

THE NOMINATION OF HON. MARCO RUBIO  
TO BE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## **THE NOMINATION OF HON. MARCO RUBIO TO BE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025**

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Daines, Barrasso, Paul, Cruz, Lee, Scott, Curtis, Cornyn, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Merkley, Booker, Schatz, Van Hollen, Duckworth, and Rosen.

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

This will be our first meeting, obviously, of the 119th Congress. I want to welcome you all here. This is an interesting meeting to start. In a moment I am going to have Senator Scott introduce the nominee here, and we will proceed after that.

Before we do I want to talk about some changes in the committee not only for this hearing but also for hearings in the future. I am significantly less tolerant than my predecessors regarding demonstrations or communications or disruptions during the committee.

This place is not a place for demonstrations or communications with members of the committee. We have work to do. We do the Government's work here. It is important and we have a very, very limited clock every single time that we meet.

So as a result of that we are not going to tolerate any type of disruptions, communications, or anything like that that distract the committee.

Distractions will include not only noise, not only standing up, not only holding up painted hands, painted signs. None of that will be allowed. If you do that I am going to pause the committee. I am going to ask our friends, first of all, my faithful sergeant at arms here who is perhaps tougher than the Capitol police but also the Capitol police to assist, and we will pause briefly, and then take up our work.

If you are removed you will not be permitted back into one of these public hearings for at least 12 months. And the purpose of this is as I have stated, and it is important work. It cannot be interrupted.

So with that, Senator Scott, please, the floor is yours.

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

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and committee members, it is an absolute honor to sit before you today to introduce my good friend, fellow Senator from Florida and future Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

I would also like to recognize his wonderful family who is here today: His wife, Jeanette, daughter Daniella, sister Barbara and Veronica, and nephew Orlando. And back home, Amanda, Anthony and Dominic.

All of us here today know that Marco is an exceptional nominee. He is the perfect person to carry out President Trump's elected—President-elect Trump's policies and to protect America's national security and to bring peace and civility back to the Western Hemisphere.

The son of Cuban immigrants, Marco learned at a young age about the suffering and oppression of socialism, and brings valuable knowledge from his roles here on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In our State of Florida we hear often from those who came to the United States to escape dangerous regimes and live the American dream that Marco and many of us have had the opportunity to live.

Every person we meet serves as a reminder of why the United States must always stand for freedom and democracy. President Trump's record in his first term was clear. He unapologetically fought to protect freedom and democracy across Latin America and ended the failed Obama era appeasement policies that had created a vacuum for tyranny in the region.

After 4 years of Joe Biden, President Trump will have to start that fight over, but he has an incredible asset with Marco Rubio on his team.

Marco sees the values of our allies and democratic leaders who will stand up to our adversaries and who will work with the United States, deny footholds to Communist China, Iran, and Russia, and fight alongside America to protect our shared national security interests and create better trade relations.

While the Biden administration has abandoned America's allies, President-elect Trump and Senator Rubio are clear eyed and understand that where freedom and democracy exists America has strong allies and trusted trade partners.

Marco has a strong record of holding the regimes in communist China, Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua accountable for their repression and tyranny. He will work with President Trump to punish communist regimes for their crimes, make clear to our enemies and partners alike around.

Most importantly, Marco will always put America's best interests first.

Marco, congratulations. You have served the people of Florida well. It has been an honor to work with you as Senator, and I will continue working together with you on issues that matter deeply to the people of Florida, to our nation.

You are well deserving of this role. You will do an incredible job. I will end up being the senior Senator finally. I am proud to support you and urge all my colleagues to do the same.  
Thank you.

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

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you very much, Senator Scott.

First of all, let me say as we open this first hearing I am pleased to be serving alongside my colleague Senator Shaheen. She and I have worked together over a number of years.

We were Governors together and came in at the same time together, and we have had actually some experience in this regard on the Small Business Committee where we had the same roles, and so we are used to each other, and we are going to do our best to have hearings and work of this committee on a bipartisan basis. We will not always agree, obviously, but we will do our very best to disagree civilly and let the process work as it should.

So with that, let us turn to the hearing today, and I want to welcome my great friend, Marco Rubio, to this hearing. Likewise, Marco and I go back a long ways. I look back at when I got to the Senate 16 years ago. I came to this first hearing and took my seat way down there at the end and spent 2 years there, and then that afternoon went over the Intelligence Committee, and again, took my seat way down on the end down there.

Served a couple years, and then 2 years later the—by the way, when I went into the Intelligence Committee I do not know if I have ever told anyone this story before, but I walked in there and got a little nervous because, you know, I am about to learn all the deep, dark secrets of the United States of America.

And I went in and sat down, and someone came up to me and tapped me on the shoulder and said, Senator, you seem to have brought an electronic device with you into this room.

This was in the SCIF over in our semi-secret room over in the Hart building. And so I learned then that the Intelligence Committee does know a lot so I gave up my electronic device.

Two years later, I was no longer on the end. Senator Rubio came and joined me down at the end and sat at my left there, and we went to the hearing in the morning to the Foreign Relations Committee. That afternoon we went over to the Intelligence Committee.

Again, there he was, sat down next to me on my left, and as he sat down I said, by the way, I hope—I said to him, I hope you do not have any electronic devices with you. And he says, well, no, you doofus. There is a big sign out there that says do not bring any—

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. So I judged him to be a very astute person at that point. In my defense, that sign was not there 2 years earlier. They do not give you a course at what you can and cannot bring in. So anyway that was my introduction to Marco Rubio.

Since then we have worked together for a long time on issues and have found ourselves almost always in violent agreement on virtually every issue we dealt with both here in the Foreign Relations Committee and on the Intelligence Committee and work to-

gether closely as we were ranking member on and chairman on those two committees.

Out of all the issues we have done, I can only think of one issue that we disagreed on. It is a very, very small issue, a very tiny issue. It deals with intelligence so, unfortunately, we will not be able to discuss it here today but, Marco, I have a small gift for you as you part here in your last hearing here. I will give it—assuming you survive this hearing, I will give it to you at the end of the hearing.

So welcome, and in a moment I am going to give you a chance to make your opening statement. I am going to talk a little bit, Jeanne is, and then we will get to you.

Unfortunately, we meet at a time when America faces threats from nearly every corner of the world. It is no secret that hostile powers from China to Russia, from North Korea to Iran, have formed an authoritarian axis bent on weakening the United States.

Sadly, the outgoing Administration has frequently made ill informed decisions that have empowered these adversaries. From the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal to its desperate efforts to woo Iran, failure to deter Russian aggression, constant concessions to China, and undermining support for Israel, our allies question U.S. resolve, and our adversaries believe they have a free hand.

Those days are over. China remains the most significant long term risk to the United States. The Chinese government steals American intellectual property, floods our streets with fentanyl, and exploits our free markets for its own gain while aggressively undermining American national security.

China is no longer satisfied to undermine the United States on its own. Now it helps Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Chinese support has enabled Russia to carry on its illegal war against Ukraine, and China's massive purchases of Iranian oil are a lifeline to that murderous regime's proxy wars.

The outgoing Administration's failure to push back on China's aggression means that China is challenging America everywhere from Africa to our hemisphere in Latin America. Senator Rubio has been a strong advocate of tougher policies to counter China's aggression and particularly in Latin America.

In the Middle East, Israel fights a multi-front war against Iran after the brutal attack on October 7. Yet, the outgoing administration has undermined support to Israel. This has only prolonged the terrible situation in Israel and Gaza.

In spite of the outgoing Administration's policy, Israel's fortitude has brought Tehran to its weakest point in decades. President Trump and Marco both know that we need to support our ally and return to a maximum pressure campaign against Iran.

At the same time Putin, with the support of the CCP, continues his violent assault on Ukraine. Putin has escalated this war over and over again, most recently by importing thousands of North Korean soldiers.

I have said repeatedly since the beginning of the 2022 full scale invasion we need to help Ukraine end this war quickly and permanently.

I am confident that if anyone can end this war it is President Trump, and Marco is the right man to help ensure it is done in a



way that guarantees security and stability for Ukraine, the U.S., and our allies, and prevents Russia from launching another war.

Unfortunately, the threats to American interests do not end there. A genocide in Sudan, a much needed but still uncertain regime change in Syria, human rights abuses, human trafficking—the list of challenges facing America is long, and because of that we must rein in and enforce accountability at the United Nations whose agenda and wasteful practices frequently do not align with those of the United States.

In Asia, it will be important to work with our allies in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines to boost their military spending and bolster their ability to deter China.

We should work with Australia and the United Kingdom as part of the AUKUS agreement to develop and advance military capabilities to counter Chinese coercion in the Indo-Pacific, and I hope the State Department will acknowledge the nuclear arms race our adversaries are pursuing and make the changes needed to confront this new reality.

Further, U.S. foreign assistance is not charity. American taxpayer dollars should only be spent to advance U.S. interests, and every penny should be scrutinized to ensure its necessity and effectiveness in advancing our America's interests.

Often enormous amounts of money are spread thinly around the world and never really accomplish goals. This also needs to stop.

A final word on the operations of the State Department itself. The department must refocus itself on the core mission of effective diplomacy. Every program, office, and policy at State must effectively advance U.S. foreign policy goals, not advance progressive ideology.

The outgoing Administration often undercut effective foreign policy by inserting ideological and political requirements into the fabric of personnel decisions and policy execution.

Rather than making hires or promotions based on merit and effectiveness, the department created new diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility requirements that distracted from this mission, undermined morale, and created an unfair and opaque process for promotions and performance evaluations.

Fidelity to progressive politics became the benchmark for success. As we look around the United States that view is diminishing very quickly amongst even large corporations, amongst even large progressive leaning corporations.

Adherence to these goals was assured at the State Department to a rigid enforcement structure that included senior advisors for DEIA in nearly every bureau and Soviet style anonymous reporting portals where employees were encouraged to denounce colleagues who would not toe the company line.

This must end on day one. We need a return to merit, and I know Marco will right that ship.

Senator Rubio, this is a long laundry list of crises. You have earned yourself one of the hardest jobs in America, but after serving with you for so many years I am confident you are the right person we need to take on these threats.

Thank you very much.

And to my good friend Senator Shaheen I yield the floor.

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

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Risch. Congratulations on your new role.

As you point out, while this may be our first Foreign Relations Committee hearing together in these new roles it is certainly not our first time working together.

We came in as Governors so we like to get things done. We have also had the same role in 2017 on the Small Business Committee. So I look forward to working with you and to our opportunity for this committee to get a lot of work done.

I want to also congratulate the new members of the committee, Republicans McCormick, Daines, Scott, Lee, Curtis, and Cornyn, and on the Democratic side Jacky Rosen. Nice to have you all on the committee.

One point that we have always agreed on, the Chairman and I, is the need to work together so this committee can function more effectively. That means holding hearings. It means advancing bipartisan legislation. It means confirming career Foreign Service officers quickly.

I believe it is in our national security interest to have our embassies fully staffed and to confirm career ambassadors with the requisite expertise, which is why it was important to both of us to have Senator Rubio's hearing as soon as possible.

And Senator Rubio, welcome. You and I have also had a good working relationship for many years. I believe you have the skills and are well qualified to serve as Secretary of State.

But today, I want to find out a little more about what this Administration is thinking about American foreign policy and the State Department in particular. As I said, I believe this committee has a responsibility to get your team out in the field, and we hope you will send us qualified, experienced, and well vetted nominees.

I know you already have an expert group of career Foreign Service nominees before you that was not considered under the last Congress. I hope we will see many of those nominees resubmitted to this committee soon.

On policy, I want to start by hearing from you on Ukraine and NATO. There is strong bipartisan support, as you know, in the Senate for Ukraine. There is a clear understanding that we cannot trust Putin, and I am concerned that if Vladimir Putin wins in Ukraine he is not going to stop.

President Trump has repeatedly said that he plans to end the Ukraine war within 24 hours of his inauguration. It has been reported that his proposals would give away Ukrainian territory to Vladimir Putin.

Now, I cannot speak on behalf of Ukraine, and President Zelensky has said that he is open to a peace agreement. But I am concerned both for the Ukrainian people who have sacrificed so much about the message that abandoning Ukraine would send not just to our allies but also to our adversaries, and not just Russia but to China, North Korea, and Iran.

Our allies—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan—our partnerships and alliances like AUKUS and NATO, are all looking very closely and watching what we are going to do.

I believe these alliances are one of the United States' greatest assets. And what happens in Ukraine also affects emerging democratic nations, civil society movements from Belarus to the Balkans to the Black Sea to Georgia.

It impacts us here at home as well, and I know that for so many Americans this might seem like a distant war, but as we know what happens in Ukraine does not stay in Ukraine. The war has caused food and gas prices to go up. It has affected day to day lives of Americans.

So, Senator Rubio, I know that in the past you have supported Ukraine. You introduced legislation that would ban U.S. recognition of territory annexed by Russia. We were both co-sponsors of Chairman Risch's resolution recognizing Russian genocide in Ukraine.

But the path forward is uncertain, and I hope today you will lay out some of the Administration's plans for Ukraine.

I would also like to hear from you on the Middle East and Syria in particular. In recent months we have seen the dismantling of much of Iran's axis of resistance including the fall of Assad, one of Iran's most brutal proxies.

One of our goals should be to get humanitarian assistance immediately to the Syrian people who have suffered for so many years and to capitalize on this historic opportunity to sideline not only Iran but Russia as we help rebuild Syria.

I also want to underline that whether it is food insecurity or sexual violence that accompanies war, and whether we are talking about Sudan or Haiti or Afghanistan, Ukraine, or Gaza, that it is women who often bear the brunt of these conflicts.

They should have a seat at the table when it comes to resolving them, and that is not just a sentiment. It is also backed up by data because we know that when women participate in conflict negotiations peace is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.

That is why we passed the Women Peace and Security Act in 2017. It was signed into law by President Trump during his first term, and I hope that in his second term we can build on this effort.

It is one of the reasons I am pleased that we now have three women on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Duckworth and Senator Rosen. It is the first time since I have been here that there has been three women on this committee, and I am interested to hear your vision for the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, and more broadly, how the Administration will work to empower women and girls on the global stage.

As Chairman Risch has said, the list of challenges facing America is very long. And so, Senator Rubio, if you are confirmed I hope we can work together to continue to promote American interests that we have seen around the world the importance of America's role in the world.

Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Good remarks.

Senator Rubio, the floor is going to be yours, and I hope you will introduce your beautiful family to start with, and we will take it from there.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
FLORIDA, NOMINATED TO BE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE,  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Senator RUBIO. Well, thank you, Chairman Risch, and I want to thank the ranking member as well, Senator Shaheen, and thank you, Senator Scott, for your introduction, and let me just say it is a bit surreal to be on this side of the room, but you all look very distinguished. I want you to know that.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. We know that.

Senator RUBIO. In the 249 year history of our republic there has only been 71 other Americans who have served in the role in the position that President Trump has now nominated me to occupy, and I want to thank him for his confidence, and it is an incredible honor. It is also, as many of you have already pointed out, an extraordinary responsibility.

Three of my children—Amanda, Anthony, and Dominic—could not be here with us today or join us here in person. But I am happy that my wife Jeanette is here and that my daughter Daniella is here with me as well because I think as each of you know well, it really is impossible to do our job in the Senate, not to mention the job I have been nominated for without the love and the support of our families.

I am also very pleased that my sisters Barbara and Veronica and my nephew Orlando are joining me here today, and to me it is a reminder that the path that brings me to this moment was paved by those who are not here with us today.

My two parents who arrived here on May 27, 1956, from Cuba and they had nothing but the dreams of a better life, and because of them I had the privilege to be born a citizen of the greatest nation in the history of mankind and to be raised in a safe and stable home by parents who made their children's future the very purpose of their lives.

I also want to acknowledge all the blessings that God has bestowed upon me in my life. My faith is critical and something I will lean and rely on heavily in the months that are ahead in a tumultuous world where in my faith we are called to promote the cause of peace and the common good, and that task has gotten harder than it has ever been, and I will rely heavily on my faith and pray for God's blessings that He will provide me the strength, the wisdom, and the courage to do what is right in these tenuous moments.

At the end of the Second World War the United States was, in the words of the then Secretary of State, tasked with creating an order, a world order, a free half, in his quote, out of chaos, without blowing to pieces—without blowing the whole of the world into pieces in the process, and in the decades that followed that global order served us quite well.

Americans' incomes rose, and communities flourished. Alliances emerged in the Indo-Pacific and Europe that led to the emergence of stability and democracy and prosperity in these regions.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. Back to order.

Senator RUBIO. Alliances emerged in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe that led to the emergence of stability, democracy, and prosperity, but it also prevented a cataclysmic world war, and ultimately a wall in Berlin came down and with it an evil empire.

Out of the triumphalism of the end of the long cold war emerged a bipartisan consensus, and this consensus was that we had reached the end of history, that all of the nations of the world would now become members of the democratic western led community, that a foreign policy that served the national interest could now be replaced by one that served the liberal world order, and that all mankind was now destined to abandon national sovereignty and national identity and would instead become one human family and citizens of the world.

This was not just a fantasy. We now know it was a dangerous delusion. Here in America and in many of the advanced economies across the world an almost religious commitment to free and unfettered trade at the expense of our national economy shrunk the middle class, left the working class in crisis, collapsed our industrial capacity, and has pushed critical supply chains into the hands of adversaries and of rivals.

An irrational zeal for maximum freedom of movement of people has resulted in a historic mass migration crisis here in America but also around the world.

It is one that threatens the stability of societies and of governments. Across the West, governments now censor and even prosecute domestic political opponents. Meanwhile, radical jihadists openly march in the streets, and sadly, drive vehicles into our people.

While America far too often continued to prioritize the global order above our core national interests, other nations continue to act the way countries always have.

Senator RISCH. Pause.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. Back to order.

Senator RUBIO. I get bilingual protesters, which I think is cool.  
[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. As you know, that is a first here for us, at least in recent times.

Senator RUBIO. All right.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Senator RISCH. Back to order.

Senator RUBIO. All right. So while America too often prioritized the global order above our core national interest, other nations continued to act the way nations have always acted and always will in what they perceive to be their best interest, and instead of folding into the post-cold war global order, they have manipulated it to serve their interests at the expense of ours.

We welcomed the Chinese Communist Party into the global order, and they took advantage of all of its benefits, and they ignored all of its obligations and responsibilities.

Instead, they have repressed and lied and cheated and hacked and stolen their way into global superpower status, and they have done so at our expense and at the expense of the people of their own country.

In our very own hemisphere narco terrorists and dictators and despots take advantage of open borders to drive mass migration, to traffic in women and children, and to flood our communities with deadly fentanyl and violent criminals.

In Moscow, in Tehran, in Pyongyang dictators, rogue states now sow chaos and instability and align with and they fund radical terror groups, and then they hide behind their veto power at the United Nations Security Council or the threats of nuclear war.

The post-war global order is not just obsolete. It is now a weapon being used against us, and all this has led to a moment in which we must now confront the single greatest risk of geopolitical instability and of generational global crisis in the lifetime of anyone alive and in this room today.

