensions and preserve the current ceasefire.

Question. Prime Minister Modi's massive infrastructure push is reshaping India's transport and border regions yet concerns over foreign investment and worsening weather have complicated progress. How can the U.S. ensure its development assistance to India and the region at large is both strategically aligned and resilient?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the dollars of the hardworking American taxpayer are always spent wisely and toward what is best for Americans. Every dollar we spend and every program we fund must be justified by answering if it makes America safer, strong, and more prosperous. This includes any development financing assistance to India and the region.

Question. As India increasingly ties its aid and infrastructure investments to strategic goals, how should the U.S. recalibrate its own approach to remain a relevant and trusted partner?

Answer. The United States has a powerful tool in its private sector, which can deliver world-class quality and resilient infrastructure around the globe. If confirmed, I will work to mobilize private sector investment and ensure that U.S. Gov-

ernment investments not only meet India's development goals but also make the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Question. India has a long-standing policy of handling Kashmir issues bilaterally. Do you believe the United States should let India and Pakistan resolve the Kashmir question on their own?

Answer. The United States' long-standing policy on Kashmir remains the same. The pace, scope, and character of any negotiations on Kashmir are for India and Pakistan to decide upon bilaterally.

Question. India's diversification away from Russian weapons systems is one of the most significant ways the United States can weaken Russia's military-industrial complex. What would you do to help India diversify sources of weapons systems, potentially to include strengthening defense industry cooperation between the United States and India?

Answer. President Trump has emphasized in discussions with Prime Minister Modi the importance of India continuing to increase its procurement of high-quality, American-made defense articles. If confirmed, I will support these efforts. U.S. defense equipment is the best in the world. As part of the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership, our countries are pursuing opportunities to expand defense industrial and technological cooperation across ground, space, air defense, missile, maritime, and undersea technologies.

Question. India is now a major producer of sub-systems for the U.S. defense industry, including parts of the F-16 fighter jet. Do you believe the United States should continue to invest in co-production of defense technologies in India?

Answer. Recognizing that India is a Major Defense Partner with Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) status, we are pursuing an ambitious agenda to expand our defense trade and industrial collaboration. These deals have provided New Delhi with key capabilities that support India's diversification from legacy systems, including those supplied by Russia, and enable India to expand its security role in the Indo-Pacific. These deals also support thousands of jobs in the United States.

Question. The United States has encouraged U.S. companies, including electronics and technology companies, to shift production out of China and to de-risk U.S. supply chains. Do you believe the United States should encourage companies to look at India as a production alternative to China? If so, what specific steps do you intend to take to pursue this policy objective?

Answer. If confirmed, I am eager to further support the electronics and technology supply chain partnerships that are developing between the United States and India. To realize the full potential of these collaborations, India must address deficiencies in its export control and intellectual property protection regulations, as well as eliminate data localization requirements that put U.S. companies at a disadvantage. If confirmed, I will push India to develop the regulatory environment which will create billions of dollars in opportunities for U.S. companies.

Question. The United States has worked to "de-hyphenate" India and Pakistan policy over the past decade in a bid to get India to play a larger role in East Asia. Do you agree with the "de-hyphenating" policy, and if so, how would you encourage this goal.

Answer. Yes. The United States maintains separate relationships with both India and Pakistan. These relationships stand on their own. If confirmed, I will support the Administration's foreign policy in both the South Asia region and with India in the Indo-Pacific that makes Americans safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Question. Indian students are the largest group of international students studying in the United States and an important source of STEM talent for U.S. industry. Do you believe we should continue to look for ways to encourage Indian students to attend U.S. universities?

Answer. The President has made clear that he welcomes foreign students in the United States. However, national security considerations will always come first. As the Secretary stated, every single visa decision is a national security decision.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HERSCHEL WALKER BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What are your views on China's substantial foothold in the Bahamas, including its operation of the Freeport Container Terminal, a diplomatic presence disproportionately large in comparison to the Chinese resident or tourist population, and Huawei's near-monopoly of local telecom networks?

Answer. The Bahamas' proximity to the United States makes it a tempting target for China. Chinese state-owned enterprises have invested heavily in high-profile resort projects and bid on tenders related to telecommunications, shipping, and transportation. If confirmed, I will promote U.S. companies and U.S. financing alternatives. I will make the case that U.S. firms offer not just the best technology, but also a commitment to quality, security, privacy, and fair business practices.

Question. The Bahamas is an important economic and security partner of the United States, what steps would you take to strengthen our bilateral relationship with the Bahamas?

Answer. The partnership between the United States and The Bahamas is strong. If confirmed, I will work to make it even stronger and closer. Having an ambassador in The Bahamas for the first time in 14 years would also be a huge step toward strengthening our relationship. If confirmed, I will build upon existing Embassy work on economic matters, law enforcement, military cooperation, public outreach, and combatting illegal immigration to further strengthen our relationship.

Congressional Travel

Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight mission. However, the Department has repeatedly denied or pushed-back on CODELs and STAFFDELS under previous administrations.

Question. Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, 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. If confirmed, yes, I commit to fully support Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) that seek to travel to The Bahamas.

State Management and Oversight

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

Answer. As the owner and CEO of two successful businesses, a former professional athlete, and an Olympian, I have great experience with leadership and management. I foster strong relationships with people from all walks of life, and I build trust through compassion, humor, and a focus on shared goals, creating unity and collaboration within teams and organizations.

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

Answer. I understand that the DCM typically manages most of the internal coordination and operations for the Embassy, and the Chief of Mission is the face of the United States to both the government and public. The DCM also needs to be included regularly in external activities to be able to step into the role of Chargé d'Affaires in the absence of the Ambassador, as Chargé d'Affaires Furnish has been doing very adeptly. If confirmed, I will work with my DCM to maximize their strengths and identify the most effective areas where they can help me to lead the Mission team.

It is imperative that U.S. diplomats get outside of posts abroad to meet with local actors, including host government officials, non-government organizations, and local citizens.

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

Answer. While I have not worked at an embassy before, if confirmed, I will work with embassy personnel to ensure that they make every effort, within security, financial, and resource allowances, to get outside the embassy walls and into remote communities as much as possible to ensure we share our vision, values, and goals with the people of The Bahamas.

Question. How will you ensure diplomats know they need to get outside of the embassy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that Embassy Nassau takes full advantage of all opportunities to meet with people across the thirty inhabited islands of The Bahamas. This would include outreach work to many varied locations in The Bahamas, as budgets allow, and ensuring more than one office sends representatives to these communities to talk about their work in the country as well as opportunities we promote. As budget allows, I would personally travel to these locations to engage with local populations. We will use modern technology to reach additional people, such as through virtual townhalls; interviews on the news, radio, and internet; and engagement through social media.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HERSCHEL WALKER BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Have you ever physically assaulted an individual? If yes, please describe the incident(s).