Eight decades later we are once again called to create a free world out of the chaos, and this will not be easy, and it will be impossible without a strong and a confident America that engages in the world, putting our core national interests once again above all else.

Just 4 years ago I believe we began to see the outlines and the beginnings of what that would look like during President Trump's first term. American strength was a deterrent to our adversaries, and it gave us leverage in diplomacy. There were no new wars. ISIS was eviscerated, Soleimani was dead, the historic Abraham Accords were born, and Americans were safer as a result.

Now President Trump returns to office with an unmistakable mandate from the voters. They want a strong America, a strong America engaged in the world, but guided by a clear objective to promote peace abroad and security and prosperity here at home.

That is the promise that President Trump was elected to keep, and if I am confirmed, keeping that promise will be the core mission of the United States Department of State.

Now, tragically horrifying atrocities and unimaginable human suffering can be found on virtually every continent, and I am certain that today I will be asked about the array of programs and the activities the Department of State carries out to address them.

We are a nation who was founded on the revolutionary truth that all men are created equal and that our rights come not from man or from government but from God, and so we will never be indifferent to the suffering of our fellow man.

But ultimately, under President Trump, the top priority of the United States Department of State will be the United States. The direction he has given for the conduct of our foreign policy is clear.

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.

Under President Trump the dollars of hardworking American taxpayers will always be spent wisely, and our power will always be wielded prudently and toward what is best for America and Americans before anything and everything else.

Prudence in the conduct of foreign policy is not an abandonment of our values. It is the common sense understanding that while we remain the wealthiest and the most powerful nation on the Earth, our wealth has never been unlimited, and our power has never

been infinite, and placing our core national interest above all else is not isolationism.

It is the common sense realization that a foreign policy centered in our national interest is not some outdated relic. Since the emergence of the modern nation state over two centuries ago, countries acting based on what they perceive to be their core national interest, that has been the norm, not the exception, and for our country placing the interest of America and Americans above all else has never been more relevant or more necessary than it is right now. For in the end how can America promote the cause of peace on Earth if it is not first safe at home?

What good is America to our allies if it is not strong, and how can America help end the suffering of God's children across the world if it is not first prosperous here at home?

I thank you, and I hope I can earn your support, whether it is because you believe I would do a good job or because you want to get rid of me.

[Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

#### NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

*Question.* Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from the Department of State available to the Committee and designated staff when invited?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you commit to keep this Committee fully and currently informed about the activities under your purview?

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you commit to promptly responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff?

Answer. Yes.

[The prepared statement of Senator Rubio follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Thank you, Chairman Risch. Thank you, Ranking Member Shaheen. And thank you, Senator Scott for your introduction. In the 249-year history of our republic, only 71 other Americans have served in the position President Trump has nominated me to occupy. I thank him for his confidence. It is both an incredible honor and an extraordinary responsibility.

Three of my children—Amanda, Anthony, and Dominick—were not able to join me here in person today. But I am happy that my wife Jeanette and my daughter Daniella are here with me. Because as each of you know well, it would be impossible to serve in the Senate or in the role I have been nominated for now, without the love and the support of our families.

I am also pleased my sisters Barbara and Veronica, and my nephew Orlando are joining me. It is a reminder that the path that brings me to this moment was paved by those who are not here with us. By two parents, who arrived here on May 27th 1956 from Cuba with nothing but the dream of a better life. Because of them, I had the privilege to be born a citizen of the greatest nation in the history of the world. And to be raised in a safe and stable home, by parents who made their children's future the very purpose of their lives.

At the end of World War II, the United States was, in the words of then Secretary Acheson, tasked with creating a world order “a free half” out of chaos “without blowing the whole to pieces in the process.”

In the decades that followed, the global order they created served us well. For Americans, incomes rose and communities flourished. Alliances emerged in the Indo-Pacific and Europe that led to the emergence of stability, democracy, and prosperity in these regions, and prevented a cataclysmic third world war. And ultimately a wall in Berlin came down and with it, an “evil empire.”

Out of the triumphalism of the end of long Cold War emerged a bi-partisan consensus that we had reached “the end of history.” That all the nations of earth would become members of the democratic Western led community. That a foreign policy that served the national interest could now be replaced by one that served the “liberal world order.” And that all mankind was now destined to abandon national identity, and we would become “one human family” and “citizens of the world.”

This wasn’t just a fantasy; it was a dangerous delusion.

Here in America, and in many of the advanced economies across the world, an almost religious commitment to free and unfettered trade at the expense of our national economy, shrunk the middle class, left the working class in crisis, collapsed industrial capacity, and pushed critical supply chains into the hands of adversaries and rivals.

An irrational zeal for maximum freedom of movement of people has resulted in a historic mass migration crisis here in America and around the world that threatens the stability of societies and governments.

And across the West, governments now censor and even prosecute domestic political opponents, while radical jihadists openly march in the streets and drive vehicles into our people.

While America far too often continued to prioritize the “global order” above our core national interests, other nations continued to act the way countries always have and always will, in what they perceive to be in their best interest.

And instead of folding into the post-Cold War global order, they have manipulated it to serve their interest at the expense of ours.

We welcomed the Chinese Communist Party into this global order. And they took advantage of all its benefits. But they ignored all its obligations and responsibilities. Instead, they have lied, cheated, hacked, and stolen their way to global superpower status, at our expense.

In our very own hemisphere, despots and narco-terrorists take advantage of open borders to drive mass migration, traffic women and children, and flood our communities with fentanyl and violent criminals.

And in Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang, dictators sow chaos and instability and align with and fund radical terror groups. Then hide behind their veto power at the United Nations and the threat of nuclear war.

The postwar global order is not just obsolete; it is now a weapon being used against us.

And all this has led us to a moment in which we must now confront the single greatest risk of geopolitical instability and generational global crisis in the lifetime of anyone alive here today.

Eight decades later, we are called to create a free world out of chaos once again.

This will not be easy.

And it will be impossible without a strong and confident America that engages in the world, putting our core national interests above all else once again.

Just 4 years ago we saw the beginnings of what that would look like. During President Trump’s first term, American strength was a deterrent to our adversaries and gave us leverage in diplomacy. There were no new wars, ISIS was eviscerated, Soleimani was dead, the historic Abraham Accords were born, and Americans were safer as a result.

Now President Trump returns to office with an unmistakable mandate from the voters. They want a strong America. Engaged in the world. But guided by a clear objective, to promote peace abroad, and security and prosperity here at home.

That is the promise President Trump was elected to keep.

And if I am confirmed, keeping that promise will be the core mission of the United States Department of State.

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Tragically, horrifying atrocities and unimaginable human suffering can be found on virtually every continent. And I am certain that today I will be asked about the array of programs and activities the Department of State carries out to address them.



As a nation founded on the revolutionary truth that “all men are created equal” with rights that come not from man but from God, we will never be indifferent to the suffering of our fellow man.

But ultimately, under President Trump, the top priority of the United States Department of State must be and will be the United States.

The direction he has given for the conduct of our foreign policy is clear. Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions:

- Does it make America safer?
- Does it make America stronger?
- Does it make America more prosperous?

Under President Trump, the dollars of hardworking American taxpayers will always be spent wisely and our power will always be yielded prudently, and toward what is best for America and Americans above all else.

Prudence in the conduct of foreign policy is not an abandonment of our values.

It is the commonsense understanding that while we remain the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, our wealth has never been unlimited and our power has never been infinite.

And placing our core national interests above all else is not isolationism. It is the commonsense realization that a foreign policy centered on our national interest is not some outdated relic.

Since the emergence of the modern nation-state over two centuries ago, countries acting based on what they perceive as their core national interest has been the norm not the exception. And for our country, placing the interest of America and Americans above all else has never been more relevant or more necessary than it is right now.

For in the end, how America can promote the cause of “peace on earth” if it is not first safe at home?

What good to our allies is America if it is not strong?

And how can America help end the suffering of God’s children across the world, if it is not first prosperous here at home?

Senator RISCH. Either way the result is the same.

Thank you, Senator Rubio. I have always been impressed with your view, particularly on a 50,000 foot level, of the kind of problems that we face in our lane and national security lane, foreign relations and intelligence. So I appreciate those remarks.

We are now going to start a round. I am going to allow 10 minute questions since this is a Cabinet level position. That does not mean you have to use all 10 minutes, but the 10 minutes are there, and what I am going to do in this hearing, and what I am going to do in future hearings, is I will call on people based on seniority on the committee at the time the gavel goes down, and if you come after that you will be put in line after that, and we will go down the list like that.

In any event, with that, Senator Rubio, could you talk for a minute about the Russian energy reliance? I think all of us were impressed when the war started that the Europeans knew the necessity of cutting the cord with Russia on their reliance on Russian energy, which had developed since the Iron Curtain came down, all of us believing that Russia would behave itself, which turned out to be a very misplaced view.

And now with the war carrying on, it is going to end, obviously, at some point in time. There are voices in Europe saying, well, we can go back to using Russian energy.

My view is that that is not reasonable, and it is not appropriate, and indeed, I think that the fallout from this war is going to go on for generations. Your thoughts on the energy relationship between Europe and Russia in the future?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I am reminded, I believe back in 2018 then President Trump on two occasions, once at the United Nations, and I think another time at a NATO conference, pointed, for example, to Germany's reliance on Russian energy as a real vulnerability, and he was snickered at.

I remember he was snickered at by the representatives of Germany at the United Nations. He turned out to be 100 percent correct. In fact, that reliance on Russian energy was a major loss of deterrence.

Vladimir Putin, among his many calculations, one of the calculations he took in going into Ukraine was that the Europeans would complain, maybe they would hit him with a couple sanctions. They would write some strongly worded nasty letters about him, but ultimately would not be able to do anything effectively because of how much they depended on Russia, and in some cases continue to depend.

I believe France is the third leading payer into Russian energy in the world, and I think a couple other countries in Europe follow right behind.

So there is still a significant amount of dependence in that regard, and that dependence on Russian energy is a tremendous amount of leverage that Vladimir Putin holds on his neighbors in Europe.

Now, there is some good news, I think. For example, I watched with great interest the German engineering marvel where they have been able to by the end of this year, after they waived permitting requirements and within 9 months, were able to open what is literally a floating LNG terminal to allow and receive exports including from the United States and other places.

So I do think you are seeing movement in Europe now to try to detangle itself from that level of dependence, but it remains a real vulnerability and a tremendous piece of leverage for Putin against his neighbors and the broader world.

It is also a reminder, by the way, and I used to be guilty of saying this quite a bit, that the Russian GDP was the size of Italy's—you know, not very large.

I think one of the things we learned from this endeavor is that it is not just the size of the GDP but what it is composed of. And the Russian GDP, while smaller than some other countries, is largely reliant on the production of raw materials, on the energy, on food production, fertilizer, and the like. And these are critical components of national strength and a reminder of how important they are for us here domestically as well.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I do think too we ought to acknowledge that the Europeans did a job that was well beyond their expectations the first winter as they struggled through. They did really well as far as cutting the cord with Russia being as how hard they were tied to that.

Let us talk about AUKUS for a minute. There has not been much discussion about AUKUS, really, since the thing started. A lot of us have been pressing the Administration to gear that up. It has not been forthcoming.

I would like to hear your thoughts on AUKUS, the importance thereof and getting this thing moving as it was intended.

Senator RUBIO. Well, one of the things we will have to endeavor to see, obviously, there is a tremendous amount of this that relies on the Department of Defense and other entities in Government.

To the extent the Secretary of State and the Department of State is engaged it is something that I think you are going to find very strong support for in this Administration because it is one of not—I think it is almost a blueprint in many ways of how we can create a consortium like partnership with nation states that are allied to us to confront some of these global challenges, be it in the defense realm, in the technology realm, in the critical minerals realm, in the sensitive technologies and critical technologies, for example, artificial intelligence and advances in even quantum computing.

This, obviously, is more defense related, but it is one example of how we can leverage the power of these partnerships with allies—two, three countries in some cases, broader in others—to reach outcomes and objectives such as creating a geopolitical and strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

So we will have to look at that and to see what components of whatever impediments exist can be removed by the action of the Department of State. But it also reminds us that in many of these very few of these global issues are entirely relying on the Department of State, the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense.

We have a host of other Government agencies—Commerce, in many cases—who also play a critical role in expediting and going through, for example, some of the lists of technologies that perhaps are not being transferred because they have been deemed as sensitive.

But in the case of our strong and close allies, that is the point, right, is that you want to be able to find yourself in a situation where you can accelerate partnership by making available to key allies these sensitive technologies that we would not want to see in the hands or developed by an adversary or an aligned country.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Our view is aligned, particularly on the excluded technology list. These are our closest and most trusted allies, and unfortunately, the current administration has really been difficult to work with as far as getting through that excluded technology list, and I hope you will help expedite that.

Let me talk for a minute about the International Criminal Court. Look, as you know, we have got real problems there. The court originally was intended, at least from our point of view, to be a court that focused on international crimes that were committed by people from countries who did not have a robust democracy nor a robust judicial system that held its own people accountable for crimes.

The court has gone beyond that, obviously. They are not only focusing on people who are not accountable elsewhere, but they are also focusing on people who come from countries that solve their own problems, like the United States of America and like Israel.

The most recent obvious thing that flowed from that was the indictment on the same day of Netanyahu plus a Hamas character.

Any court that is a court of law has to be able to recognize good from bad, and when you try to indict two people and show some

type of moral equivalency in that regard, they are just barking up the wrong tree and I think, unfortunately, we are going to have to rein them up.

Your thoughts on that?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think it has done—the ICC has done tremendous damage to its global credibility.

First of all, it is going after a nonmember state on the claims that I believe—in fact, I think just in the last 24 hours the Israeli high court filed an appeal before the ICC even though it is not a member state, and I saw some of the filings from the prosecutor Mr. Khan, who is involved in that process, and he argues that they have the right to go after nonmembers for their activities within the confines of member states in this case.

And I think, first of all, the whole premise of his prosecution is flawed. Beyond the process of it and the precedent that it sets, which is a very dangerous precedent for the United States of America, by the way, because this is a test run.

This is a trial run to see can we go after a head of state from a nation that is not a member. If we can go after them, and we can get it done with regards to Israel, they will apply that to the United States at some point and in fact there have been threats to do so in the past.

But the premise of the prosecution itself is completely and utterly flawed. As you said, they went ahead—I think they also went after—did not travel around the world. He is not with us any longer but he does not—did not travel around the world, was at no risk of being apprehended.

Second of all, the moral equivalency piece of it was offensive. Let me explain, and I think I do not need to explain to this committee.

Hamas carried out an atrocious operation. They sent a bunch of savages into Israel with the express and explicit purpose of targeting civilians. They went into concerts. They went into these music festivals.

They knew that there were no soldiers at the music festival. They knew that these were teenagers and young families that they went into this—into different communities and the kibbutzes and the like, and they deliberately targeted civilians, deliberately.

In fact, they kidnapped the ones they did not murder. The families who they did not eviscerate, the people whose skulls they did not crack open, they kidnapped, and to this day continue to hold people, the innocents that they took. A deliberate operation.

In the case of Israel responding to that attack has had to go after Hamas. How can you coexist—how can any nation state on the planet coexist side by side with a group of savages like Hamas?

They have to defend their national security and their national interest, as I pointed out in my opening statement. And so there is no more—and they did not target civilians now, sadly and unfortunately, and I am sure we will discuss it further in some of the other questions that will come up here today.

One of the horrible things about war, it is a terrible thing about war, and it is why we should try to prevent it at almost any cost is that innocent people are caught up in it, and that is true of every conflict on the planet.

But there is a difference between those who in the conduct of armed action deliberately target civilians and those who do as much as they can to avoid civilians being caught up against an enemy that does not wear a uniform, against an enemy that hides in tunnels, against an enemy that hides behind women and children and puts them at the forefront and uses them as human shields.

That is who Hamas is. There is no moral equivalency, and I think the ICC if they do not drop this will find its credibility globally badly damaged, and I think the United States should be very concerned because I believe this is a test run for applying it to an American service member and American leaders in the future.

Senator RISCH. Well said. I could not agree with you more, and certainly the court has badly damaged its reputation, and it is going to have a long ways to go to recover from that.

So with that, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Rubio, as I said in my opening statement, I hope that this committee can better collaborate to swiftly confirm career Foreign Service officers.

These are patriotic Americans who have served under both Democratic and Republican administrations and they work to advance U.S. national security interests. Delays and vacant posts hurt America's interest.

I know you agree with that because we have had that conversation. But will you commit to working with Chairman Risch and me to prioritize the advancement and confirmation of career State Department officials?

Senator RUBIO. Well, the answer to that is yes, but I would also point to this fact that I think we are going to begin by prioritizing. We are going to look at what are the key issues in the world.

There are obviously—every post in the world is important or it should not exist, and then the question is which are the ones we bring to you first, and those are the ones that I think are most critical.

So, obviously, I think you will see our nominees for the deputy posts, which are critically important, all the under secretaries as well, and what I have endeavored to do as we interview and identify people—and I believe I have met with and interviewed most of the candidates for those top posts—is I want to bring you people that are three things.

Number one, are aligned to the mission. I think that is critically important, whether they be Foreign Service officers. I am not talking about political alignment. I am talking about alignment with the mission that we have outlined for American foreign policy, which is one of the things that I think has hurt the State Department under numerous Administrations, is sometimes the mission or what is core mission of the department has not been well defined. That is on us, and it is our obligation to define that.

So, number one, aligned to the mission. Number two, the capability to do the job, and I can tell you now that in my entire service on this committee, which spans 14 years, we always had fellows from the Department of State, I believe all of whom are still in the service of our country, and I intend, because I know them and I

have worked with them, to utilize their skill sets in the department, and in fact a couple who we hope will be returning home soon from foreign postings to work with us at the State Department closer to my office.

But the point is that we want to have people that are highly capable, both those who we bring from what they call political appointees, but also those that are promoted from within the Foreign Service.

And then the third are people that we can get through the committee, because time is of the essence. Now, you may not agree with all their views, whether they be Foreign Service officers or whether they be political, but I think it is important.

And we are not going to exclude someone just because we think that maybe they are going to have a rougher confirmation process than someone else.

But I do think it is important that we have people in these positions as quickly as possible, and having served for 14 years on that side of this room I understand that one of the things we can do to help expedite that is to bring you people that will do a good job, who are qualified for the job, are mission aligned, but also that can move through this process quickly enough so that they can be at post and begin to fulfill their duties.

If I have to wait a year to get them in place, well, I am not sure on some of these issues we face today we have a year to wait.

Senator SHAHEEN. I certainly agree with that, and I appreciate your focus on mission and qualifications because I think the committee will be looking closely at that.

I want to go now to NATO because in 2023 Congress overwhelmingly passed the bipartisan Kaine-Rubio provision prohibiting any President from withdrawing the United States from NATO without Senate approval or an act of Congress.

Will you commit to adhering to Senate approval or an act of Congress as required under that law that you authored if President Trump attempts to withdraw the U.S. from NATO?