Answer. I have been very open about my past mental health struggles, the impact on my wife at the time, and how I overcame those struggles. I wrote a book with all the details. I spent decades sharing my story and encouraging anyone with mental health problems to seek help. In fact, my ex-wife has been very supportive. We remain friends. She and I gave a joint interview about what we went through together. Because our story ultimately was one of healing, forgiveness, and redemption, we knew that if we came forward, we could convince others that there is no shame in asking for help. We hoped to save some marriages and maybe even save a few lives. I think we did.

Question. Have you ever made threats of violence against any individual? If yes, please describe the incident(s).

Answer. See answer above.

Question. Have you ever stalked an individual? If yes, please describe the incident(s).

Answer. No.

Question. Why do you believe an individual who has exhibited violent behavior is qualified to serve as a U.S. Ambassador?

Answer. I have learned from my past, taken responsibility, and committed myself to helping others who may have mental health struggles like I did. Any claim that someone who was successfully treated for a mental health issue decades ago is disqualified from ever serving as a U.S. Ambassador reinforces the stigma associated with mental illness instead of erasing it. It would set us back and wipe out the progress we have made in this country surrounding mental health. It would discourage people from seeking treatment, and that would cause needless suffering and possibly loss of life. Mental health should be treated like any other aspect of health. Seeking treatment is not a sign of weakness but a sign of self-awareness and strength. People in the Bahamas, just like in the U.S., face mental health challenges. I can be their voice and their guide. It would be a wonderful way for an ambassador to build and strengthen relationships. Beyond that, my past experience and the grace that was shown to me by my family, my friends, and my Lord and Savior have strengthened my dedication to peace, diplomacy, respect for others, love, and trust.

Question. PRC-entities have sought to strengthen relations with the Bahamas, including investing heavily in logistics and tourism. What specific steps would you take to show the Bahamian government that the United States should be the country's top partner of choice?

Answer. The United States is the natural partner of choice for The Bahamas and the relationship between the United States and The Bahamas is built on a foundation of common interests, shared history, and democratic values. The United States is The Bahamas' largest trading partner, and the nearest islands of The Bahamas are only 50 miles from the United States. U.S. companies exported more than \$5.6 billion of goods and services to The Bahamas in 2024. The Bahamas imports nearly all its food and most of its manufactured goods from the United States.

If confirmed, I will work to make the U.S. business community aware of opportunities to support U.S. firms in exporting goods and services to The Bahamas as well as investing in the traditional sectors of tourism and hospitality. I will also encourage more American businesses to explore other sectors such as construction, energy, health, and financial services. My activities will further the opportunities for U.S.

companies while strengthening the Bahamian economy and supporting our shared prosperity. In addition, if confirmed, I will work with U.S. businesses in The Bahamas and the government to improve the ease of doing business.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HERSCHEL WALKER BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Over 80 percent of the Bahamas' landmass lies at an elevation of less than 1.5 meters above sea level, rendering the Nation acutely vulnerable to the accelerating threat of sea level rise. This environmental fragility is compounded by the increasing frequency and severity of hurricanes and tropical storms, which have placed immense strain on the Bahamian people and infrastructure.

Question. Mr. Walker, you have previously expressed criticism of major climate policy initiatives, including the Inflation Reduction Act. Considering the Bahamas' geographic and climatic vulnerabilities, do you regard climate change as a serious and immediate threat to the region?

Answer. Hurricanes and other natural disasters are a serious and immediate threat to the region, especially as a low-lying collection of islands in the hurricane belt. I understand that in May 2025, Secretary Rubio reactivated two U.S.-administered programs to strengthen early warning systems and provide rapid, life-saving assistance across the Caribbean. If confirmed, I look forward to leveraging such programs in the event of hurricanes or other natural disasters.

Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian—a Category 5 storm—USAID played a critical role in supporting recovery efforts, particularly in promoting food security and agricultural resilience. Programs such as the Farmer-to-Farmer initiative provided essential training to local farmers, helping to restore livelihoods and reduce dependency on external aid. This program was discontinued in January.

Question. Do you support the current Administration's decision to terminate USAID programs that were instrumental in post-disaster recovery and long-term resilience in the Bahamas?

Answer. I support President Trump and Secretary Rubio's priorities and decisions to realign foreign aid programs with long-term American interests. If confirmed, will work to implement the Administration's policies in The Bahamas.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Do you believe that it is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to humanitarian crises quickly and efficiently so we can save lives, project American values, and help meet the legitimate humanitarian needs of refugees before they become migrants?

Answer. I believe responding to humanitarian crises quickly and efficiently can be in the national security interests of the United States, particularly when done in a way that supports U.S. foreign policy interests, uses resources judiciously, and has a limited duration. Swift action can save lives, foster stability, and prevent crises from escalating into broader problems, including mass migration.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance, including in relation to: forecasting need and prepositioning commodities?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance, including in relation to conducting on-the-ground needs assessments, beneficiary targeting, market analyses, and post-distribution monitoring to determine the types, timing, and impact of distributions?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance, including in relation to managing logistics and supply chains in complex operating environments, including for ordering, shipping, offloading, primary warehousing, inland transportation, secondary warehousing, and physical distributions?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance, including in relation to conducting commodities safety checks and site security across the full chain of custody?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance, including in relation to monitoring and evaluating partners and programs to protect against diversion, waste, fraud, and abuse?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you believe regional bureaus at the Department and foreign service officers in the field have the required technical skills to effectively plan, execute, monitor & evaluate humanitarian assistance? If not, will you work toward centralizing these capabilities within PRM in order to avoid the need to hire specialized experts within each of the regional bureaus, thereby creating duplication and contributing to bloat?

Answer. The Department's reorganization empowers its regional bureaus to prioritize foreign assistance to meet U.S. foreign policy objectives. I understand that, as part of the transition of management of ongoing foreign assistance programs from

USAID to the Department, the Department acquired the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacities in these areas. Further, I understand that the Department is developing a centralized monitoring and evaluation capacity in the Office of Foreign Assistance Resources.

If confirmed, under my leadership, PRM will work closely with regional bureaus to support them in assuming responsibility for humanitarian assistance programming historically managed by PRM that transitions to management by the Department's regional bureaus.

Question. Do you support the idea of creating a dedicated career track for humanitarian assistance within the Foreign Service now that USAID/BHA will be merged into State?

Answer. This question is not under PRM's purview. I refer you to the Department's Bureau of Personnel and Training. Generalist Foreign Service Officers have functioned effectively in PRM over several decades.