Senator RUBIO. Well, first, let me say that President Trump has appointed an ambassador nominee for NATO, which clearly indicates his role to engage in that.

Second is the law is what it is. Obviously, as you have mentioned, I was a co-sponsor of the law, and so it is tough to say I am not in support of a law that I hoped to pass and that I think it is an important role for Congress to play because, frankly, it is not just about the withdrawal piece of it.

It is the contributions we make toward—the power of the purse still resides with the Congress. Now, maybe, if confirmed moving toward the executive branch I will become—I will forget that lesson a little bit.

I hope not but, ultimately, I still recognize and understand that the power of the purse is with Congress, and it is an incredibly important power.

Let me point on NATO one thing. I think there is a misunderstanding about it. The NATO alliance is a very important alliance. I believe that. I believe alliances can be and has been very useful. Without the NATO alliance there is no end to the cold war.

In fact, without the NATO alliance it is quite possible that much of what today—at the time—today we know as Europe would have fallen victim to aggression.

But what is important for the United States is not just to have defense allies. It is to have capable defense allies, allies who are capable of defending their region, and I think there is a question to be asked.

I am not stating a public policy position. I am stating a question to be asked, and that is should the role of the United States and NATO in the 21st century be the primary defense role or as a backstop to aggression, with countries in the region assuming more of that responsibility by contributing more.

Now, look, in fairness—and I think the further east you move in Europe, the more money you see spent on the military as a percentage of GDP—but I think there has been broad acknowledgement across Europe and across multiple Administrations, both Republican and Democrat, that our NATO partners—these are rich advanced economies—need to contribute more to their own defense and ultimately to the NATO partnership as well, and that is a demand that has been made by multiple presidents across the years and we—and the fact that that is true has been revealed by what has happened with Ukraine.

Look at the ramp up in defense spending and the industrial capacity of multiple countries in Europe as a result of an armed conflict. Imagine if that capacity had been there before. It quite possibly might have had a deterrent effect as well.

So I think it is important that we have alliances, but we have to have alliances with strong and capable partners, and not those who sort of have viewed the U.S. and the NATO defense agreement as an excuse to spend less on defense and more on some domestic needs.

We have domestic needs, too. These advanced, rich countries in Western Europe have enormous safety net programs that they fund. We have domestic needs as well. But they have been able to divert or grow those programs because they do not have to spend as much on defense as we do as a percentage of our overall economy, and that dynamic needs to change, and I expect that President Trump will continue to forcefully make that point.

Senator SHAHEEN. And as you know, this committee and the Senate NATO Observer Group which I co-chair has made that point repeatedly, and we are now up to 23 of the 32 NATO nations who are meeting their 2 percent of GDP, and we have a number of them who are going beyond that, and it is appropriate.

And I think the sentiment on this committee would be to agree with what you are saying. But to ensure that we continue to have a strong NATO I think will be important not only to European security but most important to our own security.

We talked about Ukraine. I appreciate your past leadership in supporting Ukraine's fight for sovereignty. More recently you voted against supplemental funding for Ukraine and against forgiving loans for Ukraine in November, loans that would be critical to Ukraine's economic stability.

So can you talk about how your views on Ukraine have developed, and where you are now and what you think is important for

us to do in order to ensure that there is the strongest possible negotiating position if Ukraine and Russia do get to the negotiating table?

Senator RUBIO. Sure.

First, let me point out, and although I will still speak to my view of the process that I voted against that bill because I said I would not vote for a bill unless it addressed the crisis at our southern border as part of the overall arrangement. That was not done, and so I voted against it.

That said, here is my view of the situation. Once this war became what we now know it is, and that is a war of attrition, a stalemate, a protracted conflict, the dynamic on that situation has changed.

It has, and I believe, and I think that this echoes what the President—let me first echo the President's words and what he said in an interview about a year ago. He was asked about the war in Ukraine. He says, I want the dying to stop. I want people to stop dying. I want the killing to stop.

And frankly, I do not know how anyone could say they do not. The destruction that Ukraine is undergoing is extraordinary. It is going to take a generation to rebuild it.

Millions of Ukrainians no longer live in Ukraine, and the disruption—that means how many of them are going to come back, and what are they going to come back to. Even as I speak to you now the Ukrainian infrastructure and their energy infrastructure is being decimated in ways that are going to cost hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild over the next decades.

So this is an important conflict, and I think it should be the official position of the United States that this war should be brought to an end. And the question becomes what role can we play, and I think the first is by making that abundantly clear.

And my differences with the Biden administration throughout this process is they never clearly delineated what the end goal of the conflict was. What exactly were we funding? What exactly were we putting money toward?

And on many occasions it sounded like however much it takes for however long it takes. That is not a realistic or prudent position.

The truth of the matter is that in this conflict there is no way Russia takes all of Ukraine. The Ukrainians are too brave and fight too hard, and the country is too big. That is not going to happen.

It is also unrealistic to believe that somehow a nation the size of Ukraine, no matter how incompetent and no matter how much damage the Russian Federation has suffered as a result of this invasion—there is no way Ukraine is also going to push these people all the way back to where they were on the eve of the invasion just given the size dynamic.

I saw a quote recently, and I wish I could attribute to who it was, but the quote was, and I think it was very wise, where they said the problem that Ukraine is facing is not that they are running out of money, it is that they are running out of Ukrainians. There is a size differential here that is important.



Now, what Vladimir Putin has done is unacceptable. There is no doubt about it. But this war has to end. And I think it should be the official policy of the United States that we want to see it end.

Now, what that master plan looks like is going to be hard work. This is not going to be an easy endeavor. But it is going to require bold diplomacy, and my hope is that it could begin with some ceasefire and we are going to have—there are going to—in order to achieve objectives like the one that needs to occur in Ukraine, it is important for everyone to be realistic.

There will have to be concessions made by the Russian Federation but also by the Ukrainians, and the United States should lend itself there. It is also important that there be some balance on both sides.

In essence, it will be difficult to achieve this objective of a ceasefire and ultimately a peace settlement unless both sides have leverage.

Putin's goal now is to have maximum leverage so that he can basically impose neutrality on Ukraine, retrofit, and come back and do this again in 4 or 5 years, and that is not an outcome I think any of us would favor.

By the same token, I think it is important that the Ukrainians have leverage, but they also will have to make concessions to reach this agreement. It is going to be very difficult. This will not be easy.

Conflicts of this nature that have historical underpinnings to it are going to require a lot of hard diplomacy and tough work, but that is something that needs to happen. This conflict needs to end.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I am out of time, but I appreciate your last comment about the importance of leverage, and it is important for the United States to do what we can to help provide that leverage to Ukraine so that they can be in the best negotiating position possible with Russia.

Thank you very much.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator RICKETTS.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Well, Senator Rubio, congratulations on your nomination to this very, very difficult job. I want to thank you for your previous service in the U.S. Senate and your willingness to take on this job should you be confirmed.

And I also want to thank your family as well for their support for you to be able to be a U.S. Senator and to apply for this job as Secretary of State, and I want also to express my gratitude to all the members of the State Department.

We have a lot of people who choose to serve our country overseas, spend time away from their friends and family, and I cannot think of a more noble calling. You are taking over a department that is very, very important to us.

On Sunday, Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security advisor, said, quote, "The American people are safer, and the country is better off than we were 4 years ago."

Let me repeat, "The American people are safer, and the country is better off than 4 years ago." I do not know who believes that. I do not believe that.

I think the election results demonstrate the vast majority of Americans do not believe that. We do not believe it at home. Inflation has hurt average Americans' pocketbooks. Open border policies have put Americans at risk, and I do not believe we see it overseas.

In fact, Senator Rubio, should you be confirmed you are being handed a job at a time when this country is in the most danger we have been in since World War II. It is a very dangerous time in the world and your opening remarks demonstrate that you know that.

We are not better off, and we are not safer. President Biden started this with the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan that projected weakness and an incomprehension of what it means to have a policy of deterrence.

Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine and started the largest war in Europe since World War II after that withdrawal. I believe it is because he saw weakness in this Biden administration.

It has been the President's fear of helping Ukraine that has contributed to putting them in the untenable position they are today, by slow rolling the weapons that Ukraine needs to be able to defend themselves.

His incomprehensible and incoherent policy has caused him to handcuff American liquid natural gas exports while delaying tough sanctions on the Russian oil and gas industry which, as you know, is the lifeblood of the Russian war machine.

The Middle East is equally disastrous. Instead of enforcing sanctions on Iran, Biden naively tried to resurrect the Iran nuclear deal, enabling the regime to generate \$100 billion in oil revenue.

And I want to point out that during the Trump administration because of sanctions Iran's foreign reserves fell from \$122 billion to less than \$14 billion. That hampered their ability to be able to fund terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.

What the Biden administration has done is allowed the Iranian regime to enrich enough weapons grade uranium to be a week or two away from having a nuclear weapon. And since October 7 President Biden has not supported Israel in the way he has needed, and because of the previous mentioned money that he has allowed the Iranians to have that has funded the terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, our allies like Israel have been attacked, and we have been attacked directly.

Thankfully, Israel has had the courage to stand up to these terrorists and take matters into its own hand, and it has led to the decimation of Hamas and Hezbollah. But no amount of revisionist history can change the fact that this was despite the lack of support from the Biden administration, not because of the support from the Biden administration.

And of course, let us not forget North Korea and how dangerous they have become and the fact that we are now seeing North Korean troops in Europe. I thought 4 years ago that was unthought by anybody, and of course, one of the most concerning things is Biden's weakness has emboldened the greatest adversary we have on the face of the Earth right now, which is the People's Republic of China.

The People's Republic of China is the head of the stake of this axis of dictators that are challenging the United States today. They

are challenging our freedom, our security, and the very way of life we have.

Beijing has had a direct hand in each of the problems I just mentioned. That is why addressing any one of them cannot be done without making sure that we are thinking about how we are deterring the People's Republic of China.

When everything is a priority, nothing is a priority, and Senator Rubio, your top priority must be the People's Republic of China.

Since the election in November—so this is all within the last 2 months—the PRC has hacked our Treasury Department including CFIUS, continued what has been described as the worst telecom hack in U.S. history, sabotaged important undersea communication cables in Asia and Europe, deployed ships to the South China Sea to harass our allies like the Philippines in their own territorial waters, simulated a naval backed blockade of the Japanese islands for the first time, conducted the largest naval drills in decades targeting Taiwan and the broader Western Pacific, revealed new mobile piers suitable for a Taiwan invasion, unveiled advanced aircraft and launched the world's largest amphibious warship, and they have allowed Iran to draw down and ship nearly 3 million barrels of oil from a storage site in China.

It is obvious that Xi Jinping is positioning his chess pieces in preparation for war. He has directed his military to be prepared to take Taiwan by 2027, and folks, that is only 2 years away.

Now, it is true that does not mean that he will invade in 2027, and it is also true that it is not predetermined. But it should be very concerning to all of us that he has given his military that direction because time and time again dictators tell people what they are going to do, and then they go out and try and do it.

The only thing that dictators respond to is force, strength. Peace through strength. This was something Ronald Reagan understood a long time ago, and it is what we have to get back to in the United States.

Xi Jinping has vowed to be the world dominating power by 2049. We should take him at his word. That is what he believes he is going to try and do. It is time for us to go on the offensive and abandon illusions about what kind of adversary we are faced.

This is not a managed competition. This is a competition we must win. It will take more than an all of government approach. It will take an all of society approach to be able to win this.

As our lead diplomat, Senator Rubio, you are in a position to set the tone, and that is why I cannot think of a better pick to be the Secretary of State than you.

So, first of all, do you agree that the PRC is the biggest threat that we face as the United States?

Senator RUBIO. The Communist Party of China leads the PRC, is the most potent and dangerous near peer adversary this nation has ever confronted.

They have elements that the Soviet Union never possessed. They are a technological adversary and competitor—an industrial competitor, an economic competitor, a geopolitical competitor, a scientific competitor now in every realm.

It is an extraordinary challenge. It is one that I believe will define the 21st century. When they write the book about the 21st cen-

tury there is going to be some chapters in there about Putin. There is going to be some chapters in there about some of these other places.

But the bulk of that book about the 21st century will be not just about China but about the relationship between China and the United States and what direction it went, and I think you are alluding to it in your statement. I know you may have another question. I do not want to eat up all your time, but I do want to say this.

The Chinese believe that the United States are a great power in an inevitable decline and that they are in an inevitable rise. Now, they are going to be—they already are—they are going to be a rich and powerful country and we are going to have to deal with them.

The danger is that because of our own actions in many cases a dangerous imbalance has built up in that relationship. We allowed them for years to pretend that they were some developing country so we should allow them to continue to cheat on trade and commerce. We should allow them to continue to expand.

They lied about not militarizing and populating island chains in the South China Sea and the like. We allowed them for years before we got serious about it to conduct grotesque human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims as an example, one of the most horrifying things happening on the planet, and for years no one talked about it.

Which, by the way, not just has a human rights component to it. It allows them to use slave labor to produce goods at the expense of the rest of the world.

Talk about not just a horrific humanitarian crisis but an unfair trade practice as well. We have allowed them to get away with things, and frankly, the Chinese did what any country in the world would do given these opportunities. They took advantage of it.

And so I think now we are dealing with the ramifications of it. I agree 100 percent what you said, but I remind you and I remind everyone—I guess I want to make this point—that much of what we need to do to confront China is here at home.

It is not just abroad. It is also here at home. We have to rebuild our domestic industrial capacity, and we have to make sure that the United States is not reliant on any single other nation for any of our critical supply chains.

Senator RICKETTS. And with 4 seconds left how are you going to explain that to your average American that we need this all of society approach and to your point exactly that it needs to begin here at home so that people from my State in Nebraska will understand and get on board?

Senator RUBIO. If we stay on the road we are on right now in less than 10 years virtually everything that matters to us in life will depend on whether China will allow us to have it or not.

Everything from the blood pressure medicine we take to what movies we get to watch and everything in between we will depend on China for it. They have come to dominate the critical mineral industry supplies throughout the world. Everywhere in the world they have now established critical mineral rights.

Even those who want to see more electric cars, no matter where you make them, those batteries are almost entirely dependent on

the ability of the Chinese and the willingness of the Chinese Communist Party to produce it and export it to you.

So if we do not change course we are going to live in a world where much of what matters to us on a daily basis, from our security to our health, will be dependent on whether the Chinese allow us to have it or not. That is an unacceptable outcome.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Senator RISCH. Next is Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Senator Rubio.

And I have enjoyed working with you on the Congressional Executive Commission on China which engages in many issues related to their treatment of folks, from the Tibetans to the Uyghurs to their position regarding Hong Kong and Taiwan.

But let us talk about Taiwan. I had the chance to go to Taiwan in the year 2000. It was the second Presidential election there, and it was the first one where people were becoming convinced that they actually might be able to hold a democracy.

I believe they have earned the right to have a voice in international affairs, and I also believe that they are at great risk right now with mainland China, Xi's plan to be aggressive militarily toward them as my colleague Senator Ricketts just noted.

Will you support in your role as Secretary of State Taiwan's right to have a voice in international affairs, participate in international forums, and will you support the porcupine strategy providing that we will supply them with defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability?

By the way, that phrase is from the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. It is in our current law.

Senator RUBIO. Yes. Let me just point out that on the Taiwan Relations Act, I believe in the year 2016, I was the lead Republican sponsor in reauthorizing and reinvigorating it.

I think that the multiple consecutive presidential administrations of both parties have made clear that the policy of the United States toward Taiwan is encapsulated not just in the Taiwan Relations Act but in the Six Assurances that multiple Administrations, including the Trump administration and now the Biden administration, have made clear are our policies.

With regards to your second point about international forums, ASEAN is a great example of one where that is being tested. Last year, at their conference, the Chinese were able to prevent participation by the—Taiwan—any mention of Taiwan in the memorandum, and then this year they are working very hard to make sure that no one associated with Taiwan is anywhere near it.

So this is one more example of how they are being excluded. I would also point to the Western Hemisphere. I know that sounds like half a world away, but you understand this issue.

The majority of nations on Earth that continue to recognize and have relations with Taiwan, the vast bulk of or the plurality are within the Western Hemisphere. They have undertaken a very aggressive action in just the last 7, 8 years to get these countries to flip.

They got Panama to flip. Then they got Panama to convince the Dominican Republic to flip. They have targeted multiple other nations and Nicaragua most recently to flip.

So I think that is an important thing for us to keep in mind and make a priority, and I also think it is important to recognize allies in the region like Paraguay that have not flipped and others who have stayed strong in that regard.

On the porcupine strategy, because I know it may sound weird to people if anyone's watching this—I know what the ratings are, but hopefully not high and—but let me just say that when the porcupine strategy—what it really means is you want to make the cost of invading Taiwan higher than the benefit.

We want to discourage that by the Chinese believing that, yes, could they ultimately win an invasion of Taiwan, but the price would be too high to pay. It is basically deterrence, and I think that is critical not just to defending Taiwan, to preventing a cataclysmic military intervention in the Indo-Pacific, and that is what it would be.

And I would make one more point, and again, I do not mean to want to be alarmist about it, but if you listen to Xi Jinping, and it is important when you listen to him—and I say, listen, read—do not read the English translation that they put out because the English translation is never right. You have to read the real translation on what they actually said in their native tongue.

What they are basically saying is that this is a foundational and definitional issue for Xi Jinping personally, and as a result I think we need to wrap our head around the fact that unless something dramatic changes like an equilibrium where they conclude that the costs of intervening in Taiwan are too high, we are going to have to deal with this before the end of this decade.

Senator MERKLEY. And so strongly support for the porcupine strategy. Thank you. And I know people in Taiwan—

Senator RUBIO. I just do not like saying porcupine, but yes.

[Laughter.]

Senator MERKLEY. You know, when I went to Taiwan in November and met with the president and other leaders, they are extremely nervous right now, and part of the reason they are nervous is they are concerned about how things play out in Ukraine as possibly creating an incentive for China.

And I take your point about the current stalemate and the fact that there is a range of objectives that are out of reach for either side.

But I do feel like our partnership with NATO and our continued supply of war materiel that enable Ukrainians to keep fighting—until that resolution is done is extremely important because if Ukraine collapses, it will say a lot to China about whether we will stay the course in assisting Taiwan, not to mention it will be a catastrophe for democracy and a catastrophe for the Ukrainians. I do not know if you share that view.

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think, first of all, our goal, as President Trump has stated, is he wants the dying to stop. He wants the killing to stop.

So it is very difficult to reach an accord or an agreement that begins with a ceasefire and ends with a peace agreement unless both sides have some leverage.

Now, there is some leverage that exists beyond military capabilities as well. We have a significant number of sanctions on the Russian Federation, and they continue to grow and expand, and other nations do as well, and that will have to be part of this conversation in terms of bringing about a peaceful resolution.

And then there is the question of the long term security and stability of Ukraine beyond the—even if the conflict were to end, there needs to be the capability of Ukraine to defend itself.

And it is a point that I made back as far as 2014, when the United States under the Obama administration chose not to provide weapon capabilities, and I think we lost deterrence during that period.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. I am going to keep rolling here for a few other questions.

One of the things China is doing is deeply engaged in transnational repression, which means threatening people here in the United States, that they will disappear or kill or harm their family members back in China if they exercise their free rights here in our country.

And also they are seeking to repatriate Uyghurs who have escaped China, and right now there are 48 Uyghurs that are in Thailand, and Thailand is on the verge of repatriating them back to China.

Will you lobby for Thailand to not send these Uyghurs back to the horror they will face if they are returned?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and the good news is that Thailand is actually a very strong U.S. partner, a strong historical ally as well, and that is an area where I think diplomacy could really achieve results because of how important that relationship and how close it is.

I think it is also one more opportunity for us to remind the world of what exactly we are talking about here. This is not some obscure issue.

These are people who are basically being rounded up because of their ethnicity and religion, and they are being put into camps. They are being put into what they call reeducation centers.

They are being stripped of their identity. Their children's names are being changed. It is one of the most horrifying things that has ever happened, and they are being put into forced labor, literally slave labor, and—

Senator MERKLEY. I will say our work together on the Forced Labor Prevention Act—Uyghur Forced Labor—was tremendous. Thank you for championing that.

I am encouraging other nations, including Canada, Mexico, and Europe, to follow the rebuttable presumption strategy we put into that bill, because right now if our slave labor products or China's slave labor products are rejected here they are shipped to Canada, and we need to expand on that.

I want to turn to another point. Our companies face in China often the requirement for partnerships or location or what products they can produce or the theft of their intellectual property.

Meanwhile, we are helping their economy by being a major supplier of fossil gas, LNG, to China. Should we be strengthening the Chinese economy by sending them LNG?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think that is a good point to raise in that regard, because I will tell you that is one of the things that is going to have to be discussed in the broader relationship with China, and that is it is one of the things we actually export to China.

They import a lot this way. One of the few things that we export in great capacity is these long term contracts that are tied up either directly to China or through third countries.

Because some of this, obviously, is exported to a third country who in turn sends it to China either as a direct sale or as a byproduct.

So I think that has to be on the table as a number of other measures that we have and leverage as we engage the Chinese in this geopolitical perspective.

I would go further and point out that the Chinese also have, I believe, the world's largest surplus refining capacity. They have invested very heavily in that as well, and that is one more area where I think our energy policy will be critical and bringing some geopolitical stability to our relationship with them. I know you sponsored a bill to cut off the exports with—

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. I have 1 minute left. I focused on China, but I want to turn to humanitarian issues.

I, by the way, fully supported Israel's ability to respond to Hamas, but I am very concerned about how it has played out in terms of the massive humanitarian conditions in Gaza. Will you help lead the world in responding to those humanitarian conditions?

And there is a proposal for a broad regional agreement that would provide security to Israel, peace with all their Arab neighbors, building on the Abraham Accords that in return would create a framework to have concrete steps toward a Palestinian state.

I believe that is our best bet to break the cycle of hate and war that we have been trapped in my entire lifetime. How will you pursue breaking this cycle of hate and war, and will you support humanitarian support to Gaza?

Senator RUBIO. So my first point is I am hopeful, and again, I have been here so I do not know of any news that has emerged in our time during this hearing.

But I am hopeful that there is an agreement in place that will bring hostages back immediately and in exchange and in a three phase plan that Secretary Blinken sort of has outlined over the last 24 hours, and that credit to both the Biden administration and the Trump transition worked side by side on helping this become about, and I hope that comes about.

And part of that phrase—part of that deal, as I understand it, is it has this very tenuous but important 6 week transitional period where it is going to require international cooperation to bring some level of stability in administration and that could serve as—assuming it works that could serve as a foundation to build upon.

I would also point to one more thing, and that is we do not know yet for sure, but there are opportunities available now in the Middle East that did not exist 90 days ago.



Whether it is what has happened in Lebanon, whether it is what has happened in Syria, whether it is what hopefully will happen with the ceasefire and the release of hostages after a horrifying detention and unjustifiable actions by Hamas, whether it is any of these things or all in combination, there are now factors at play in the Middle East that I think we can build upon and may open the door to extraordinary and historic opportunities, not just to provide for Israel's security but ultimately begin to confront some of these other factors.

But these things, again, are going to be hard work, and they will require us to take advantage of those opportunities as they exist.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Senator RICKETTS [presiding]. Senator McCormick.

Senator MCCORMICK. Senator Rubio, good to see you again. I am looking forward to working with you closely on many of the issues we are going to discuss today.

As a Senator you have been a strong voice for American leadership, and I am really confident you will be a strong Secretary of State on behalf of President Trump and the American people for advancing America's interest. I believe you are the right man for the job.

When we met privately we talked about a range of topics, from China to Israel to the fate of the hostages in Gaza to energy policy.

We also talked about something that hits home here in Pennsylvania for my constituents, which is the fate of Marc Fogel. As you and I discussed, Marc has been imprisoned by the Russians since 2021.

I have had a chance to meet with his mom, 95 year old Mafa. She was at the Butler rally with myself and President Trump in the front row when he was shot.

We need to bring him home. It took far too long for the State Department to designate Marc as wrongfully detained by the Russian government, and was really a gut punch to many of us in Pennsylvania that Marc was not included in the swap last year.

So, Senator, will you commit to working with me and others in our delegation to make Marc's return home a high priority?

Senator RUBIO. Absolutely, and in fact I have been involved already. I have met with those families as well. We have had conversations about this, and there are two things I would point to.

Number one, this is a ridiculous case. I mean, this is an American that—clearly there was an order given at some level that if you see an American, and you have anything you can charge them with, let us charge them and let us collect these because we can trade them in the future for something.

There is a global market for this now, and it is one of the challenges of the 21st century. There is now an active global market for detaining Americans wrongfully in Venezuela, in Russia, in China, or somewhere else—Iran—and then using them to trade for something they want in the future.

And so I think there needs to be greater awareness put out about that reality. Although people are still going to travel, and Americans are still a free people that have the ability to travel, this is a real risk.

In this particular case this has nothing to do with politics. No one can claim nor do they that he is a spy or that he is involved in a national security threat.

And so this is a case that has to be elevated, and hopefully, one that can be done through strong, private diplomacy at a minimum as a goodwill gesture, because if they are not willing to do this then the—not to mention the broader challenges posed to us by what Putin is doing in Ukraine, then I think the chances of improvement in U.S.-Russia relations are impossible.

Not that this would solve that problem, but it is at a minimum the kind of thing you would hope to see if anyone is serious about improving relations, especially if we can get the situation in Ukraine to a peaceful standing, and I hope that this case will be one that we can reach a good result on.

Senator McCORMICK. Good. Thank you.

On the sad topic of hostages, as you know, Dena and I—my wife—live in Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh. We have been part of a meeting with hostages in Israel and in the United States as recently as last week.

Noa Argamani and Ronen and Orna Neutra, who lost their son, sadly, Omer recently came to visit, and you know, President Trump said recently all hell will be to pay if the hostages are not released.

If confirmed, what emphasis would you put on releasing those hostages in Gaza? Do you agree that a permanent ceasefire in Gaza must include—absolutely must include the release of those hostages?

Senator RUBIO. Well, it must include it because if it does not there will not be a ceasefire for long. I mean, the Israeli commitment to bringing back their civilians—and that is what these are.

These are civilians. These are not—these are people. These are innocent people who were targeted and have been held in horrifying conditions, the health and well being of which many of them were not—we still do not know. But we believe that a substantial number that are going to be released as part of this first tranche.

And that is an important point as well, you know, in regards to this agreement that has now been publicly reported on. It is not everyone. I think there is a first tranche of women, children, and people over a certain age, and then a second tranche of releases of males that are of military age who they claim are all combatants even though they are not. They just happen to be of a certain age.

But without the hostage situation resolved, the situation will not be resolved. It is the linchpin of what has happened now.

Hamas has been severely degraded, but these people, that include a number of American citizens, need to be home as soon as possible and that will remain a priority in any engagement that we are involved in with regards to not just a ceasefire but some permanent peace process, moving forward.

Senator McCORMICK. Very good. Thank you.

Since October 7 there has been a disturbing rise in anti-Semitism, pro-terrorist violence in our cities, on college campuses. You and I had the opportunity to write an op-ed together, and in that op-ed we called on foreign nationals who support Hamas or other terrorist organizations to lose their visas and to be sent back to their home countries.

As Secretary of State, of course, you will be responsible for overseeing the issuance of visas. How will you enforce our laws to ensure that we remove supporters of terrorist groups from our country?

Senator RUBIO. Listen, my view, and this is one of common sense. If you apply for a visa to come into the United States, and in the process of being looked at it comes to light that you are a supporter of Hamas, we would not let you in.

If we knew you were a supporter of Hamas, we would not give you a visa. So now that you got the visa, and you are inside the U.S. and now we realize you are a supporter of Hamas, we should remove your visa.

If you could not come in because you are a supporter of Hamas, you should not be able to stay on a visa if you are a supporter of Hamas. That is how I view it, and I think that is just an issue of common sense and we intend to be very forceful about that.

Senator McCORMICK. Good. Thank you.

You know, fentanyl is killing 4,000 Pennsylvanians each year, over 200 Americans a day. President Trump campaigned on this throughout the country in Pennsylvania as did I, on we have to stop that flow of fentanyl.

And of course, violent criminal groups in Mexico, including the Jalisco and Sinaloa cartels, terrorize our communities here at home with this deadly fentanyl, and the Mexican people with endless violence.

As secretary will you initiate the process to designate these groups, these cartels, as foreign terrorist organizations, and if so can you describe for the American people the national security tools that that unlocks—that designation unlocks to degrade the cartels?

Senator RUBIO. Well, first of all, the designation of a designated terrorist—foreign terrorist organization brings with it a host of things that makes it illegal to cooperate or work with them in any way or to be supportive of their endeavors.

It cuts off access to all sorts of banking opportunities and the like around the world where it is important to move money around.

Now, that said, probably an imperfect tool when it comes to these groups that you are discussing because these are sophisticated criminal enterprises. They are terrorizing the United States, but they are sophisticated criminal enterprises, and they operate in the trafficking of people, drugs, and migrants.

It is a horrifying effect. Sadly, they also have basically operational control over huge swaths of the border regions between Mexico and the United States.

That is just an unfortunate fact, and it is one we are going to have to confront with our partners in Mexico is that these sophisticated transnational terroristic organizations have operational and functional control over huge swaths of areas that border the United States of America.

And so whether that is the tool that we use, which may be the appropriate one, or some new one that we come up with, it is important for us not just to go after these groups but to identify them and call them for what they are, and that is terroristic in their nature because they are terrorizing America with mass migration and with the flow of drugs.

Senator MCCORMICK. What about military force?

Senator RUBIO. Well, that is an option the President has at his disposal. Obviously, it is not one that is in the purview of the Department of State. I think President Trump is someone that never publicly discusses his options and leaves himself the flexibility to act.

I think there is a lot we can and will continue to do in close partnership with our allies and Mexico. I think there is more they can do as well to confront this challenge.

My preference would be—from the Department of State's perspective, my preference would be that we can work with the Mexicans on this issue cooperatively, because it is impacting their nation as much as ours.

These sophisticated groups, these criminal organizations, do not simply threaten America. They threaten the Mexican political process.

In the last election you had multiple presidential candidates and other candidates to other offices assassinated. You have had journalists targeted and assassinated for speaking out against these groups.

So these groups do not simply terrorize the United States. They are terrorizing and in some ways undermining the Mexican government and Mexican sovereignty and the health and well being of the Mexican people.

And so my hope in a perfect world is that we could work in close collaboration with Mexican authorities to take these groups out.

Senator MCCORMICK. Very good. Thank you.

Final question. The Chinese Communist Party, as you said in your testimony, has waged a deliberate campaign of economic warfare against the United States and our allies.

We need to restore, as President Trump has said, reciprocity in that economic relationship and impose costs on Beijing for hurting American workers.

How can the United States counter that campaign? How do you think about the economic tools that the Administration can apply to cut off the flow of American capital and technology that supports China's geopolitical ambitions?

Senator RUBIO. Well, and again, much of what comes to trade and so forth in this Administration will be handled through the Department of Commerce but we will certainly have an economic under secretary and a whole entire bureau that will be dedicated to what we can contribute to that endeavor. So I will just share my views broadly on it.

Number one, I think it would make common sense to everybody that if by and large a relationship in which their companies can do whatever they want here, but we cannot do it there, is a pretty unfair relationship, and it is something we have allowed in the past for allied countries who were small, poor, and developing. That cannot continue, in my view, and I think that is the President's view.

The second is there is much that we need to be—that needs to be done with regards here domestically. I think we, once again, as a nation—this is not a Department of State issue but once again as a nation, need to prioritize the importance of our industrial ca-

capacity and our access to supply chains domestically, especially in key and critical industries.

Maybe not every industry, but some key industries we should either have a domestic capacity or an allied capacity that is reliable and cannot be used against us in a moment of conflict as leverage.

The third point I would make is we need to be actively engaged in the world. As an example, the Chinese own significant mineral rights and mining rights in Argentina, in Chile, throughout Africa.

It is one of the reasons why the polar region and the Arctic region has become so critical as well in that regard is because they are scooping up all over the world these mineral rights, port rights, et cetera, that place us at an enormous disadvantage in the long term, and it is what I said in that short answer is we are going to—if this trend continues, we are going to wind up living in a world where much of what we depend on for our security, our health, our safety, and our economic prosperity will, largely, depend on whether the Chinese allow us to have it or not. And that cannot be a world that we leave for our children.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you, Senator.

Senator RICKETTS. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Senator Rubio, I look forward to this hearing and to our service together. Welcome to the other side of the dais, and welcome to your wife Jeanette and your children and your family. Thank you for your service.

I have three questions, broadly, of nominees: Do they have the qualifications to appropriately serve, do they have a policy alignment with our core national interests, and do they have the integrity and character to serve.

We may have policy disagreements, but we have had multiple areas of convergence. Over the time we have served here in the Senate together—I had my folks go back and look—we have cosponsored nearly 60 bills together. So I hope we can continue to find constructive ways to partner.

I have a number of questions to get through, so I will try to move briskly. With regards to special envoys President elect Trump has appointed a series of special envoys focused on a wide range of areas and some of these I think can genuinely complement, not undermine or distract, from State Department's core efforts.

The special envoy for hostage affairs, for example, Adam Boehler, I look forward to working with. As Senator McCormick asked about, there is a number of key issues around hostage taking of Americans.

There is a bipartisan bill Senator Risch and I have on this that we hope to work with you on. Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg, Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia, I think will be central to achieving an outcome in Ukraine that is a lasting and secure peace and prevents further Russian aggression.

But others like Ric Grenell for special missions and Massad Boulos for the Arab world concern me in terms of the potential for mission conflict or conflict of interest. How will you work to ensure that State maintains its authority and encourage the Administration to conduct a full vetting of any potential conflicts of interest and to ensure there is clarity of alignment with special envoys?

Senator RUBIO. Sure, and thank you for the question because I think it is a valid one.

With the exception of Mr. Boulos, who I do not know—I may have met once but do not know—every one of the envoys that have been named so far is someone that I have worked with in the past and expect to work well with in the future.

To me, the expression of a special envoy is critically important where it is most successful. It sits on a complex issue with a defined goal and an expression of presidential priorities.

So Sudan is an example of a special envoy, and Mr. Perriello and the job he has done there, and this is in addition to the fact that we have an ambassador, and we have other presence—diplomatic presence there, that can be very complementary.

So the way this will work, and how I anticipate it will work, is these envoys work for the President in coordination with us. These are all people, with the exception of one who I am not disparaging—I just do not—I am not—do not know him but I have worked with everyone else that you have mentioned—are people that are going to be focused on this full like a laser, and they will need to do so not simply in coordination with the Department of State because of subject matter expertise.

Let us say you reach an agreement, or you reach an outcome. You are still going to need the technical support necessary to pull this off, and we have an array of experts in the Department of State that will help achieve that.

And it also—it will involve other elements of the U.S. Government. So, as an example, if you are going to reach an agreement on migration, say, in the Western Hemisphere that also could entail the necessity to have a conversation about trade policy and tariffs that will involve Commerce and others.

That is the only way this will work, and that is how I anticipate it working.

Senator COONS. I have agreed to co-chair with Senator Hagerty a commission on reform and modernization of the State Department that Senator Cardin created with him. We cannot, in my view, do more with less, given the challenges of the global moment.

I think we need more investment in U.S. diplomacy and development as instruments of national power, but we also need to address efficiencies and make sure that we are streamlining and focusing the department and supporting its work force, the Foreign Service.

How will you work to make sure that the Trump administration's efficiency mandate will strengthen and not deplete core state functions?

Senator RUBIO. Well, first of all, I think the work of this new committee that is being set up as a result of the legislation that passed will be critical.

My understanding is the impediment was that not all the appointments have been made—maybe that has now changed—and we eagerly await that because I do think that there are two things that are very important.

The first is when we talk about efficiency, the efficiency is not simply just saving money. The efficiency is improving performance. A key part of the State Department is customer service.

We provide consular affairs—passports, visas, all kinds of work around the world—for Americans who are stranded or in trouble or need to get somewhere. Improving that experience for the consumer is one of the top priorities we need to have.

How can we leverage—and I think Secretary Blinken has begun this work. We need to build on this. How can we infuse technology, AI and the like, not simply to improve the customer service aspects of the State Department but improve the productivity.

If somehow through leveraging technology appropriately we can get people at the State Department to achieve three times the amount of work than they do now because it takes less time to do these tasks or frees them up to do other tasks, that will be an enormous win, and I hope that the commission will look at those aspects of this as well.

Senator COONS. I think I understand—Senator, if I might move to another question—that multilateral organizations concern and frustrate many of us. Some of their actions have been counter to American interests.

But when we have withdrawn from multilateral organizations and in particular some U.N. entities, it is also giving an opening to our adversaries. The previous Trump administration withdrew from UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, the World Health Organization, and I am concerned that if we do so without thinking through the consequences, we may abandon our chance to implement our agenda around human rights, around 5G standards, around technical standards that matter for the 21st century.

Do you support sustained U.S. participation in multilateral organizations, and how will you work to strengthen our leadership in those institutions in ways that prevent our adversaries from advancing their competing agendas?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I want to point back to what I said at the opening, and that is our engagement in any international agreement or any international arrangement or any international organization has to be driven by the answer to one of three questions: Will our involvement in this organization make us safer, make us more prosperous, make us more secure.

It has to be justified by an American interest. It just does. I mean, we are in an era where we need to really—it should have always been that way, but now more than ever.

And so each of these will have different components to it. I think there is a second component of funding, and that is should the United States be funding organizations who in many cases are pursuing and/or achieving outcomes that are contrary to the national interest of the United States.

Each of these will require a serious examination as we work through them and a justification to Congress about why we are no longer funding it, or we are no longer participating.

I think you do point to one that I can tell you right now is one that will be critical for us to be engaged in, and that is the setting of standards. But the setting of standards, for people to understand, is it is not simply from these organizations. This also becomes practical.