Question. How will PRM's Disaster Assistance Response Teams (deployed abroad) and Response Management Teams (providing headquarters support) be recruited, staffed, deployed, and managed?

Answer. I understand that PRM's Office of International Disaster Response has 46 staff in Washington and 14 in overseas locations to respond to disasters responses. PRM might deploy some of this staff as a DART to help manage response activities when the magnitude or likely duration of the disaster warrants a sustained on-ground presence. In such cases, the DART Leader will report concurrently to the U.S. Chief of Mission and PRM leadership in Washington to ensure that U.S. Government disaster relief efforts are well-coordinated across USG agencies and with implementers.

Question. Historically, State/PRM has managed non-food assistance for refugees and operated almost entirely through contributions to international organizations (including historic contributions to UNRWA, over which PRM spectacularly failed to vet, monitor, or evaluate). Alternatively, USAID/BHA closely managed all forms of humanitarian assistance for disaster response and internally displaced persons, including food aid.

If confirmed, which approach to humanitarian assistance will you push the newly organized PRM bureau to adopt: PRM's historic approach, which relied upon generalized contributions to international organizations with limited direct oversight; or the former Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's approach, which prioritized projectized, needs-based assistance with rigorous oversight?

Answer. The President ordered a review of U.S. participation in all international intergovernmental organizations of which the United States is a member and provides funding or other support. The purpose of the review is to determine which organizations, conventions, and treaties are contrary to the interests of the United States and whether they can be reformed and to provide recommendations on whether the United States should withdraw from them. Regardless of the Department-wide approach to assistance that emerges from the review, all legally required oversight will be rigorously implemented.

Question. How will you manage the logistics and procurement of highly specialized humanitarian commodities—capabilities that PRM historically has not previously had?

Answer. I understand that the necessary contracts and expertise to maintain USAID's former capacity in this area transitioned to the Department of State, including PRM. These staff can coordinate the procurement and maintenance of stocks, their drawdown when required, and the transportation of relief commodities, either by air or surface, through the Department's Bureau of Administration.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Asylum

Question. Do you believe the United States is bound by the obligations in the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which the United States ratified in 1968?

Answer. My understanding is that, having acceded to the 1967 Protocol, the U.S. Government agreed to be bound by its provisions. That does not preclude the United

States from seeking reforms to modernize migration-related international agreements and to ensure they function effectively in the current world.

International Agreements

Question. With which countries have the United States entered into an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding to receive third country nationals removed from the United States?

Answer. PRM does not negotiate third-country national removal arrangements.

Question. With which countries have the United States entered into an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding to receive asylum seekers seeking international protection in the United States?

Answer. PRM does not negotiate safe third country agreements.

Question. How is the Administration ensuring that third country nationals removed to third countries are not tortured, at risk of human trafficking or forced labor, not rendered stateless or not at risk of other human rights violations?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for further information on removal procedures.

Question. Earlier this year, migrants seeking asylum in the United States were sent to Costa Rica and Panama. Some of them remain there, with no clear path forward. Do you believe this violated the principle of nonrefoulement?

Answer. I understand refoulement to mean the return of a refugee or asylee to a country where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of a protected ground, or where it is more likely than not than an alien would be tortured. To the best of my knowledge, that is not the case for those sent to Costa Rica and Panama. I refer you to the government authorities of receiving countries for further information.

Question. To your knowledge, is anyone from the U.S. Government tracking the status of the individuals sent to Costa Rica or Panama, which includes vulnerable young Afghan women, and if not, what obligation do you believe the U.S. has to do so?

Answer. I am not aware of any such activities. I understand the governments of receiving countries make decisions about the status of transferees in accordance with their own laws and international obligations. I refer you to the government authorities of receiving countries for further information.

Question. Last week, a Mexican national who had been removed from the U.S. to South Sudan was repatriated to Mexico, at U.S. taxpayer expense. Is this a good use of U.S. taxpayer money?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for further information on removal procedures.

Question. Do you understand that the Administration is making efforts to reach out to the individuals' country regarding returning them to their country of origin before removing them to third countries?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for further information on removal procedures.

USRAP

Question. I understand the Administration may seek to admit upwards of 60,000 Afrikaners for resettlement in the United States in Fiscal Year 2026 and only 300 Afghans, with no other nationalities included. Do you commit to advocating to increase the ceiling for Afghans, including Afghan SIVs and refugees stranded in Qatar and Pakistan, and advocating for other nationalities to be accepted for resettlement in the United States?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize. The State Department will carry out the President's priorities.

Question. What is the Administration doing to resettle refugees already approved for resettlement before January 20th?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize for resettlement to the United States.

Question. What evidence does the State Department have that Afrikaners meet the legal definition of a refugee under U.S. law and international law?

Answer. USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of claimed need of protection; I refer you

to my DHS colleague for additional details. If confirmed, it would not be my role to adjudicate refugee eligibility.

Question. Has there been guidance distributed within the Department to prioritize admission of refugees to the U.S. that are white or Christian?

Answer. I am not aware of any such guidance.

Question. Would such guidance be appropriate?

Answer. I cannot comment on hypothetical guidance.

Question. If confirmed, will you work to ensure that all slots dedicated to Afghans go to eligible Afghans and that they and their families are safely resettled in the United States?

Answer. The President determines which populations to prioritize for resettlement to the United States. If confirmed, I will faithfully carry out the President's priorities and duties prescribed by law.

Question. If confirmed, will you work to ensure that any Afghan who has fully cleared interagency screening will be scheduled to travel within 30 days, absent new derogatory information—and, if not, update this Committee on a plan to resolve any cleared pending cases?

Answer. The President determines which populations to prioritize for resettlement to the United States. If confirmed, I will faithfully carry out the President's priorities and duties prescribed by law.

Support for Afghan Women

Question. Afghan women face significant and unique concerns of violence if they remain in Afghanistan. They are also significantly under-represented in the Afghan SIV process, which is only of the only pathways that remains for Afghans under this Administration. If you are confirmed, how will you direct the bureau that you will oversee to consider the threat women refugees face, both as a consideration of their need to seek safety outside of their home country and the threats they face as refugees in third countries?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize. If confirmed, it will be my job to carry out the President's priorities.

Question. UNFPA reports that they see a significant number of women who are forced to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan who have been raped and sexually assaulted. If confirmed, how will you address this?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with regional bureaus to determine appropriate assistance to refugees and migrants when doing so advances U.S. foreign policy priorities.