So throughout Africa we are now seeing the deployment of these Safe City programs by Huawei. Now, this is just a commercial deal for Huawei.

This is the ability to ingrain itself in the telecommunication of these countries and establish itself as the leader in 5G, and now all of the other technologies that depend on 5G—additive manufacturing, you know, the 3D printing, and so forth, autonomous vehicles—they will all have to be drawn to the standards set by Huawei.

That is not because an international organization set it up. It is because they have established market dominance, and it is a concern we have in multiple parts of the Global South and the developing world. We need to be engaged that way as well.

Senator COONS. I very much look forward to working with you on deploying the full tool set that allows us to compete in the Global South including the Development Finance Corporation, something Senator Corker and I led on this committee and which I know you see the potential for.

As I come to the end of my time, I have worked hard with Senator Graham to get signed into law two different bills I wanted to mention—the Global Fragility Act, which presses the Department of Defense, Department of State, AID, to have a common strategy in fragile states, and we really struggled to effectively implement that, and much more recently the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act, something that Chairman McCaul and Senator Graham and Congressman Meeks and I worked on.

It would create a public-private foundation to address security and conservation in ungoverned and insecure spaces in the Global South, in South America and Africa and Southeast Asia.

Both of these bills address the root causes of instability and facilitate cost effective uses of American dollars by encouraging engagement with the private sector and philanthropy.

Can I count on your support to work as the Secretary if confirmed in the State Department to implement these two laws more effectively in the coming years?

Senator RUBIO. Well, on the conservation one, I believe it just passed, right? Most recently—

Senator COONS. Just signed into law.

Senator RUBIO. We are getting there just in time to help you with it, and it is had strong bipartisan support.

On the Global Fragility this has been ongoing for quite a bit of time, and we will have to go back and check on the progress. I do not know. I know there is a 10 year plan and there is the five countries that we have identified, and by the way, no country likes to be identified as fragile, so we have to be sensitive about how we do it.

But I think that is a component. We got to go back and see where we are on that 10 year planning, because that is an important way of leveraging both economic security and development efforts in the whole of government.

And I think key to this is going to be not simply the Department of State, but it is that steering committee that is supposed to meet every 3 months at the National Security Council that coordinates all this work is happening.



Look, laws are great, programs are great, but if someone is not in charge of it, someone is not running it, and someone is not measuring at the end of those periods of time whether it is reaching its intended outcome, we are going to have a huge problem.

But the goal of that legislation, as I recall, is and believe still, is we want to get ahead of this before there—before a—this is about preventing crisis which, frankly, is a lot cheaper and a lot better than actually dealing with crisis after the fact.

And so identifying places around the world that are in danger of becoming chaotic, uncertain, insecure, and getting ahead of it and helping them through a variety of means to prevent that from happening, and preventing those crises from happening is going to save us a lot of headaches, a lot of danger, and a lot of money.

Senator COONS. In closing, I will just repeat something I have heard from several of my colleagues. I think that our global network of alliances and partners rooted in our shared values—a commitment to democracy and human rights—is essential to our national security, and how the war in Ukraine ends, and whether a peace agreement there lasts and secures Ukraine from ongoing Russian aggression is critical to our credibility and security and to sustaining that network of allies and partners.

I hope that is something you strongly agree with. I look forward to working with you toward that end.

Senator RISCH [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Coons.

Next up is going to be Senator Daines, and after that will be Senator Murphy, and about that time it is going to be noon. We are going to take a short, 5 minute break at noon. Not a Senate 5 minutes but a for real 5 minute break at noon.

And those of you who have a seat here, I would suggest you do not leave because it is going to be difficult to claim your seat back if you are here as an observer.

So with that, Senator Daines, welcome to the committee.

Senator DAINES. Chairman, thank you.

Marco, it is good to have you here. I have got a great view here from the dais seeing your family behind you, seeing Jeanette, Daniella, the rest of the Rubio family.

What a moment of great honor and celebration for the Rubios, culminating on Monday when your family will celebrate the 1 month anniversary of Anthony Rubio's touchdown as a Florida Gator.

[Laughter.]

Senator DAINES. So congratulations on every front, proud dad.

Look, you are charged with one of the most important tasks I think the Administration will have, and that is advancing President Trump's agenda and representing the interests of the United States around the world.

I cannot think of a better nominee for Secretary of State to serve under President Trump than Marco Rubio. You will have a lot of active conflicts we are working together on as we think of what is going on in Ukraine, Israel, Sudan, ongoing nuclear weapons program in Iran, the tyranny in Venezuela.

The New START Treaty has been completely disregarded by Russia, not to mention what we have to think about strategy as it relates to China.

I could continue to list the results that we saw from the Trump administration with the Abraham Accords and really moving forward here with significant, substantive advancements of American interests abroad.

But look, this next Administration and the leadership of President Trump and your service will be extremely consequential. This posting could not be more important.

Marco, as you know, Iran is the world's leading sponsor of terror. In 2024 Iran exported, roughly, 587 million barrels of oil, an increase of over 10 percent over the prior year.

These illegal oil sales fund Hamas, the Hezbollah terrorism, the Houthis, the nuclear arms programs, drone technology that is being used right now by the Russians against Ukraine. These oil sales are directly resulting in global unrest, and they are costing innocent lives.

Senator, if confirmed what would be your goals and strategies as you think about addressing Iran as an adversary?

Senator RUBIO. You asked that question at a very interesting moment. So Iran today—two points I want to make about Iran and it is really important.

When we talk about Iran, I am talking about the radical Shia clerics and not the people. The people of Iran are people of an ancient civilization, an ancient culture with tremendous pride and advances, who take great pride in their Persian heritage and identity, and I do not know of any nation on Earth in which there is a bigger difference between the people and those who govern them than what exists in Iran, and that is a fact that needs to be made repeatedly.

In no way is the clerics who run that country representative of the people of that country and of its history and of contributions it has made to humanity, and it is a point I wish we would continue to make.

Iran and that regime is at its weakest point in recent memory, maybe ever. Their air defenses have been badly damaged. Their Shia Crescent that they were trying to create has been badly damaged in Lebanon and Syria, where they have been basically forced and driven out.

Their economy is in shambles. They are now on some days having 6, 8, 12, 9 hour blackouts. They are on the verge of potentially, if not having done so already, having to pull back on the energy subsidies that they provide people in that country that are incredibly popular, and it would be unpopular to reverse.

So they are in a lot of trouble, and now what we need to be wise about is the following. I imagine that within that regime, and I am just saying this because of common sense, there are two schools of thought.

There is one group that is saying now is the time where we need to find ourselves an off ramp. Not we are going to turn into really nice guys, but we are really in trouble here. We need to find an off ramp and buy ourselves some time.

And then there is another group that is probably saying now is the time to prove that we are a nuclear power or a nuclear capable power, enrich from 60 to 90 and press go, and that is how we are going to buy ourselves immunity from foreign action.

And this is a tenuous moment in that regard, but it is one we need to acknowledge. My view of it is that we should be open to any arrangement that allows us to have safety and stability in the region, but one in which we are clear eyed.

Any concessions we make to the Iranian regime we should anticipate that they will use, as they have used in the past, to build their weapons systems and to try to restart their sponsorship of Hezbollah and other related entities around the region because they seek to become the dominant regional power.

That is their stated goal, and it has been clear by the actions that they have taken. I think it is interesting that in the year in which by—I think by October of this year, the Europeans and the E3 countries of the U.K., France, and Germany have to confront whether they are going to do the snapback provisions or not because Iran is clearly in violation of the agreement that we are no longer part of. In fact, IAEA inspectors have not even been in the country since 2021, if I am correct.

So I think early this week on Monday they engaged the Europeans in talking about nuclear arrangements. So whether that is indicative of the direction they are going or not, we are going to find out.

What cannot be allowed under any circumstances is a nuclear armed Iran. What cannot be allowed under any circumstances is an Iran and an Iranian regime that has the resources and the capability to restart and continue their sponsorship of terrorism, and what cannot be allowed under any circumstances is an Iran with a military capability of threatening and destabilizing its neighbors and potentially reaching the homeland as well both kinetically and directly and also through their surrogate groups who have long planned contingencies for attacks.

And let us not forget that this is a group—these are individuals that have spent the last 5 years actively and openly plotting the assassination of the President elect and of multiple members of previous Administrations.

Think about this for a moment. When is the last time you heard that a foreign government is actively, openly, and admittedly seeking to assassinate the former Secretary of State, the former and soon to be once again President of the United States, and others, and that people have been arrested for plotting that?

This is who we are dealing with, and anything that we do with Iran needs to be clear eyed about who that regime is, but also who the people of Iran really are, because they are not their leaders.

Senator DAINES. Marco, thank you.

Shortly after the election and prior to Thanksgiving I took a quick trip over to Central Asia, as I discussed that with you a bit, to Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. In fact, in the last 12 months I visited all five of the Central Asian countries.

In fact, I was bedded down, speaking of Iran, 20 miles from the Iranian border in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. They have the fourth largest reserves of natural gas in the world. This is a part of the world that is often neglected, but of such strategic importance.

You have got Iran, you have got Afghanistan, Russia, and certainly China as they talk about living in a submarine as they look

into multi-vector diplomacy and want to engage with the United States as the Russians and Chinese are competing for their favor.

One of the first trips that I made after the election, the region was Central Asia. There had not been a U.S. Senator there in 13 years—13 years—to Turkmenistan or Tajikistan. Very important strategically.

One of the first goals of the caucus that Senator Gary Peters and I created of Central Asia is to repeal the Jackson-Vanik label on the region and extend permanent normal trade relations with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

I realize you have a lot of priorities on your plate when you will be confirmed as our secretary, but I would say rescinding it would be a good faith indication—the Jackson-Vanik requirements—that Central Asia needs right now to grow.

My question is would you work with me and Senator Peters to have your team work with us to remove this designation?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and I believe the permanent removal will require legislative action. I think Senator Murphy has a bill on that as well. Yours is the three countries.

Look, I think this is a relic of an era that has passed. There are some that argue that we should use it as leverage for human rights concessions or leverage to get them to go stronger in our way as opposed to Russia and the like.

But I think in some cases—and it is an absurd relic of the past—I think it is Kazakhstan, who the Department of Commerce has already said is a market economy. In fact, I think they hosted the WTO ministerial just a couple years ago. So it just—they have met the conditions.

Senator DAINES. Yes, it is—

Senator RUBIO. But we will work with you on this because I think it is important.

Senator DAINES. I think it is a neglected part of the world, and I look forward to working with Senator Murphy on this. You know, that C5+1, which is Central Asian countries plus the United States, I hope we can work with President Trump actually to think about maybe hosting some kind of a summit there. Very strategic.

After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, we need more friends in Central Asia, and I look forward to working on that.

In the time I have left, when I opened up my comments I talked about all these conflicts around the world. Sometimes we forget some of the most important relationships are right in our backyard. I am thinking about Mexico.

With the nearshoring going on at the moment, a lot of production coming now into more of our time zone and hemisphere coming from China and so forth, Laredo, Texas, is now the largest port in the United States. I think it is one of the underreported facts in our country.

You talked about the cartels. They have command and control, certainly, on the border at the moment. My question, as you think about Mexico, and you have been so active on Latin America, and you know, looking south of the United States, with President Sheinbaum now just coming into office, what are your thoughts around how do we become better engaged with Mexico to help them

with their issue as it relates to the cartels, basically, which are running the country it seems at times?

Senator RUBIO. Well, and I wish we had more than 30 seconds to do it, because it is one of those issues that I think do not get enough attention beyond the problems.

Look, Mexico's economy, in many ways, is a very vibrant one and has made tremendous advances and continues to be a very strong regional power.

They can become frustrating at times for us because they have enshrined even in their constitution a sort of nonaligned, noninterventionist foreign policy with regards to some of the abuses.

And so it has been disappointing, for example, to see the position they have taken with regards to Venezuela and others.

By the same token, our economic interests are so deeply intertwined. I think there are three areas of friction. The first is on trade and violations of trade agreements and so forth that have been laid out, and some of the things that I have seen even as a Senator from Florida in the agricultural sector that are going to continue to be an irritant in our relationship that we hope we can resolve.

The second is the security situation at the border, and I think there is great interest and should be on the part of the Mexicans to bring this migratory problem at the border under control.

People forget an increasing number of cases, the people crossing the border are not Mexican nationals. They are people that are transiting through Mexico, and in fact, in southern Mexico you have seen a significant uptick in resentment against migration by Mexicans who are bearing the brunt of the costs of becoming a key element of the migratory path.

And the third is the violence, and this violence at our border has to be addressed. I think they pose a threat to the United States most certainly. They are flooding us with the fentanyl, the criminal activities occurring within the United States facilitated by these groups who have become vertically integrated.

These are not the Colombian cartels. These transnational groups are now vertically integrated. They are the suppliers all the way down to the street level and all the way up to the production level.

They are vertically integrated criminal enterprises, but they are also threatening the sovereignty and security of the Mexican state, and as I pointed there are journalists and there are politicians who have been assassinated for standing up to these cartels, and it tells you the amount of leverage so they have over the government as a result of it.

So it is in their interest as well as ours that we work cooperatively to take these groups apart and not allow them to continue the reign of terror, not just in the border region of Mexico but spilling over into the United States.

Senator DAINES. Thanks, Marco.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

For the edification of the committee I have just been advised that there has been a ceasefire announced in Gaza. Before we all celebrate, though, obviously we are all going want to see how that executes.

With that, Senator Murphy, you are up, and then we are going to take that short break.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That is, indeed, good news.

Senator Rubio, I want to talk to you about a topic that I think is going to be real trouble for you and for U.S. national security interests, at least for the first few minutes of my time, and that is the growing personal financial entanglement of President Trump, his family, and Middle East governments. I will give you an example of what I am talking about.

For nearly 8 years the Trump organization has been pursuing a real estate deal to build a hotel complex in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

During President Trump's first term, the Trump organization actually voluntarily committed to refrain from pursuing real estate deals with foreign companies, especially those that are backed by foreign governments, and so the deal did not go through, and then it remained stalled for the entirety of the Biden administration.

And then, magically, 30 days after the November election, Saudi Arabia's biggest construction company that is affiliated with the government announced that the deal was going forward, alongside an additional \$200 million deal for a Trump property in Oman.

Now, it used to be that somebody with these big financial business interests would come into government and take actions like setting up a blind trust or divestment in order to make sure there was no connection between their personal financial interests and the business they were conducting in government.

But President Trump has just done the opposite, right. Over the last 8 years while he was in office and since he has been out of office, he and his family have become more deeply dependent on revenue from governments in the Middle East.

During his last presidency, Middle East interests sent about \$10 million to Trump properties. After he left office, Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who was his primary Middle East envoy, was handed \$2 billion in investment by the Saudis, even though a Saudi investment board said the investment was a bad business decision. That investment actually comes up for renewal in 2026—giving the Saudis massive leverage over the Trump family.

And then to make matters worse, right after the election the Trump organization said that in this term—the President elect's second term—it would drop its previous prohibition on doing new deals in the Middle East with private foreign companies aligned with foreign governments.

So the Trump organization is going to be signing new business deals in the Middle East with private companies that have connections to foreign governments at the very moment that you are going to be conducting sensitive diplomacy in these countries.

That is just extraordinary. Never before in the history of this country has a President been, I mean, literally, receiving cash from foreign governments and from foreign companies that are backed by foreign governments in the middle of their term.

If you or I had done this as Senators we would be in violent violation of Senate ethics rules. That is not permitted on the Foreign Relations Committee.

And so I guess my question to you is a pretty simple one. Do you see how this fundamentally compromises your diplomatic efforts?

Do you have an issue or will you raise an issue with the President about his growing financial connection with the governments that you are going to be negotiating with?

Senator RUBIO. Well, first of all, I am neither authorized nor in any position to give you sort of any insights into any of these arrangements you have pointed out.

You know, you mentioned Jared Kushner as an example. He is a private citizen. Happens to be a Floridian. I do not know what if any engagement he has in the work that is going on now.

I can tell you what I know. Obviously, I am not in the State Department yet, but I can tell you as an example the President's envoy to that region, who is charged—Steve Witkoff, who is charged with being an envoy toward reaching an accommodation between the Israelis and the Saudis, has been working cooperatively and together with the Biden administration, and in fact I dare to say that all involved deserve credit for the ceasefire that the chairman has just announced. But Steve Witkoff has been a critical component of it and he has been involved in it from day one.

I think the broader consideration about whether we want to see a Saudi-Israeli mutual recognition and relationship would be one of the most historic developments in the history of the region for all the factors we have discussed here today.

And one of the impediments to it has been this conflict and the ongoing conflict and the lack of a ceasefire. I also think it is going to be important for the Saudis and others to be participants in post-conflict stabilization efforts in Gaza and beyond.

So all I can tell you is what I have said from the very beginning from the opening statement, and that is our foreign policy is going to be driven, as the President has made abundantly clear, by whether some action is in the interest of the United States and our national security, and that is what it is going to be driven by and that is how all these policies should be judged by, and that is certainly the job that I believe I have been tasked with executing on.

Senator MURPHY. Well, let me then simply ask you this question. Do you believe that the President should refrain from doing new business deals with Middle East governments during his term in office?

Senator RUBIO. Well, my understanding—again, I am speaking out of turn, but the President does not manage that company. His family members do, and they have a right to be in the business.

I mean, that is the business that they are in. They are in the real estate business. They have been for a very long time both domestically and abroad. They have properties in multiple countries.

So at the end of the day, I do not know—his family is entitled to continue to operate their business. The fundamental question is not whether his family is involved in business. The fundamental question is whether that is in any way impacting the conduct of our foreign policy in a way that is counter to our national interest.

And the President has made abundantly clear that every decision he makes and every decision we are to make at the State Department should be driven by whether or not it serves the core national

interests of the United States, and that is how I hope our policies will be judged by, not what business his family is conducting while the President is here in Washington working not on his business from the Oval Office.

Senator MURPHY. You are correct. That is the fundamental question, whether or not a policy is being pursued in U.S. national security interests or due to the President's personal financial interest.

That is the reason why as United States Senators we are not allowed to have complicated existing financial arrangements with foreign governments because you do not want to create the impression that there is a conflict of motivation, and I just wished that this President applied to this incoming Administration the same rules that we hold ourselves to as United States Senators.

Senator Rubio, in the time I have remaining I just want to tackle two other topics, one that I know is of mutual concern to you and I, and that is the need to confront China in nonmilitary ways as they try to exert influence around the world.

Last time President Trump was in office he was calling for pretty massive cuts to the State Department's budget. But as you know, China uses all sorts of nonkinetic tools like misinformation, economic diplomacy, around the world to exert influence.

I am hopeful that you are going to be an active voice to try to make sure that you have the tools, including when it comes to combating Russian and Chinese misinformation, to be able to confront all of the ways, many of them asymmetric, that China in particular but Russia as well presents challenges to U.S. interests. Just wanted to get your commitment to make sure to build that full comprehensive foreign policy toolkit.

Senator RUBIO. Yes. Not only have I been someone concerned about foreign disinformation, I have been the target of it from multiple nation states, and I have learned over time that the best way to confront disinformation is through a flood of free speech that allows the counter points of view to be heard and understood.

I think where we get ourselves into trouble, and we have learned this now, and I think multiple U.S. companies are now admitting, is when we get ourselves into a position of determining what is true and what is not and then using the tools of government to go after that, particularly when it implicates domestic entities.

But yes, it is one of the tools that they have in their toolbox. By the way, it is not just disinformation. It is flat out influencing nation states' views of the United States writ large by promoting conspiracy theories internally in other countries that undermine us and that undermine our standing, whether it is in Africa, and increasingly you see it in the Western Hemisphere as well. And one of the best ways to combat that is to be present, to be there, to show what we do, and to brag about what we do.

One of the things that frustrates me the most is there are literally programs with USAID where they do not allow us to label it as made in America or a gift of the American people, because it might offend someone locally.

I think it is important for the world to know what the United States is doing to help their societies. We do not do a good enough job of promoting what we have done historically and continue to do to help our fellow man around the world.



Senator MURPHY. China is spending \$10 billion per year on that propaganda and misinformation operation. They celebrate when budgets get sent up to the Hill that propose big increases in military spending and giant decreases in the kind of tools that are available to you.

So I do look forward to working with you to make sure that we have given you that full suite of tools necessary to confront our adversaries.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

We will take this break now. I appreciate everyone getting back here in 5 minutes, because we have still got a long ways to go.

And so with that, we will be at ease for 5 minutes.

[Recess.]

Senator RISCH. The committee will come to order.

We will continue on with our 10 minute rounds of questions, and by my list the next person up is Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Rubio, congratulations. I am grateful for your willingness to serve our nation in this new role. Thank you as well for your family's commitment to continue with your service here to this country.

I think President Trump made a wonderful choice in nominating you to be Secretary of State. Your extensive foreign policy experience and your deep understanding of international relations I think makes you a perfect choice for the position.

While serving together in the Senate on this committee, I have seen firsthand your dedication, your knowledge, and your commitment to our nation's security.

Your strategic insights, your principled approach to diplomacy, they are going to serve our nation well, and we do face many challenges. We have talked about them in the past. So you have my full and unwavering support.

I wanted to start with China because over the years we worked closely together to counter the significant threat that China poses to global security and to stability.

The Chinese Communist Party strategy extends far beyond traditional military conflict. They are conducting an aggressive campaign aimed at weakening American leadership and reshaping the global order to serve their own interests.

Make no mistake, China is challenging our interests all across various domains—diplomatic, economic, technologic. They are playing the long game, and I think we have to respond with equal resolve and a strategy.

It is essential that we fully recognize the scope of the challenge and develop a strategy to safeguard American interests and values on the world stage.

So could you talk a little bit about your approach in addressing an increasingly aggressive China and how we and our international partners can hold China accountable?

Senator RUBIO. Well, as I pointed to earlier, it is an important question because I think it is definitional to the century. I really do. I think the 21st century will be defined by what happens between the United States and China.

The Chinese have basically concluded that America is sort of a tired, great power in decline, that they are on a path over the next 20 or 30 years to naturally supplant us irrespective of what happens, and I think their preference is to not have any trade and/or armed conflict in the interim because they think they might interrupt what they believe is a natural progression. I do not share that view. I think they have some significant domestic challenges.

Nonetheless, I do think what we cannot ignore is that the current road that we are on right now is an unbalanced relationship and that much of their growth and their progress has come at our expense, not because they out competed us but because they, frankly, have violated the rules that they have benefited from but have lived by none of its obligations.

So I think the first begins with a recognition that China is and will continue to be a rich and powerful country, and we will have to deal with them. It is in the interest of global peace and stability that we have to deal with them.

By the same token, we cannot find ourselves in a situation in which we allow them to continue to flaunt the rules in order to undermine us economically and/or industrially, nor can we allow them to undermine our alliances and our presence in different parts of the world.

For example, I think it is clear that on that path toward what they view as their rightful place as the world's preeminent power, they want to establish preeminence in the Indo-Pacific. And that has historical ramifications because—or historical underpinnings because they view these smaller countries as tributary states that basically all roads lead back to Beijing, and they view that.

Unfortunately for them their neighbors do not view themselves as tributary states, and this is particularly true in places like South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, but also Vietnam and others, some of whom have historical disagreements with China.

So the core of our strategy has to be twofold. Number one, ensuring that there is a proper geopolitical balance between the United States and China to avoid any sort of conflict that could be deeply destabilizing and worse for the world, but at the same time ensuring that it does not come at our expense, that we do not find ourselves in a world in which we are dependent on China, or any foreign power for that matter, for the raw materials that we need for the ability to make medicine, for the ability to fuel our economy, the ability to feed ourselves or our people.

We cannot be a country that becomes dependent on foreign powers, and so much of that involves not simply how we engage in the world, but also what we do here domestically.

That is not the responsibility of the Department of State, but it is important for us to point to that much of what has happened with China and much of what is happening now is what we are not doing, whether it is through our own industry and the development of our industries or access to raw minerals and raw resources that are critical to fueling and/or building a modern economy.

Senator BARRASSO. You talk about China playing by a different set of rules, and they do the ones that we think of as traditional rules, but the only—and I appreciate your comments to Senator

Ricketts about China and even the definition of them as a developing nation.

I think it is a big problem. They cannot be allowed to continue to play openly with a different set of rules in addition to the hidden rules. I oppose China exploiting its status as a, quote, “developing nation” within international organizations. I think it helps them gain an additional unfair advantage in what you described as this unbalanced relationship.

China is not in any way a developing country. You just mentioned they are a rich and powerful country. That is not a developing country. It is the second largest economy in the world.

Clearly, it has the financial resources and access to capital to meet its own needs. So I think we need to end China’s preferential treatment and hold it accountable on the global stage. I mean, we see it in the World Bank. We see it in other locations.

Are there things that we can do and you can do as Secretary of State to try to eliminate this unfair advantage that they have? And it is an open unfair advantage.

Senator RUBIO. Yes, absolutely. I think we need to, first of all—and I mentioned this in my opening statement—we have to acknowledge that many of the global institutions that were created not just in the post-war era but the coast post-cold war era have been weaponized against us, and I can use a number of examples.

The first is, you think about the Security Council of the United Nations, which was created ostensibly for the purpose of preventing global conflict. Sadly, two of the greatest drivers of instability in the world today hold a veto vote at the Security Council. It has basically rendered the Security Council almost irrelevant.

By the same token, I would say I am not against multilateral organizations so long as that or any foreign arrangement we have serves the national interest of the United States.

I do not believe, and the President has made this abundantly clear—President Trump—that under no circumstances should any foreign entity or multilateral or international organization have veto power over the national security interests of the United States of America.

The second point that I would point to is that the Chinese have very aggressively played this. They have figured out, and it is not hard to figure out, that even the smallest nation state has a vote at the United Nations General Assembly and they have worked hard to not just court but entrap a handful of votes around the world and including in our own hemisphere.

If you look at the Caribbean Basin in Grenada and places like that where they go into these countries and they do not just provide a million dollars to—a billion dollars to build a stadium. They also give you \$5 million or \$6 million under the table for your family and friends. They do that in place after place. We have seen that practice as well in Africa.

So we need to understand that there has to be in many of these parts of the world, look, we are not bribing anybody. We are not going to do that, and it is certainly illegal for American companies to do it.

But it is hard to engage these countries who in many cases have legitimate needs when they say, the Chinese—we would prefer to have your stuff.

We would prefer to have American investment, but you are not offering any, and so we are left with the only alternative, and that is to take the Chinese investment even though it comes with strong strings attached that include things like debt diplomacy or debt traps and expectations of diplomatic cooperation at these international forums.

Senator BARRASSO. My final question, because you used the phrase we need to be able to fuel our economy, I want to talk a little bit about that energy. Look, people who live in foreign developing nations, they want to be able to fuel their economy as well.

They need a stable energy source to grow their economy, to improve lives. Many of the countries you have traveled to and I have, we have seen what energy poverty can do to people to make it harder for them.

You know, we have an ability to help these countries develop a stable energy supply. But this current Administration—the Biden administration—has put restrictions in place on funding of certain energy resources such as coal, natural gas. The United States should be working to promote an all of the above energy strategy and help our friends and allies have affordable energy as opposed to what is the politically correct type of energy to be used.

So I believe we should be helping these countries with energy, and are you committed to ensuring the State Department is promoting all forms of energy projects across the globe including oil, gas, coal. Affordable energy that will help people raise their standards of living.

Senator RUBIO. Yes. In fact, it should be a centerpiece—one of our centerpieces of economic diplomacy. We talked earlier, I think it was Senator Coons had mentioned the work on fragile states and the hope of preventing fragility so that states do not collapse into some of the havens that you now see where terrorism takes a hold and so forth.

And one of the things you can do to help a country become more stable and then more prosperous is access to reliable and affordable energy, and that is not simply for everyday life.

That is critical if you want to build a manufacturing sector. It is going to be especially critical in a world in which all these new technologies like AI are going to require a tremendous amount of power generation that is going to draw upon global energy resources to begin with.

So absolutely it needs to be at the centerpiece, and we will work very closely with the Energy Department in ensuring that it is a centerpiece of our foreign policy.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Barrasso.

And next up we have Senator Booker.

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

Marco, the President—excuse me, Senator Rubio, the President made a great decision in choosing you. I am happy to see you there. You are a thought leader in foreign policy.

I, however, do not think most Americans know how great of a thought leader you are in NCAA, NFL, and high school football, and I am a little disappointed that you are not going to be the head of the NCAA right now.

Senator RUBIO. Not yet.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. We sat in my office recently. I told you about my concerns about Africa right now. Democrat and Republican administrations have not prioritized the continent. It is literally the fastest growing continent on Earth.

We now see the future. By 2050, one out of every four human beings on the planet will be in the continent of Africa, and because of the demographic issues we have around the globe from Europe to the United States to even China, one out of every three working people on the planet will be in Africa.

It is rich with arable land and critical minerals. It has an economic potential that could create tremendous markets for American companies and American businesses.

More than this, we know while it has incredible assets and opportunities, a lack of focus on Africa could endanger the whole planet. We know in the days of infectious diseases, for example, an outbreak of an infectious disease anywhere is a threat to public health everywhere.

More than that, we see the climate challenges, migration patterns there threaten to destabilize the Middle East and other areas. Egypt, for example, literally is hosting millions—millions—of refugees in Egypt right now.

Now, my frustrations in my 12 years here is that we as a nation have not really prioritized it. We do not have ambassadors in some countries where China and Russia, who understand the African opportunities, are investing heavily.

I have gone around the world and in my times in African countries I often encounter people that say, hey, the Chinese are here. Where are you? And it is not just ambassadorial placements. Other critical positions in embassies just are not being filled, and therefore we are being outplayed by the Chinese and the Russians.

African countries and leaders have told me time and time again, we prefer you. We would rather deal with you. We would rather work with you. And we can see by legal immigration patterns that their people would rather our way of life than the Chinese or the Russians.

But we are simply being outplayed in ways that we can counter if we had a real focus and a real strategy for engaging Africa. And the impact of U.S. engagement is real, and the backbone of our diplomacy is that diplomat abroad, is that Secretary of State on down, people saying, this is a priority.

I said this to you in our office, and I want to make it plain now that we are at a point in this country that what we do in the Senate and in the White House and in the State Department are planting seeds for the future.

We could reap a tremendous harvest in 10, 20 years prioritizing and emphasizing our work in Africa. Not to do so undermines the three points that you said at the beginning that I agree—our for-

eign policy should be guided by what makes us safe, strong, and prosperous, and the future in so many ways is Africa.

Could you just talk to me a little bit about how you are prioritizing it, how you understand the critical opportunities and the dangers of not engaging at a higher level than either the Biden administration, Trump administration, Clinton administration, Bush administration have done?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and I will preface it by saying that, obviously, I am not—been confirmed yet. The President is not in office yet. There will be a national security strategy that will frame much of what we do in foreign policy.

So what I am going to share with you, basically, here today is as someone who will be at that table, some of the impressions that I would share with regards to our historic involvement in Africa and also some of our challenges, moving forward.

So the first, and you have already highlighted all the things about the growth that is going to happen. They will double in population between now and 2020, 2035, or what have you.

So it is extraordinary. That is not just an interesting number. That is also markets. Those are also consumers. Those are also places that I think provide an extraordinary opportunity, properly positioned for America to become more prosperous. Literally, more people that can afford to buy the things Americans provide both in services and goods and vice versa. So I think there is an extraordinary opportunity.

Where I think some of our situation in Africa has fallen off has been—it has been, and rightfully so, heavily focused on counterterrorism, and solely on counterterrorism in some places, and that is valuable and important.

It is very difficult for a country to progress or move forward if they are, in fact, a haven, you know, for—that is open, and so, you know, the freaks come out at night and you have got terrorist groups that are operating and undermining that country.

So it is not that it is not important. I think we are also learning from the Sahel how quickly the situation changes despite significant counterterrorism contributions. Each of those countries have pivoted to their great mistake, grave error, toward the Africa Corps led by Russia.

These people are not any good at fighting counterterrorism, and again, unreliable. And I think the moment will come when they will realize that, and maybe there will be a new opportunity to engage.

On the flip side of it, if you look at the littoral West Africa, there are real opportunities there for—and in fact, ongoing engagements, not just on counterterrorism but on economic progress. I look in the north to Morocco, another place where we have already seen substantial improvements because of the Accords but also because phase two of that relationship that continues to build.

You also talk about one thing that I do not think has been talked about enough, and I think we hear the term—it is a 19th century term—the impact that malaria has is not simply a health crisis or a humanitarian crisis. It has deep economic crisis—deep economic implications. It pulls kids out of school for long periods of time and

affects their lives. It literally sets people and communities back, when humans and people are the greatest resource of any country.

And the cost-benefit of an investment leveraging private partnerships to deal with things like malaria pays extraordinary dividends if appropriately done and channeled, and that is something that I think could, as part of an overall approach to Africa, include—be included in things that you could argue are improving our prosperity, our security.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, Senator Rubio. You have affirmed a lot of this to me in our private talks. I just want to make an emphasis publicly here that the disinformation in Africa, and you have mentioned disinformation writ large, but you know, for example, the *Washington Post* published an article in October detailing how Russian propagandists targeted U.S. anti-malaria programs in Burkina Faso, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported—published in March 2024, highlighted how Russia and China are leading sponsors of disinformation campaigns in Africa that are showing incredible success because we are not doing a coordinated campaign to counter their misinformation.

And so I am looking forward to working with you. I hope that you will prioritize this for the sake of America's future, that you could be the Secretary of State that says we have a vision for Africa, and we are backing it up, not just from the Secretary of State's office but all the way down to making sure key resources are invested in encountering disinformation as well as making sure that we have personnel in there.

It is not a popular post, as you know, for many State Department people. We have got to make it that way and let people know that they are helping to define the future of not just United States but humanity by focusing on Africa.

I cannot let my time expire without talking about the biggest humanitarian crisis going on on the planet Earth right now, what is happening in Sudan. It has been called by our country a genocide. There is a famine being declared in areas where you are seeing unbelievable levels of systemic sexual violence going on.

I traveled to the Sudan border with Chad and saw a humanitarian crises like I have never seen before, and I have been around the world looking at humanitarian crises. We have a great special envoy who you have already positively name checked in this confirmation hearing.

It is so important and vital that that work continue and that we work for diplomatic solutions. There are a lot of our allies who have been implicated in fueling this crisis.

This is an opportunity to end this crisis by diplomacy to bring about one of the most important peace processes there are, and I am hoping that you and incoming President Trump will prioritize that.

Senator RUBIO. Yes. In an era in which the term genocide has been misappropriated to almost a global slander—an international slander—this is a real genocide.

By its very definition, this is a real genocide. This is the ethnic targeting of specific groups for extermination, for elimination, by groups, by the way, that are being funded by nations that we have

alliances and partnerships with in other parts of the world, and we should express that clearly.

I think—and part of our engagement with the UAE, and it will have to be a pragmatic engagement—I mean, they are important players in what we hope to resolve in the Middle East, and I think as part of that engagement we also need to raise the fact that they are openly supporting an entity that is carrying out a genocide.

And I think for those who are interested in going out and actually protesting a real genocide this should be the one, and I just do not see it. I do not see people mentioning it.

Senator BOOKER. Well, it is morally reprehensible that this crisis gets virtually no attention in our country, especially because of the role we should be playing.

And my time is over but I want to say this. No need to respond. But the other place on the planet that gets no attention that we are responsible for in our hemisphere is the crisis in Haiti as well.

Senator RUBIO. Correct.

Senator BOOKER. I know that you know this intimately, and again, I just want to keep calling out these moral omissions of our country often at least in the press of an inability to focus our compassion, empathy, and understanding of our interwoven destinies with places like Africa and places like Haiti.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator Booker, for that. Those are things that needed to be said.

Having said that, you have underlined probably the most difficult crises we have on the planet, and I think everybody is ready to sign up on a path forward.

So far nobody has laid out that path forward. And you are right, we have an obligation to at least try to design a path forward, and when that happens I have no doubt that we will pull together Republicans and Democrats as Americans to do something about this.

But I will tell you, the—identifying who are the people there that are the good guys that you can partner with is very, very difficult, as you know.

Thank you. Thank you, Senator Rubio, for your comments in that regard.

We will move now to Senator Paul.

Senator PAUL. Senator Rubio, congratulations on your nomination.

One of the questions that I have asked over time to Secretaries of State as well as ambassadors and others from the State Department is can you name for me instances where sanctions have changed behavior for the better.

I am not going to ask you that question now. I am going to wait till you come back to ask you. Those are a preview of what I will ask you the next time.

But the reason I bring that up is that I think—hopefully people think of sanctions as a way of trying to modulate behavior. You want better behavior out of a country. A country is doing something you do not like. You would like them to change their behavior for better through sanctions.

And I think it rarely works, and I think we pile more on. Now, some would say, well, sanctions are just to punish them, and we



just want to—you know, Russia invaded Ukraine. We are just punishing them.

And so as punishment, they kind of work. I do not think they are deterring Russia's behavior or changing it but really, sanctions can have effect in a couple of ways.

I think the threat of a sanction, the same way the threat of a tariff can have an effect on behavior, but once placed I think a sanction or a tariff only has effect on someone's behavior if you remove it.

Now, you mentioned earlier a little bit about discussing ways to unwind some of the sanctions, ultimately, on Russia. People mentioned, well, we never want to let them sell energy again.

No, you have to let people enter back into the world. That is how you are going to get behavioral changes, and it really will have to be part of the peace. If there is going to be a negotiated peace, the one aspect that makes us part of that war are all the sanctions.

And so it really should be offered up of removing that and going back to normalcy when we can find a resolution to the war. I will give you an example of where I think often the State Department loses its sight of its mission. Instead of being the department of diplomacy, which I think it is supposed to be, it becomes just an extension of the Department of War and muscle, and we show how strong we are through the State Department.