Humanitarian Assistance

Question. PRM is now responsible for emergency and humanitarian response activities that were conducted by USAID, including deploying the nearly \$5 billion in unobligated fiscal year 2025 International Disaster Assistance funding. The Bureau also has nearly \$4 billion in unobligated fiscal year 2025 Migration and Refugee Assistance Funding. How do you plan to respond to protracted humanitarian crises like the civil war in Sudan or the more than 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, the Department reorganization aimed to consolidate non-security foreign assistance under regional bureaus to ensure programs closely aligned with U.S. political and diplomatic objectives in each country. If confirmed, I will ensure that PRM works across the Department to provide assistance where it is appropriate and in the U.S. interest.

Question. The Trump Administration has stated that it will only provide humanitarian assistance when it is in our national interest. What are the determining factors and who makes that decision?

Answer. I understand the Department prioritizes foreign assistance recipients based on Secretary Rubio's questions: "Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, every policy we pursue must be justified by the answer to one of three questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Or does it make America more prosperous?" If confirmed, I will ensure that PRM works across the Department to provide assistance where it is appropriate and in the U.S. interest.

Question. The United States has been the leader for emergency and disaster response, with our Urban Search Rescue Teams from Fairfax and LA County deployed

internationally to save lives. If confirmed, what will your criteria be for deploying Disaster Assistance Response Teams?

Answer. I understand that PRM's Office of International Disaster Response has 46 staff in Washington and 14 in overseas locations to respond to disasters responses. PRM might deploy some of this staff as a DART to help manage response activities when the magnitude or likely duration of the disaster warrants a sustained on-ground presence.

I understand PRM maintains the urban search and rescue (USAR) capability to respond in situations involving collapsed structures in urban settings. PRM also maintains the capability to deploy chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) experts for disaster response guidance and the capability for wildland fire management in cases that might affect people, including advising on host-nation fire suppression operations.

Question. Will the United States deploy Disaster Assistance Response Teams and lifesaving support to countries that request U.S. support?

Answer. I understand that the process for activating Department resources, including a potential DART, in response to a new disaster includes consulting with the U.S. Ambassador or Chief of Mission regarding whether: (1) there is significant unmet need; (2) U.S. disaster assistance will save lives; (3) the affected country requests assistance; and (4) responding supports U.S. foreign policy objectives. If a country does not request international assistance, the Department is unlikely to respond.

Durable Solutions

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to find durable solutions to the growing global forced migration crisis?

Answer. Under President Trump, U.S. diplomacy is focused now more on ending conflicts, from the DRC and Rwanda to Cambodia and Thailand. If confirmed, I would seek to use PRM's resources to support such efforts, as ending conflicts enables voluntary return, the preferred durable solution for most displaced populations.

Question. Will the PRM Bureau continue to work to address the causes of global forced migration through the provision of foreign assistance?

Answer. Under President Trump, U.S. diplomacy is focused now more on ending conflicts, from the DRC and Rwanda to Cambodia and Thailand. If confirmed, I would seek to use PRM's resources to support such efforts, as ending conflicts enables voluntary return, the preferred durable solution for most displaced populations.

Repatriations

Question. In June, the State Department transferred \$250 million in PRM funding to the Department of Homeland Security for Project Homecoming, to carry out repatriation of migrants. Since then, DHS has received an influx of funds—more than \$170 billion—for immigration enforcement, while funding for foreign aid programs that save lives and advance U.S. national security have been slashed. Do you support the Department of State transferring more funding from PRM to the Department of Homeland Security and if so, for what purpose?

Answer. I understand that PRM funds DHS via an interagency agreement to implement Project Homecoming, giving aliens without lawful status in the United States, or whose status is expiring, the choice to leave the country voluntarily. Eligible aliens receive assistance obtaining travel documents, cost-free travel, and an exit bonus upon return to their country of origin or a country where they have legal status.

If confirmed, I will evaluate whether to continue this voluntary, cost-effective alternative to deportations to support President Trump's effort to end illegal immigration and save American taxpayer dollars.

Question. Is it your understanding that the State Department is working with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that people who leave through its repatriation program do so voluntarily?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for information on its procedures.

Question. Do you commit to sharing with the Committee the interagency agreement between the State Department and Department of Homeland Security regarding the transfer of MRA funds?

Answer. I am not aware of the details of the interagency agreement between the Department and DHS. If confirmed, I will examine the issue further and ensure that the Committee has the information it needs to conduct oversight.

Question. Part of the initiative under the Department of Homeland Security entails giving people a \$1,000 “exit bonus” to incentivize leaving the United States. How is this money being distributed to people leaving through this program, and do you think the State Department has an obligation to ensure the money is not immediately pocketed by smugglers when people return to their countries of origin?

Answer. I understand that DHS works with Project Homecoming partners on the disbursement of exit bonuses. Aliens who depart the United States receive exit bonuses after landing in their country of origin or legal status. The delivery method varies based on country-specific guidelines and regulations. I refer you to DHS for further information on Project Homecoming implementation.

Office of Remigration

Question. The new reorganization of the Populations, Refugees and Migration Bureau includes an “Office of Remigration.” If confirmed, what is your vision for what this office will do?

Answer. I support President Trump’s priority of ending mass and illegal immigration to the United States. If confirmed, under my leadership, the Office of Remigration will prioritize the safe, voluntary, cost-effective departure of aliens whose status in the United States is unlawful or is expiring, as part of a whole-of-government approach to addressing the challenge of mass and illegal migration.

International System

Question. In your testimony, you expressed a desire to “reform” the international refugee and migration system. If confirmed, what steps do you plan to take?

Answer. Migration has emerged as a defining challenge for the world in the 21st century, and the asylum system is routinely abused to enable economic migration. This widespread abuse undermines the credibility of refugee and asylum systems.

PRM has an important diplomatic role advocating for reforms that return to and advance core principles grounded in national sovereignty, the rule of law, and democratic accountability.

RESPONSES TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. PRM Bureau has more than \$6 billion in unobligated fiscal year 2025 International Disaster Assistance funding and \$4 billion in unobligated fiscal year 2025 Migration and Refugee Assistance Funding. Congress has not been briefed by USAID or the Department since the start of this Administration on operational plans, spend plans or the utilization of humanitarian assistance. If confirmed, will you brief Congress on the humanitarian assistance spending plan, including for the \$10 billion in unobligated funds?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that PRM briefs the committee on the status of MRA funds, as well as IDA funds that the Bureau is responsible for administering, after the lapse in U.S. Government appropriations is resolved.

Question. What is the total amount of obligated, but not outlaid, IDA and MRA funds for awards that were terminated and are there claims on those funds from foreign assistance partners?

Answer. I understand that Department financial staff are compiling these figures for awards administered by PRM and will share them with the committee when available. In general, PRM is regularly processing payment requests from foreign assistance grantees in due course and is current on all requested payments.