But really, when bellicose statements come from other parts of the government, I see the State Department is the one that shows up and tries to still have a conversation. In the past I think because of remarks you had been banned from travel to China.

The ambassador that has been nominated also has had statements that make us question whether or not he will be received in China if he becomes the Ambassador to China.

When Blinken and Yellen went to China recently, they decided—and I am not arguing with the goal. The goal was to get China not to sell dual use parts to Russia to use in the war against Ukraine. A noble goal. I share the goal.

But they got to China, and they shamed them in public and called them names, and told them they are terrible people, and they should quit doing it. I would argue that there is another way to try to get behavioral changes.

I would argue that the opposite of sanctions is trade, and so we have a lot of sanctions on China. If I had been the one going to China with a mission, I would have said to China very quietly we may not be able to undo everything, but perhaps we could undo one bit of sanctions that will enhance your economy by X amount if you will agree to quit selling dual use parts to Russia.

And I think that is just a different look on things, and I do not think we are getting it very often. I guess my hope is that you will think about a different way of doing business other than just saying let us sanction everybody, and let us call people names we do not like, because I do not think it helps.

I think it actually makes the situation worse. That does not mean we curl up in a ball and just say do whatever you want, but there has to be some give and take. There has to be something we take back.

And so I guess my general question to you would be we know a lot about the stick. We know about sanctions and this and that. Do you see any possibility of any carrot with China to make relations better with China?

Senator RUBIO. Well, let me first say, indeed, I have been strongly worded in my views of China. Let me just point out they have said mean things about me, too, and I am not sure that they are fans of mine in that regard here.

My role now as the Secretary of State is to lead the diplomatic wing of the country and that will involve engaging them.

The fact of the matter is in a mature and prudent conversation, and I would expect that they, at the end of the day, are also mature and prudent practitioners of foreign policy—they have got a billion people and nuclear weapons and a large economy.

We have 400 million people, the largest economy in the world, and a nuclear weapon, and it is in their interest, our interest, and the interest of the world for two great powers to be able to communicate.

In fact, despite everything I have said, I have consistently throughout my career said that it is that geopolitical balance between our countries that—or imbalance—developing imbalance that is the greatest risk to global security and prosperity, because that could quickly trigger not just the trade and economic conflict but an armed one, which could be catastrophic.

Never in the history of mankind have two powers like the United States and China ever faced off in a global conflict, and the outcome would be catastrophic, and we should want to avoid it, and so should they.

So the bottom line is this. Yes, we are going to have to deal with China. They are too big and too important in the world, and they are going to have to deal with us, and my goal is that it is dealt with in a way that furthers our national interest.

What cannot continue to happen is that China continues to assume all of the benefits of the international system and none of its obligations—all the benefits of global trade and commerce and none of its obligations.

Your point on sanctions are important. I think that one of the things that has happened over time is we have adopted this view that we are going to be involved in less armed conflicts, which I think is a positive, generally speaking, right. Most would agree.

The only other alternative left in the toolbox then is economic sanctions, and while I do think that there are—you can question whether it has an impact over the changing the behavior of a country, it can achieve two things.

The first is it can deny a nation state the resources they could use to fund more of that activity. Let there be no doubt. If the Iranian regime had more money because of no sanctions, they would have spent more money on Hezbollah and Hamas and their missile program and the Houthis and others.

So I do think there is value in that regard, and the second is, to be frank, leverage. When you sit down at a table—let us say we talk about Ukraine and the need to end that conflict. When you get and sit at the table, and the United States is involved in those conversations, hopefully, to reach a peaceful settlement of that conflict

you are going to have to give, not just get, and sanctions and the release of sanctions could be a part of that, assuming that the conditions are appropriate.

So I do think sanctions also have a role to play in that regard. But I would not diminish the part about denying resources for governments and countries to carry out nefarious—denying them the ability to have the resources to carry out these nefarious activities.

Senator PAUL. I think you are right, and the point is probably valid with regard to Iran, probably not so much with China. I do not think we have denied China resources, and I think their resources extend beyond what we can do.

I think our sanctions are more, you know, prodding them but not really damaging their economic prospects. With regard to the concept of diplomacy and how we make things better or attempt to make things better, I think if we have absolutes we tend to not understand really the way diplomacy has to work because it is about engagement. It is about hearing the other side. It is not about accepting their position, but it is about at least knowing what the position of what the position of the other side is.

With regard to NATO and Ukraine, to a person the State Department under the previous Administration is adamant, and so are many Republicans, that there is absolutely no way we will ever say that Ukraine could be a neutral country—that absolutely they will be in it. It is our absolute prerogative to invite anybody we want to into NATO.

We can say that, and we have the ability to do that, but there are consequences to that, and one of the consequences is that at least from the Russian perspective they see that as one of the reasons why the war has developed there.

And so I think that if you are looking at peace, you have to look at in the—first you have to get to a ceasefire before you even get to real discussions. But if you had a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, I think our sanctions need to be on the table as far as negotiating the removal of them.

But I think also the idea of Ukraine being a neutral country as far as a military alliance, if it is not on the table, Ukraine does not have that much to offer. I mean, Russia now occupies a good 15, 20 percent of the country. It has been a big bloody war, and they have done it in a sort of World War I fashion, but I do not think they are going anywhere.

It is at a stalemate. But the one thing Ukraine has to offer is they will not become part of a military alliance allied against Russia. Just not taking it off the table enhances our ability to negotiate, enhances Ukraine's ability.

I think Zelensky's public words have been a little less firm than they had been in the past. But instead I think we have done the opposite with our diplomacy. Every day it is Blinken, you know, beating the drums, beating the drums to absolutely be in Ukraine.

Do you think that the concept of a neutral Ukraine not in NATO can be part of the negotiations to end the war?

Senator RUBIO. Well, obviously that is something that will ultimately be part of any negotiation. I do agree with your point that, we want to be real here for a second because I think we have lost the art of reality in some of the foreign policy.

These are not outcomes that are almost—rarely are they ideal. Sadly, in many cases our choices in foreign policy are a choice between a bad outcome and an even worse outcome, and that has been true not in the modern era but throughout the history of diplomacy and nation state relations.

In the case of conflicts such as these, they invariably require concessions. I do not think it would be wise nor appropriate before or even in office or even in any public forum such as this to discuss the parameters of what those potential concessions can be for either side.

Suffice it to say I do think, to be honest with the committee and the full Senate, if you want to reach agreements to end armed conflict where people are dying on a daily basis, and enormous destruction is occurring, and a great potential for escalation exists on a daily basis, if we want to be honest about bringing that to an end true diplomacy will require concessions from every party engaged in those conversations.

That is the nature of diplomacy, and it is best conducted directly and in an appropriate forum and not in public, and that can be done, by the way, without abandoning our core principles as a nation or our feelings as a people about what has happened and transpired in that conflict to date.

Senator RISCH. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen.

Senator Rubio, good to see you. It was great to sit down with you and talk about some of these important issues yesterday.

Let me just say at the outset that I appreciate your response to Senator Booker's question about what is happening in Sudan, specifically as the Biden administration just found that the RSF under Hemedti is engaged in a genocide, and we need to do everything we can to stop what is happening there.

You referred obliquely to some of our sort of Gulf partners who have not done what they should be doing. One of them is the UAE, and I have been very clear that the United States should not be providing military assistance to the UAE, when the UAE is, in turn, providing military assistance to a group like the RSF that is committing a genocide in Sudan, and I am expecting a briefing from the Biden administration by the end of this week as to whether or not their commitments to President Biden to stop doing that have been fulfilled.

I want to pick up on a couple of the issues we discussed yesterday. One, as you know, Senator Sullivan and I are the co-chairs of the bipartisan Foreign Service Caucus. We have passed a number of pieces of legislation through the U.S. Congress, most recently the Foreign Service Families Act.

As you know and we discussed yesterday, you know the importance of supporting the men and women at the State Department, including the Foreign Service, and I appreciate your willingness to work with us and the caucus to continue to make sure that they have what they need to do their jobs effectively.

We also discussed the ongoing war in Ukraine and the importance of supporting Ukrainian people against Putin's aggression, and I just want to say for the record I support and endorse every-

thing that Senator Shaheen said on that score, so I do not have to go into great detail.

I will say that we know that what happens in Ukraine does not stay in Ukraine, and it is not just me saying that. That is what we have heard repeatedly from leaders in Japan, leaders in South Korea, and other partners of ours in the Indo-Pacific region.

So I hope that we will continue to focus on that because what we do know is that President Xi has one eye on what is happening in Ukraine and another eye on what is happening in Taiwan, and measuring everybody's response.

Like you, and we have worked on a bipartisan basis to try to make sure that we meet the challenge of China, lots of important pieces of legislation that have passed but none yet to really rise to meeting those challenges—I do support the Biden administration's ongoing efforts to restrict the flow of very high end technologies—the highest end chips—to China that can be used in their military.

We are going to have to work successfully with our allies to do that, just like the Trump administration back in the day worked on the Huawei issue. So my view is that we need to expand that effort.

We also discussed the volatile situation in the Middle East. You know, we often talk about the importance of shifting our focus to China and the Indo-Pacific, but we always seem to get dragged back into conflicts in the Middle East.

I want to start with Syria. Good riddance to the murderous Assad regime. Obviously, we have a stake in what comes next in Syria, given the fact that it is a very volatile part of the world.

I support the very cautious engagement of the Biden administration with HTS, but we should acknowledge their very poisonous genealogy, beginning with al-Qaeda morphing into al-Nusra.

The other issue, of course, in Syria is that when you have got a situation like we see today, there are opportunities for ISIS to get further back on its feet, to provide it more oxygen, and as you know the tip of the spear in our fight against ISIS has been our Syrian Kurdish partners, the SDF.

But at this moment President Erdogan of Türkiye has been backing attacks of the so called Syrian National Army, which Turkey largely controls against our partners the Syrian Kurds, which opens the door to a revival of ISIS.

Because of the actions of the U.S. Government, Turkey has so far paused that effort. Senator Graham and I have introduced legislation to impose sanctions on Turkey should they renew those attacks in an aggressive way.

We talked about this. I know that you recognize the importance of that partnership with the Syrian Kurds, but just a very straightforward question. Do you agree that we should continue to support our partners, the SDF, in the fight against ISIS?

Senator RUBIO. Yes. Well, absolutely. Not only that but I think we also need to recognize that there are implications to abandoning partners who have a great sacrifice and threat—actually jailed the ISIS fighters.

One of the reasons why we were able to dismantle ISIS is because they were willing to host them in jails, a great personal threat to them, and obviously that situation is very tenuous.

I do not want to take up a lot of your time, but I do think it is important to respond to this opportunity in Syria because it could be an opportunity.

Look, the new people that are in charge there are not going to pass an FBI background check. OK. We recognize that. These are not people we know a lot about, and their history, as you said, is not one that gives us comfort.

That said, it is in the national interest of the United States, if possible, to have a Syria that is no longer a playground for ISIS, that respects religious minorities ranging from Alawis all the way to Christians, that protects the Kurds, and at the same time is not a vehicle through which Iran can spread its terrorism to Hezbollah and destabilize Lebanon, not to mention what has happened in other parts.

Not only is it in the national interest of the United States, it is in the national interest of virtually every nation state in the Middle East to see that come about. That is worth exploring.

There is an interesting dynamic at play, and Senator Paul asked a moment ago about the impact of sanctions. I would argue that the Caesar sanctions directly contributed to the downfall of the Assad regime in many ways. We find ourselves in this interesting situation now where because I think it was reauthorized as part of NDAA we now have these sanctions in place against a government that no longer exists.

But nonetheless, it is an opportunity for us to explore how we could use that tool, the removal of it and others if in fact the territory is fertile for these outcomes.

There are impediments to this that go beyond simply the new people in charge, and one of them, as you pointed out, is Erdogan and what his intentions are. Right now there is a very tenuous ceasefire.

With regards to the Kurds, it is important for that to be maintained. I think it is important to signal to Erdogan early, including through this hearing, that they should not view a transition in power in the U.S. as a window in which they could take advantage of to sort of violate whatever agreements are in place.

Right now what we want in Syria is stability so that we can explore what opportunities exist to bring a different dynamic, because it would have an impact on Lebanon, on Israel, on the situation in Gaza, and on the broader Middle East, to walk away from an opportunity that may not come back.

By the way, the Russians have been run out of there. The Iranians have been run out of there. But they are pragmatic foreign policy operators. If we do not explore these opportunities, they will work their way back in there at some point.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I agree with everything you just said and look forward to working with you on that.

Let me turn to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which we also discussed yesterday, and we all witnessed the horrific October 7 Hamas terror attacks on Israel.

We have also witnessed the devastation and human rights catastrophe in Gaza. Like you, I have met Israeli families who lost loved ones on October 7. I have met with hostage families. I have also

met with Palestinian families who lost kids and other innocents in this war.

So I am very pleased to see the announcement today of the ceasefire and the return of hostages. Let us pray that it holds and that it is implemented.

But of course, as we discussed yesterday, the question is what happens next, and we all agree that Hamas can have no role in the governance of Gaza or any other place.

We also know that for all its flaws and faults the Palestinian Authority has recognized Israel's right to exist for the last 30 years since the Oslo Accords. Their security forces are trained by U.S. forces. They today are fighting Palestinian militants in certain parts of the West Bank.

But at the same time their funds have been restricted by the Netanyahu government today. These are funds that belong to the PA. We have seen a record increase in the number of settlements in the West Bank, and so the PA is not able to deliver on what had been the hope of Oslo, which is self-determination, security, and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians.

So you have said that the ideal way forward, recognizing that we have been at this for a long time, is a two state solution. There are members of the Netanyahu government that today want to annex all of the West Bank.

So my question is do you agree that annexation would be contrary to peace and security in the Middle East, and what is your vision, going forward?

Senator RUBIO. First, let me say that, yes, the idea would be that there not be conflict and the people could live side by side with one another without being in conflict, and the ability to pursue prosperity.

Sadly and unfortunately, the conditions for that to exist have not been in place for some substantial period of time. I point to you as an example back in 2020 the Trump administration offered \$58 billion—about \$50 billion or \$58 billion—\$58 billion to \$50 billion in investment to the Palestinians, and that included, I believe, \$28 billion or \$29 billion specifically for Gaza, and it was rejected.

That offer was made back in January 2020, and then it pivoted over as a result of that rejection to what we now know as the Abraham Accords.

Second, I would say that Israel is a small nation who, at its narrowest point, is 9 miles wide. It has been historically surrounded by enemies that seek their destruction—Hezbollah to the north, Hamas to the west, Iran further north with nuclear weapons—constantly. In fact, I would argue that if Israel had not been firm and strong in its response in this endeavor most recently, they may very well have faced an existential threat, as they continue to in many ways.

Now, here is the good news, and it is not just about the ceasefire today, although that is very important. The good news is that potentially we have had a dynamic shift in the region that has an historic opportunity if appropriately structured and pursued that changes the dynamics of what might be possible, and that—we have discussed Syria.

We have discussed events in Lebanon quite a bit as well, the degrading of the Iranian capability, which I hope will continue, and hopefully the ability to reach some agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia on normalization and being able to engage both for their mutual security and also economic prosperity.

The real open question for the Palestinians is who will govern—who will govern in Gaza in the short term, and who will ultimately govern. Will it be the Palestinian Authority or some other entity?

Because it has to be someone. That was the initial goal for Gaza when the Israelis withdrew from there, and they turned it over, and they turned it over with greenhouses, and they turned it over with all kinds of economic development.

Hammas won an election, they took over, and they destroyed the place and built tunnels for terrorists to operate from.

So the key is not simply governance. It is who will govern. You cannot turn it over to people who seek your destruction. And so I do think this is a very complex issue, and I think that is understating it. We all recognize it.

But I also believe that we should not underestimate the potential opportunities that now exist, and it will take some time to fully understand what those are, that perhaps open the door to things that were not open in the future.

But from the Israeli perspective, which I fully understand, it begins with their existence because you cannot coexist with armed elements at your border who seek your destruction and evisceration as a state. You just cannot. No nation—we would not tolerate it, and they cannot either.

And it begins with having that level of security, and if they do, then I think there are opportunities that will come about as a result of it. Those opportunities historically have not existed in recent times.

Perhaps we are living in an era where that will be—the likelihood of it is higher because of recent events—unexpected events in Syria and Lebanon and other places.

Senator RISCH. Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you, Chairman.

So I was in Miami, or Hialeah, on Monday, and when there was a video where you were recognizing Alina Garcia and Dariel Fernandez and Tomas Regalado everybody applauded. They are so excited about your being the Secretary of State. You are a home-grown son, and so they are just all excited.

The other thing they were excited about is that they have somebody that is going to care about Venezuela and Cuba and Haiti and Nicaragua, all the problems, because you have been so vocal.

So I guess, can you just go through sort of one by one and say—just, what are our options? Not that you know exactly what you are going to do, and a lot of these decisions will be made by somebody else anyway.

Like, right now look at what is going on in Venezuela. The Biden administration has allowed oil to flow. He, Maduro, stole the election, completely violated what Biden told him he would do. Maria Corina Machado probably is only alive because of your hard work making sure that Donald Trump put a tweet out.



You look at Cuba now. We just—they just dropped the state sponsor of terrorism, which makes no sense. We have got people like Jose Daniel Ferrer in prison for a peaceful protest.

So give me some of your ideas of what is possible.

Senator RUBIO. Let us take one, but let us start with Haiti because in many ways it is globally complex, and I think the chairman sort of alluded to this a moment ago.

There is a fundamental problem in Haiti in that there is no legitimacy of authority, and I say this in recognition of the fact that some of the national police forces in Haiti have been extraordinarily brave.

Despite being outgunned and outmanned, these guys and gals have stuck at their post and fought back against armed gangs. You know, when the most powerful person in any nation state is nicknamed Barbecue, that is not a good thing, and this guy, obviously, is not named that for good reasons. He is not a cook.

These are bad gang elements that are operating within Haiti and have destabilized not just Haiti but threatened to destabilize the Dominican Republic, not to mention the migratory pressure that it places on the United States, on the Bahamas, and on other places in the region.

There is no easy answer. The Kenyans are there, and I can tell you I think they deserve a lot of credit for being willing to take on that mission. In recent days missions from various other countries have arrived, Salvador being among them, to sort of contribute to that effort.

I do not think anyone can tell you they have a master plan for how you fix that overnight. I do think it does begin with stability and security. You have got to establish some baseline security, and it is not going to come from a U.S. military intervention.

So to the extent that we can encourage foreign partners, and I would include foreign partners in the Western Hemisphere who should be contributing to this effort to provide some level of stability and security in Haiti so that you can explore the opportunities to have a transitional government that has legitimacy, that can ultimately lead to the conduct of elections, and then have a governing body in that country that can bring about a nation state that can begin to build some of the things you need in order for permanency.