Question. What is the value of IDA and MRA payments still owed to foreign assistance partners?

Answer. I understand that PRM provides payments in response to requests from funding recipients and will not know what is owed until all payment requests are presented.

Question. Who within the State Department is responsible for negotiating third-country national removal agreements with foreign countries?

Answer. U.S. embassies and consulates, and the Department’s regional bureaus lead such negotiations.

Question. Who is responsible for negotiating safe third country agreements?

Answer. U.S. embassies and consulates, and the Department's regional bureaus lead such negotiations.

Question. Once a third-country national agreement or safe third country agreement is made with a foreign government, what is PRM's role in facilitating or implementing this agreement?

Answer. My understanding is that PRM does not implement such agreements; I refer you to DHS for details on implementation of third-country national arrangements or safe third-country agreements. PRM will consider providing assistance to meet receiving countries' needs if requested.

Question. Has or are there plans to send Migration and Refugee Assistance to a foreign country in exchange for that country agreeing to accept third country nationals?

Answer. I understand PRM considers whether to provide MRA to meet needs when receiving countries request aid to or on behalf of refugees and migrants, including those arriving under third-country national arrangements and safe third-country agreements.

Question. Is the State Department conducting oversight on the funds provided to Eswatini, Rwanda and El Salvador in exchange for these countries accepting third country nationals from the United States?

Answer. The Department conducts oversight on foreign assistance expenditures consistent with law and policy. If confirmed, I will ensure PRM fulfills its responsibilities to appropriately monitor foreign assistance it manages.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to briefing the Committee within 30 days regarding third country removals and regarding PRM's role in Project Homecoming?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that PRM briefs Congress on its foreign assistance-funded programming after the lapse in U.S. Government appropriations is resolved.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to updating this Committee on a plan to resolve any cleared pending cases for Afghan refugees?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure PRM briefs Congress on its resettlement program after the lapse in U.S. Government appropriations is resolved.

Question. If you are confirmed, how will you direct the PRM Bureau to consider the threat women refugees face, both as a consideration of their need to seek safety outside of their home country and the threats they face as refugees in third countries? Please describe efforts beyond the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct PRM to consider the issues women uniquely face, such as maternal health, medical responses to sexual violence, and provision of hygiene supplies, as necessary to implement the bureau's foreign assistance-funded programming.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK

Question. As we look to the future, what do you see as the most significant strategic challenges facing U.S. refugee and migration policy in the next decade, and will your vision for PRM set up the Department to succeed in addressing them?

Answer. Mass and illegal migration, enabled and encouraged by increasing prosperity in the developed world and the unprecedented ease of international travel, could pull tens or even hundreds of millions of people across international borders in the coming decade. That phenomenon is inherently destabilizing to source, transit, and destination countries. It enriches criminal cartels and terrorist organizations, creates social and political unrest, undercuts the economic prospects of citizens, drains taxpayer resources, and undermines our sovereignty and the rule of law.

If confirmed, I will seek to use PRM's resources to advance U.S. national and border security with programs and policies that halt mass and illegal migration. This means supporting diplomacy to ensure other nations facilitate the timely return of their nationals with no legal right to be in our country. It also means enabling their humane, cost-effective, and voluntary re-migration to their countries of origin.

More ambitiously, PRM will work with other countries to reform the international refugee and asylum regime to prevent economic migrants from exploiting. This widespread abuse threatens the asylum principle itself and crowds out those in genuine need of international protection. U.S. leadership can create an consensus around this issue and lead the world in reforging international norms.

Finally, perhaps most important is what PRM will not do. It will not fund programs that facilitate mass and illegal migration.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. USC 1157 (d) requires that the President or designated representatives of the President consult with Congress about refugee allocations and adjustments to those allocations and that the substance of those consultations be printed in the *Congressional Record*. On September 30, 2024, the Biden Administration authorized the admission of up to 125,000 refugees. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order which suspended the United States Refugee Admissions program, effectively bringing the authorized number of admissions to 0. What consultation process did the President or designated representatives of the President undertake to adjust the authorized number from 125,000 to 0?

Answer. I refer you to the White House for more information on what congressional consultations, if any, the President executed in conjunction with issuance of E.O. 14163. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President or his designees will consult with Congress.

Question. On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order which suspended the United States Refugee Admissions program, effectively bringing the authorized number of admissions to 0. What consultation process did the President or designated representatives of the President undertake before issuing Executive Order 14204 “Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa” which instituted a new refugee program for Afrikaners after the January 20, 2025 executive order had determined their entry to be “detrimental to the interests of the United States”? When did this consultation process begin and when was it completed?

Answer. E.O. 14204, “Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa,” issued February 7, directed the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security to take appropriate steps, consistent with law, to prioritize humanitarian relief, including admission and resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), for Afrikaners in South Africa who are victims of government-sponsored, race-based discrimination. The State Department continues to carry out this White House priority, including by processing Afrikaner refugees for admission as case-by-case exceptions to E.O. 14163. Every admitted Afrikaner refugee meets all the requirements of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Question. If the “entry into the United States of refugees under the USRAP would be detrimental to the interests of the United States”, why was Executive Order 14204 “Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa” issued to resettle Afrikaners?

Answer. I understand the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State, as exceptions to the refugee admissions suspension under E.O. 14163, jointly determined that the admission of specific Afrikaner refugees is in the national interest and does not pose a threat to the security or welfare of the United States.

Question. At what point in the refugee resettlement process were the Afrikaners noticed of their approval? When were they “assured” of resettlement sites?

Answer. I understand these applicants are proceeding through the same U.S. Refugee Admissions Program processing steps, including assurance and notification procedures, as any other applicants.

Question. Please outline the process undertaken to vet the Afrikaners recently admitted to the United States as “refugees” including if background checks were conducted, if health checks were conducted, and if these individuals were subjected to the same screening of social media activity for antisemitic activity that the Administration announced on April 9, 2025.

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. If the vetting process outlined in Question 3 was conducted, outline in detail the process by which it was completed including background checks, health checks, screening of social media activity for antisemitic activity. Please include the average length of time needed to complete this vetting process.

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. If the Afrikaners were not subjected to the same screening of social media activity for antisemitic activity that the Administration announced on April 9, 2025, why was this group exempt from those requirements?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. If the Afrikaners were subjected to the same screening of social media activity for antisemitic activity that the Administration announced on April 9, 2025, how was this group screened?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. How is the Administration defining antisemitic for this screening?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. Would calling Jews “untrustworthy” and “a dangerous group” be considered antisemitic in this screening process?

Answer. I refer you to DHS for questions on refugee screening and vetting procedures.

Question. Do you believe Afrikaners are the only group meet the definition of a refugee under United States law?

Answer. USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of claimed need of protection; I refer you to DHS for additional details. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary, it would not be my role to adjudicate refugee eligibility.

Question. If you believe other groups meet the definition of a refugee under United States law, please outline which groups you believe meet that definition?

Answer. USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of claimed need of protection; I refer you to DHS for additional details. If confirmed, it would not be my role to adjudicate refugee eligibility.

Question. Do you believe Afrikaners are the only group whose resettlement is not detrimental to the United States?

Answer. U.S. refugee resettlement priorities are directed by the President. The Department of State will implement the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in accordance with his policies and the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026.

Question. If you do not believe Afrikaners are not the only group whose resettlement is not detrimental to the United States, what other groups would you find to be the exception?

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct my staff to process for resettlement any groups directed by the President, including any specified in the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026.

Question. Do you believe it is legal to use taxpayer dollars to imprison those removed from the United States abroad?

Answer. My understanding is that PRM funding has not been used to hold aliens removed from the United States. I refer you to DHS for further information on removal procedures.

Question. Do you support using funds from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to hold individuals removed from the United States?

Answer. My understanding is that PRM funding has not been used to hold aliens removed from the United States. PRM funds DHS to implement Project Homecoming, giving aliens without lawful status in the United States, or whose status is expiring, the choice to leave the country voluntarily. Eligible aliens receive assistance obtaining travel documents, cost-free travel, and an exit bonus upon return to their country of origin or legal status.

If confirmed, I will continue this cost-effective alternative to deportations in order to support President Trump's effort to end illegal immigration.

Question. Do you support using funds from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to hold individuals removed from the United States in a third country they have no ties to?

Answer. My understanding is that PRM funding has not been used to hold aliens removed from the United States. PRM funds DHS to implement Project Homecoming, giving aliens without lawful status in the United States, or whose status is expiring, the choice to leave the country voluntarily. Eligible aliens receive assistance obtaining travel documents, cost-free travel, and an exit bonus upon return to their country of origin or legal status.

If confirmed, I will continue this cost-effective alternative to deportations in order to support President Trump's effort to end illegal immigration.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ANDREW VEPREK BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

Question. LGBTQI+ individuals fleeing persecution often face significant barriers to accessing humanitarian protection, including risks to their safety if their identity is disclosed. U.S. law requires that any person who enters the country—whether at or between official ports of entry—and expresses a fear of return or intent to seek asylum must be given the opportunity to apply or be referred for a credible fear screening. These provisions reflect U.S. commitments under the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, which prohibit the return of individuals to situations where they may face persecution. Do you agree that, under current U.S. law, persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity constitutes grounds for asylum or refugee status?

Answer. USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of claimed need of protection; I refer you to DHS for additional details. If confirmed, it would not be my role as Assistant Secretary to adjudicate eligibility for asylee or refugee status.

Question. Under the Refugee Act of 1980, the administration is required to consult with Congress in setting an annual determination on refugee admissions. If confirmed, how would you engage with Congress in ensuring we have a refugee program that is responsive to U.S. national security and humanitarian interests?

Answer. As part of the annual Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions, the President, or his designees, is required to consult with Congress. If confirmed, I commit to supporting this process, including through required congressional consultations.

Question. What are your priorities around operating the U.S. refugee resettlement program, including around particular refugee populations of concern, working with implementing partners, communicating with the Interagency, and engaging in diplomacy with other countries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize the following principles, as articulated in E.O. 14163, in administering the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP): (1) public safety and national security are paramount considerations; (2) only refugees who can fully and appropriately assimilate will be admitted; (3) taxpayer resources must be preserved for U.S. citizens; and (4) State and local governments must have the maximum possible role in determining refugee placement.

Question. Refugee populations have often been prioritized under the refugee program because they continue to experience severe vulnerability in the places they have fled, or because they have direct ties to the United States. Family reunification cases fit into this latter category. If confirmed, do you commit to working to address the cases of refugees who have already been vetted and approved but are now stranded while the program is effectively suspended?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize. The Department will carry out the President's priorities.

Question. As of today, a refugee ban remains in place for all refugee populations. Only white South Africans have been admitted through the USRAP in any noticeable numbers. Many thousands of refugees have been waiting in the pipeline for years and have already been rigorously vetted and approved. How would you plan

to address the refugees who have been waiting for years in the pipeline, including unaccompanied refugee minors who are stranded in the pipeline?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize. The Department will carry out the President's priorities.

Question. How would you plan to address the refugees who have fled persecution from Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Answer. I understand that PRM's portfolio of humanitarian assistance includes programs that support refugees from Ukraine, Sudan, Burma, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. If confirmed, I will consult closely with Department leadership and the heads of the Department's regional bureaus to determine how PRM's foreign assistance can support U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Question. How would you plan to address the refugees who are part of family reunification cases?

Answer. USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications and follow-to-join refugee petitions on a case-by-case basis; I refer you to DHS for additional details.

Question. In December 2024, this body passed into law authorization language for the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) as part of the NDAA, mandating the ongoing work of the office responsible for relocating Afghans who remain at severe risk. What steps do you plan to take to ensure the ongoing relocation and resettlement of Afghans who remain at risk overseas due to their support for the U.S. mission?

Answer. I refer you to the Department's CARE office for questions about relocating such Afghans. Refugee admissions remain suspended under E.O. 14163, with only case-by-case exceptions. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize for resettlement. I understand that Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) processing for qualified Afghans continues.

Question. Can you share how you would approach following through on this legislation and congressional intent to continue resettling Afghans?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize for resettlement. The Department will carry out the President's priorities. I understand that Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) processing for qualified Afghans continues.

Question. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration oversees the Reception and Placement (R&P) program. This program provides initial resettlement assistance to refugees arriving in the U.S. In January, the Trump Administration told R&P partnering resettlement agencies to 'stop all work under the award(s) and not incur any new costs after [January 24, 2025] pending a review. Can you share what the status of this program is and what your plan for the future of this program is?

Answer. I understand that PRM reinstated R&P cooperative agreements in May 2025 and extended the relevant awards through December. Refugees who entered the United States since June 2025 have received R&P services. If confirmed, I will review the structure and operations of the R&P program to consider whether and how it can be improved.

Question. If confirmed, how will you ensure cases of individuals whose cases are now in limbo due to the resettlement freeze, are quickly addressed?

Answer. As part of the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2026, the President will determine which populations to prioritize for resettlement. If confirmed, I will work to quickly enact those priorities.

Question. In January, President Trump issued Executive Order 14169 pausing all U.S. foreign assistance for 90 days. Later, Secretary Rubio announced the cancellation of selected foreign assistance funding. PRM is responsible for administering funding based on humanitarian needs and U.S. foreign policy priorities.

Answer. I acknowledge this statement.

Question. If confirmed, what would U.S. foreign policy priorities be in terms of humanitarian aid and what types of programs would you focus on?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to apply Secretary Rubio's vision for America First Foreign Assistance—one that aligns with administration policies and advances concrete U.S. national interests—in the foreign assistance programs managed by PRM.

In accordance with E.O. 14204, I will direct the bureau to work expeditiously to prioritize humanitarian relief, including admission and resettlement through the United States Refugee Admissions Program, for Afrikaners in South Africa who are victims of unjust racial discrimination.

I will direct the bureau to support voluntary returns and support other countries that help us achieve our immigration enforcement goals.

I will lead the Department's response to foreign disasters in a manner that delivers life-saving assistance efficiently, effectively, and rapidly, in response to identified needs, and in a way that advances U.S. foreign policy goals.

Question. The office of International Disaster Response (IDR) under PRM is taking on responsibilities that used to reside in USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance with 60 staff, 14 of whom will be stationed overseas. This contrasts with the over 1,000 staff that used to work at BHA.

How will IDR effectively program and oversee the billions in International Disaster Assistance that will flow through the Bureau with 60 staff?

Answer. I understand that IDR is charged with providing timely, effective, and accountable disaster response within the first 6 months immediately following a new disaster. IDR does not seek to duplicate all of the functions of the former BHA.

I understand that BHA's previous role managing Title II food assistance is now overseen by the Office of Global Food Security (GFS), while allocation of International Disaster Assistance (IDA) funding based is overseen by the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom (F), IDA for protracted humanitarian emergencies is managed by the Department's regional bureaus, and IDA for relief commodity warehousing and transport is overseen by the Bureau of Administration (A).

Question. How will that many staff effectively vet and report on the programs and awards of the office?

Answer. I understand that IDR is composed mostly of former USAID staff with disaster response expertise, including some who oversaw BHA's risk management and vetting procedures. In addition, IDR, has access to other vetting and reporting capabilities resident elsewhere in PRM and the other offices under the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom (F).

Question. Previously at USAID, the Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART) were teams of highly trained specialists who could be deployed within 24 to 48 hours to respond to disasters around the world, such as earthquakes or war. When USAID was shut down, active DARTs working in Afghanistan, Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine were also shut down. According to the State Department, PRM will take on the function of the DART teams.

At USAID, it was not uncommon to have five DARTS going at once. With the current reduced capacity, what is the total number of DARTS would PRM be able to support and what is your plan for training staff to ensure they have the specialized skills required for deployment?

Answer. I understand that IDR remains capable of multiple simultaneous DART deployments. The overwhelming majority of the former USAID staff who comprise IDR's workforce bring pre-existing specialized DART qualifications and experience. I understand the Department also has hired DART-qualified former USAID staff into assistance sections at certain U.S. embassies overseas, the Department's regional bureaus, and the Office of Global Food Security.

Question. How will you evaluate when to stand up or wind down DART responses especially in longer conflicts like Sudan?

Answer. I understand that PRM will manage the Department's new disaster response function, including a DART deployment if necessary, for up to 6 months following the onset of the emergency. PRM and the relevant regional bureau will work closely to transition response activities and awards from PRM to the relevant regional bureau by the end of 6 months, which in most cases would coincide with DART stand-down, including collaborating on recommended follow-on actions. PRM will remain available to advise the regional bureau's assistance team as needed.

Question. With the State Department announcing short deployment timelines of just 90 days for DARTs, what is your plan to transfer the response to the regional bureaus and to ensure they are prepared to take on the complex response?

Answer. I understand that PRM will manage any disaster response for up to 6 months following the onset of a new disaster. Regional bureaus are responsible for managing any disaster-response awards that existed before the onset of the disaster, as well as those that might continue beyond the initial 6-month period. If confirmed,

I will ensure that PRM and the relevant regional bureau work closely to transition disaster response activities and awards from PRM to the relevant regional bureau when necessary.

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

While Jordan has formally recognized Israel for over three decades, the Jordanian public has grown increasingly anti-Israel in sentiment, even more so after Hamas' brutal October 7 attack.

Question. How will you work to improve Israeli-Jordan ties and emphasize the importance of the Jordan-Israel relationship amongst the Jordanian public?

Answer. Jordan and Israel have had a peace agreement since 1994, and both benefit greatly from cooperation on water, energy, and other issues. Jordan, to its great credit, has played a key role in providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza throughout the conflict. If confirmed, I will do everything possible to support productive and mutually beneficial agreements between Israel and Jordan that advance U.S. interests, including advancing the Project Prosperity deal which includes Abraham Accords signatory, the UAE, and would see exchanges of water for energy. I would also seek to advance our ongoing efforts to promote people-to-people ties and tolerance.

Jordan's central location in the Middle East makes it an incredibly strategic partner. It has served as a hub for our regional security and foreign assistance in the past and has the opportunity to play an important role facilitating U.S. engagement with the new Syrian government.

Question. What is your understanding of Jordanian views on the new regime in Damascus, and how can we best work with Amman to prevent a resurgence in terrorism or a tyranny that marginalizes minorities and harkens back to the Assad era?

Answer. The United States and Jordan are working hand-in-hand to give the new Syrian government a chance to succeed. The United States and Jordan have a shared vision for Syria: a country at peace with its neighbors, that is not a base for terrorists or Iran, and that respects the rights of all its citizens—including ethnic and religious minorities. If confirmed, I will continue our efforts working with Jordan to support economic and political stability in Syria, and to press the new Syrian government to turn the page on the previous abuses of the Assad regime, for the good of all Syrians and in the interest of international security and stability.

Question. Even after Assad's ouster, remnants of drug and arms trafficking networks that undermine stability and fuel insecurity persist in Syria. Do you see any obstacles to addressing these threats, and what additional resources—if any—would assist the United States to mitigate these concerns?

Answer. The United States is committed to giving all Syrians a chance at a peaceful and prosperous country. The former Assad regime hollowed out the Syrian state and encouraged criminality, including Captagon trafficking and weapons smuggling by Iran-backed terrorists. The new Syrian government's capacity to address these threats is limited. If confirmed, I will work closely with the government of Jordan to address these capacity gaps.

Question. As the U.S. continues to reduce its military presence in Iraq and Syria through Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-Jordanian security relationship will become even more important. How do you assess your role as Ambassador (if confirmed) changing based on this regional posture change?

Answer. Jordan remains one of our closest partners in the region and is crucial to regional stability and advancing U.S. objectives. Our partnership goes back decades, including working together to combat terrorism and defeat ISIS. Working with Jordan is in our direct national interest and our support enhances the positive influence of Jordan in the region, including on shared counterterrorism objectives as Operation Inherent Resolve draws down. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with Congress and the Administration to further our critical security partnership with Jordan and will continue to review our current and potential programming to ensure it is effective and aligned to achieve the Administration's priorities.

Question. What is your assessment of Iranian security threats to Jordan, and how we can assist Jordan in addressing these threats?

Answer. The most significant factor that undermines our goal of peace and security in the Middle East is the Iranian regime's longstanding practice of destabilizing the region and employing terrorist organizations as spoilers to peace. Jordan is a vital regional security partner for the United States and has been a key partner in countering Iran's malign influence. The United States provides security assistance, including FMF, INCLE, and NADR funds to support joint security priorities and ensure that Jordan remains a stable, capable partner. Our strong bilateral security relationship advances our mutual interest in combating terrorists and destabilizing actors, which helps keep us safe at home.

Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS) serve a critical oversight mission. However, the Department has repeatedly denied or pushed-back on CODELs and STAFFDELS under previous administrations.

Question. Do you agree to support fully any CODEL or STAFFDEL, 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, if confirmed I commit to fully support any CODEL or STAFFDEL visits to Jordan.

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

Answer. Embassy Amman consistently has attracted some of the top talent from around the Department. If confirmed, I will prioritize supporting and integrating this talent across the U.S. Government into a strong unified team. My personal approach in leading teams throughout my career at the State Department has been to foster a climate of collaboration, offering the resources and direction, and then allowing space to enable creative and new thinking. In this effort, I will engage with first and second tour officers. I benefited from that type of leadership as a new officer and will work to pass those opportunities forward.

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

Answer. As a career Foreign Service Officer, I have the upmost respect for the deputy chief of mission (DCM) role and have myself had the honor to serve as DCM in Kuwait. I know that our embassies are most effective when the DCM is able to undertake critical work related to the management of the mission. If confirmed, I will work closely with my DCM and empower that person to lead on critical issues, including management functions of Embassy Amman, one of our largest and most complex missions.

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

Answer. Our diplomats overseas are essential to communicating U.S. values and priorities to advance the interests of the American people and the Administration. In my experience, engagement with local actors is a core function of a Foreign Service Officer's duties. If confirmed, I will ensure officers at Embassy Amman are regularly engaging in their host community to promote American interests.

Question. How will you ensure diplomats know they need to get outside of the embassy?

Answer. Our diplomats overseas are essential to communicating U.S. values and priorities to advance the interests of the American people and the Administration. If confirmed, I will ensure officers at Embassy Amman are regularly engaging in their host community and will ensure proper mentorship of first and second tour officers to instill this core skill.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JAMES HOLTSNIDER BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

The Jordanian government has raised on numerous occasions its concern that any kind of displacement of Palestinians would be destabilizing to Jordan's security. The King of Jordan has outright rejected a U.S. proposed takeover plans of Gaza.

Question. Do you assess that the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza would be destabilizing to Jordan?

Answer. Jordan's leaders, including King Abdullah II, have spoken out against displacement of Palestinians. President Trump's plan for Gaza is focused on ending the conflict, which requires Hamas to immediately release the hostages and relinquish its rule over Gaza. Central to the President's vision is the creation of a regional architecture that allows for greater regional stability and security. Jordan will be an important partner to achieve Gaza's reconstruction on the day after. Jordan continues to play a critical role in helping advance U.S. interests in the region including to promote regional peace, and the United States, likewise, is committed to supporting Jordan to ensure its resilience and stability in the furtherance of those interests.

The United States has focused on supporting Jordan's stability by promoting economic growth and addressing water security—the greatest challenges the country faces—and partnering to address terrorist threats that persist in the region. U.S. investment in Jordan has been in our direct national interest and, if confirmed, I will continue to work to grow our partnership with Jordan.

Question. Do you assess that the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza would undermine U.S. regional interests?

Answer. The most urgent and important contribution the United States can make to promote peace in the region is to deny terrorist organizations and terrorist regimes, like Hamas, the ability to reach into the region to destabilize communities and act as a spoiler of peace. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Jordan to advance our mutual objective of promoting peace and stability in the region. President Trump's plan for Gaza is focused on ending the conflict which requires Hamas to immediately release the hostages and relinquish its rule over Gaza. Central to the President's vision is the creation of a regional architecture that allows for greater regional stability and security.

The ongoing conflict in Gaza emboldened Islamist opposition groups in Jordan. In the 2024 parliamentary elections, the leading Islamist party, the Islamic Action Front, tripled its representation. The Jordanian government recently raided the group's office, confiscated its assets, and has linked it to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is also outlawed.

Question. How has the conflict in Gaza and the prosecution of the war exacerbated political tensions in Jordan?

Answer. Jordan remains one of our closest partners in the region and Jordan is aligned with the United States in our shared opposition to U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. The United States is committed to supporting Jordan in promoting internal security and stability, which is critical to achieving our regional objectives. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Jordan to take appropriate action against foreign groups engaging in terrorist and other malign activity, and to prevent them from obtaining resources and support.

Question. How has Jordan's response to agitated opposition groups in the country impacted tensions in the country?

Answer. Jordan remains one of our closest partners in the region and Jordan is aligned with the United States in our shared opposition to U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. The United States is committed to supporting Jordan in promoting internal security and stability, which is critical to achieving U.S. regional objectives. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Jordan to take appropriate action against foreign groups engaging in terrorist and other malign activity to prevent them from obtaining resources and support.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO JAMES HOLTSNIDER BY SENATOR DAVID MCCORMICK

I think we both recognize the importance of our alliance with Jordan regionally and the role they play as a critical partner in an unstable neighborhood. That said, high unemployment, high public debt, energy, and water scarcity all contribute to the Kingdom's economic instability and political stress.

Question. What role should American investment and foreign aid play in Jordan's energy transition and water security initiatives—particularly with regard to assistance to Jordan's water conveyance and infrastructure projects?

Answer. This Administration has made clear our enduring partnership with Jordan remains a priority and U.S. assistance is critical to a more resilient and stable Jordan. I am committed to ensuring efficient stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars, including any expenditures of foreign assistance. U.S. foreign assistance must only be used judiciously and should leverage private investment for large infrastructure projects.

American investments in Jordan, including in the energy and digital sectors, can strengthen Jordan's long-term economic stability, create opportunities for U.S. companies, and support the flow of future private capital.

Jordan's critical water scarcity is a significant limitation on Jordan's economy and therefore must be addressed for the future of regional stability and the U.S.-Jordanian partnership. If confirmed, I will carefully assess the role for U.S. support to address systemic issues in Jordan's water system, including foreign assistance.