But it is going to take a long time, and I say this with sadness in my heart. There have been good times, and there have been bad times and worse times in Haiti but, sadly, there has not really been a golden era in Haiti's history, and your heart breaks for these people and for what they have gone through.

But you also as a policymaker in the United States, recognize the implications this has had on our country, not just in the migratory pressures it has placed on us, but as I pointed out earlier, the threat it poses on a daily basis to destabilizing the Dominican Republic.

You mentioned Nicaragua. It is a very weird situation, for lack of a better term. The Sandinistas earlier—one of the first things they did in the new year is they kicked out every nun in the country. They have gone to war with the Catholic Church, which was the last institution in the country capable of standing up to them.

But now they have begun this process of amending their fake constitution to basically create a family dynasty so that Ortega and his wife will now be co-presidents. There is no democracy. That has been completely wiped out.

They have literally put planeloads of opposition figures and exported them here to the United States and around the world. They literally arrested anyone who signed up to run for president. They arrested every single—you signed up to run for president they put you in jail.

So it is a big challenge, but our national interest is the most challenged, number one, because of migratory pressure. Number two, because the Nicaraguan regime is allowing people to fly into Nicaragua visa free from anywhere in the world and then transit to the United States.

They have become the point of entry for people from all over the world, because if you come in without any visa they charge you \$1,000 or whatever the going rate is today, and from there you get on the migratory route and into the United States. They have been direct contributors to the migratory crisis we face at our southern border.

And the third is the Nicaraguans have basically invited the Russians to establish a military naval presence in Nicaragua in our hemisphere. That poses a threat to our national security. That needs to be addressed.

Venezuela, sadly, is not governed by government. It is governed by a narco trafficking organization that has empowered itself of a nation state, and we have seen, I believe, upwards of 7 million to 8 million, 9 million Venezuelans have just left the country. More are expected to leave.

I was in strong disagreement with the Biden administration because they got played the way I knew they would get played. They entered into negotiations with Maduro. He agreed to have elections. The elections were completely fake.

They leveraged migration against us to get those concessions, and now they have these general licenses where companies like Chevron are actually providing billions of dollars of money into the regime's coffers, and the regime kept none of the promises that they made.

So all that needs to be reexplored because in Venezuela you have the Russian presence. You have a very strong Iranian presence. The Iranians in fact are exploring, are in fact beginning to build drone factories for the manufacture of Iranian drones in our own hemisphere, not to mention the long practice of the Venezuelan regime of providing real but illegitimate passports to operatives for Hezbollah in our own hemisphere.

And last, and I leave it last to Cuba because it is one that has been more enduring, the problem in Cuba, basically, is that despite being a communist regime and Marxism not working is that they have decided and they thought what they would do is that they would create this holding company. It is called GAESA.

It is a company that they own by the Cuban military and that holding company owns everything that makes money in Cuba. If it makes money in Cuba, they own it, and it generates revenue for them.

The Miami Herald just did an expose on GAESA, and while you have electrical blackouts, and you have all these other problems economically in Cuba, GAESA is sitting on billions of dollars that they have generated for their permanency.

We—in 2017 the Trump administration sanctioned GAESA. Unfortunately, the Biden administration lifted some of those sanctions and restrictions a couple of years ago, which increased the amount of money they were able to generate through things like manipulating remittances and the like.

And then yesterday, the Biden administration announced they were rescinding all of the sanctions on GAESA, which basically the sanctions were this. You can do business with an independent individual Cuban, but you cannot—it is the regime that does not allow it. You cannot do business with anything owned by that government run entity, and yesterday they lifted the sanctions on them.

Now, the new Administration is not bound by that decision, but nonetheless, that is what is in place. Ultimately, the reality—the moment of truth is arriving. Cuba is literally collapsing, both generationally in terms of all the young people leaving, but it is also collapsing economically.

They are now living on 20 and 21 hour rolling blackouts, and some days longer because Marxism does not work, because they are corrupt, and because they are inept, and they are going to have a choice to make, those that are in charge there.

Do they open up to the world? Do they allow the individual Cuban to have control over their economic and political destiny, even though it threatens the security and stability of the regime, or do they triple down and just say we would rather be the owners and controllers of a fourth world country that is falling apart and has lost 10 percent of its population in the last 2 years, and that is a dynamic that they are facing right now.

I hope that they will choose the path of empowering the individual Cuban so then the individual Cuban has the ability to deal with virtually every—the peoples of virtually every other country in the hemisphere have been able to do at least once in the last 60 years and some more than once, and that is elect their leaders. Vote for their leaders.

When you think about what happened here today, the Cuban people have no idea what it is like to have an authority figure or someone in charge in power like I am as a U.S. Senator sitting here having to answer questions from his colleagues, and also having had people in the back screaming and protesting against you.

You cannot do that to a Cuban official. You cannot question their decisions. The Cuban people have never been able to participate in a political process for over almost 70 years now, and they are entitled to that as much as the people of Colombia and Argentina and Paraguay and Peru and virtually every other country in the region has enjoyed.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. So let us assume you have this job. You are confirmed. You have the job for 4 years. What would your definition of success be?

Senator RUBIO. With regards to generally?

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Your job.

Senator RUBIO. The alignment of our foreign policy to our national interest has been defined. The security, prosperity of the American people and that is—and by the way, I would define that as success for the country.

What I would define as success for the State Department is not just that alignment but making the State Department highly relevant again.

Sadly, and I think I have shared this with you in some of our meetings with many of my colleagues, what has happened over the last 20 years under multiple Administrations is the influence of the State Department has declined at the expense of other agencies, and also at the expense of National Security Councils, because it takes so long for the State Department to take action.

And so increasingly you stop getting invited to the meetings, and they stop putting you in charge of things because it takes too long to get a result.

So we want the State Department to be relevant again, and it should be because the State Department has a plethora of talented people who are subject matter experts and who have skills in diplomacy, and it is not being fully utilized because increasingly on issue after issue we have seen the State Department marginalized because of internal inertia, because of the way the structure works.

So we have to be able to get—we have to be at that table when decisions are being made, and the State Department has to be a source of creative ideas and effective implementation.

So I would define making the State Department relevant again in the setting of our foreign policy is critical, and I think that is something that maybe is not as perceived by the general public as it is by those of us who watch it on a daily basis.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thanks.

Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, for holding this hearing and for welcoming me to the committee.

You know, I am joining this committee at a challenging time for the global community, from conflicts with Iranian proxies in the Middle East to Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, growing tensions with China, genocide in Sudan, and so much more, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find bipartisan solutions to these problems.

And I also want to thank you, Senator Rubio, your family that is here, and those who could not be here for working with me over the last 6 years and your service to our nation, and I would like to congratulate you again on your nomination.

And I am going to move on. I just want to make a quick statement because ensuring the United States remains a steadfast supporter of Israel I know is one of your top priorities and one of mine, and throughout your time in the Senate you have been one of Israel's most unwavering supporters.

I want to thank you for supporting Israel. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the U.S.-Israel security partnership remains iron clad, and that our friendship remains unconditional.

And I want to thank you for your response to Senator McCormick's hostage question. We all hope, since we have been in this hearing, that there is news maybe of an imminent agreement being reached to free, I hope, all the hostages. We hope to hear that confirmation soon.

But nevertheless, these issues must remain a top priority for the committee, going forward. So I am going to just move over to talking about Abraham Accords, speaking of going forward, because despite the immense challenges that you have addressed posed by October 7, the Abraham Accords have ushered in new forms of cooperation between Israel and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

As one of the founders and co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Abraham Accords Caucus, I firmly believe the U.S. should continue building on the accords by deepening people to people ties—soft diplomacy, if you will—and widening the circle of partnerships with Israel to new countries.

So, Senator Rubio, I know you have touched on this briefly, but if confirmed, how will you support the growth of the Abraham Accords to new countries generally and specifically maybe try to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

Senator RUBIO. Thank you. I think those are important points.

A couple things that have come up here as a result of this—the first is, and I point to this again because we just do not know. It is a new development.

But I think we should not underestimate or understate the potential historic opportunities that exist right now with what has happened very unexpectedly for most in Syria, what has happened in Lebanon, what is—the weakening of Iran and of its Shia crescent of destabilization in the region.

These are extraordinary opportunities that I think lend themselves to an era of diminishing insecurity—not totally the elimination of it but enough security that it opens the door for agreement on other topics.

Critical to that is the potential of a Saudi normalization with Israel, and I think that as part of broader context of the Abraham Accords I think would be historic in nature, and I think provide extraordinary benefits to the world and help bring a level of stability and peace to an area that, frankly, has not had it, one could say, for thousands of years, but certainly in my lifetime.

You talk about what we could do to build on it. I think the most important part of any arrangement of countries that enter into these agreements that historically have been difficult is there has to be a benefit to it.

They have to perceive that there is a benefit to it, particularly among themselves. Like, what is the benefit to a country? What benefits will Saudi Arabia derive from being in recognition of Israel and vice versa, and I could think of a variety of things, whether it is advances in their investments in high tech and how Saudi Arabia wants to diversify its own economy, the ability of cross investments and also, frankly, of security because for the foreseeable future I think most anticipate that there will be a mutual threat from Tehran.

It may not be openly stated as a military alliance, but it is certainly security, certainly one that I think they both have a mutual interest in, and which I think the U.S. could be a very strong partner in providing those assurances as well.

So I do think there is a real opportunity to expand it, and it will not be without irritants. There is no doubt about it. There will not be without irritants, that we are still going to have some issues with UAE or Saudi Arabia.

But we also have to be pragmatic enough to understand what an enormous achievement it would be if in fact not just you get a ceasefire, but that leads to the opening or the opportunity of a Saudi-Israeli partnership and joint recognition. What that would mean to the region is historic.

Senator ROSEN. And you have talked about potential opportunities, going forward, and we talk about maybe not just with other countries, but how does the private sector get involved in creating a normal—building and sustaining the normalization in areas of water insecurity, power insecurity, health care, technology.

We know that there are ways that we can do this. They have been doing it. How does the private sector feed into this?

Senator RUBIO. I think from an economic and development perspective, they are the linchpin of it. I think one of the things that could come about as a result of an agreement between the Saudis and the Israelis is that companies and institutions in both countries would now be open and able to invest in and/or partner in the economies of each other.

So the Israelis, as an example, have made extraordinary advances in agricultural production. Because of geographic constraints they have had to be incredibly creative and nonetheless have been able to—and I think the Saudis would benefit from that greatly.

Likewise, I think that we know as a start up nation that the technological capabilities and advances that the private sector has made in Israel, and that, I think, would be of great interest to the Saudis in partnership.

In reverse is I think some of the energy resources that Saudi Arabia could provide, some of the financing for projects that they work together on—the linchpin of all of these is private sector engagement.

But without the governmental imprimatur or without the government creating the pathways for that to be possible, because of recognition, because of diplomatic relations, that is what opens that—because those do not exist that has not been able to happen. This would open the door for that, and I think be transformative.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

I want to continue a little bit on this theme because, of course, a lot of this also has a nexus with combating anti-Semitism, and of course, anti-Semitism domestically and abroad.

I proudly founded the first ever Senate bipartisan task force to combating anti-Semitism. You and I have done a lot of work there. You are a member of the task force, and we work closely with the special envoy's office at the State Department.

We know that global rates of anti-Semitism, they are skyrocketing. It is critical the White House ensures the special envoy in their office is sufficiently staffed, supported, and resourced.

So I know we have talked about this in our meeting, and of course, like I said, we worked on this before. Can I have your commitment that you will work with the White House to do two things, quickly nominate a qualified candidate to be special envoy quickly and qualified? We really need to get somebody on board.

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and I think it needs to be someone that, as we have discussed, also enjoys broad support across different sectors. But the key, ultimately, there was a—I do not know if it was a study or a survey or something that came out yesterday, but it showed something that was really disturbing.

I think it said 60 percent of people on Earth hold anti-Semitic views, according to this poll, or in 60 percent of the countries. But I think it said 60 percent.

Look, unfortunately, bigotry and hatred has been a part of human nature from the very beginning, but anti-Semitism is a unique danger. The suffering that it inflicted on the world historically, but in the last century as unimaginable and can never be allowed to be repeated, and it is something that we should make sure we are constantly speaking out against and identifying for what it is.

I think the U.S.'s role as a leader in speaking out in that regard is indispensable, and we need to be forceful about it at every—one of the things that is most troubling is what seemed to me that one of the things that is undermining the legitimacy of many of our international organisms is they have become havens for anti-Semitic activity that oftentimes is disguised as anti-Israel, but I believe is, frankly, anti-Semitic. And of course, we have seen incidents of that in the United States as well.

We cannot ignore what anti-Semitism has cost humanity in the past, because if that lesson is forgotten it will very quickly repeat itself in every—and potentially in every region on the planet.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

I want to just quickly a yes or no. We know—we have talked a lot about how important deputies are in mission sets of different things. We know that if we do not have a deputy envoy in place they keep the wheels turning. They keep the organization going for the—waiting for the special envoy to be confirmed.

Do I have your commitment that we will quickly put in a deputy envoy to make sure that the work can continue until—

Senator RUBIO. Yes. We will work to do that as soon as possible.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

I wanted to—oh, I only have 56—56 minutes. I do not have 56 minutes. I have 56 seconds. That would be a little crazy.

I know that the first Trump administration created the Women's Global Development Prosperity Initiative. It was the first whole of government initiative to promote women's economic empowerment, dedicated global resourcing for these activities.

As secretary, will you commit to continuing to expand on the WGDPI initiative, and if so in what ways?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and that was a high priority of Ivanka Trump, who is no longer going to be in government but was at the

time, and she worked on that very much, and I am—I was a supporter of it then and look forward to being a supporter of it now, if confirmed.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. And we got—that 56 minutes went awfully fast. There you go.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. You yield back all 8 seconds?

Senator ROSEN. Yes.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can barely see you down there.

Senator RISCH. I know. It is—I was there one time.

Senator CORNYN. They had to extend the dais so Senator Curtis and I could actually sit with the big boys and girls table.

So, Senator Rubio, it is great to see you. I have complete confidence in your ability to lead the State Department. I think it is a inspired choice, and you could not be better prepared for that job.

I do want to ask you a few questions, some of which—I know Senator Cruz is here as well. He and I share a concern about Mexico. You have heard some concerns particularly about the cartel activity, but I want to talk to you about water.

In 1944 there was a water treaty between the United States and Mexico, and we have had chronic problems getting Mexico to cooperate and release the water that has been absolutely critical to the life and the livelihood of our agriculture community in the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere.

I have talked to Secretary Blinken about this. We have written letters. We have done everything we know how to do. But I would just like to get your commitment to work with us to try to just simply get Mexico to live up to its requirements under the treaty, and if they will not do it voluntarily, to look for leverage and ways we can persuade them to do what they already have a legal obligation to do which is to release water on a timely basis.

Senator RUBIO. Absolutely, and I think one of the reasons why we need to do that is twofold. The first is because it has real implications not just for the State of Texas, but broadly, for the United States.

But the second is because I think this becomes part of a pattern, and I would argue part of a pattern in a number of international arrangements but in particular international arrangements with Mexico in which you can strike any deal you want or sign any document you want but if you are not willing to prioritize its enforcement you are encouraging others to get away with the same thing, and at the same time you are undermining the willingness of people to commit to enter into agreements in the future.

And this has become a—we have seen it with USMCA, frankly. We have seen it with a variety of other commitments that have been made by partners in other parts of the world, and we are seeing it with this treaty.

Where there is a treaty, they have obligations under it, and they do not seek to meet it, and it is part of the broader challenge that I alluded to in my opening statement which is we have entered this era where we have entered into all these international arrange-



ments, but oftentimes they have been weaponized either through noncompliance or through a creative reinterpretation, and that extends to trade all the way down to treaties such as this.

Senator CORNYN. Speaking of Mexico, I know that in different quarters we have had people suggest that the cartels be identified as a foreign terrorist organization, and as I have looked into that it feels like the right thing to do because, of course, cartels are wreaking havoc and misery and death and destruction not only here in the United States, but also in Mexico.

But I worry a little bit about some of the unintended consequences. For example, does that create some new category of asylum, perhaps, for people who claim that they are victims of cartel activity that otherwise would not exist. What is your view about the designation?

Senator RUBIO. Well, and I think this question was asked earlier, so I will tell you what I said.

The first is that they most certainly are terroristic in their nature. They terrorize Mexicans. They terrorize on the U.S. side. They are involved in the trafficking of women and children, of labor—both labor and sex trafficking—deadly fentanyl and drugs writ large, as you can imagine, and I think, you know, pose a grave danger to in the process of trafficking people, trafficking terrorists into the United States.

So they are terroristic in nature. What I said was that whether it is that designation or some new designation that we create, it is important that they be identified for what they are.

I also pointed to something you just alluded to in your question, and that is they pose a grave risk to Mexican sovereignty as well. We have seen multiple journalists and politicians and candidates assassinated, murdered, in Mexico by cartels, because either they are not the cartels' chosen candidate, or they are a journalist that has spoken out against the cartels, and you find yourself murdered.

And I do not think we should underestimate, and I hope the Mexicans do not, the amount of leverage that they have created over the Mexican government, and in some parts of Mexico they are in fact have operational control over territories, particularly near the U.S.-Mexican border.

So this is something that I hope we can hope work with jointly and cooperatively with the Mexicans to address, because it is in their interest as well as ours.

Ultimately, I do not think I speak out of turn when I say that you can expect President Trump will do whatever it takes to secure the United States of America and the American people from the threat that they pose.

But it is my sincerest hope, and frankly, I think the most productive outcome would be if we could do so in partnership and cooperation with the government of Mexico, who I know shares many of our concerns.

Senator CORNYN. Well, that certainly should be our first choice. But I have the same confidence you have that President Trump will send a very clear message and follow that up with decisive action to persuade Mexico to do what it is in its best interest, and because it is an intolerable situation right on our southern border.

We cannot get a divorce. We got to make the marriage work somehow, but it is a troubled marriage, to continue the analogy.

Let me talk to you briefly about the Foreign Agent Registration Act, which is within the jurisdiction of this committee. This is something I have been concerned about for some time, because we have lobbyists that work here in Washington, DC, that actually represent foreign nations that unbeknownst to Members of Congress, they are actually advocating not on behalf of the American people and American interests, but on behalf of the interests of foreign nations.

Now, there is a loophole called the Lobbyist Disclosure Act which is, frankly, weak sauce when it comes to providing the kind of transparency that we need. Any time somebody shows up in your office and is advocating for something purporting to represent American interests, but in fact is there motivated by and being paid by a foreign interest to advocate their interest, is that something that you would be willing to work with us to further reform and refine?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and as you know from our time serving together on the Intelligence Committee as well, it is something we spend a lot of time talking and thinking about as well.

And I would raise two points. The first is, look, the straight up, some foreign government hires a lobbyist. You know that because they are registered, and we are aware of it.

The second is more nefarious, and that is that you hire someone through a cutout, a third party, without aware of the fact that they are in fact being paid by a foreign entity, and sometimes dressed up as an American interest when in fact it is furthering the interest of a foreign entity.

And then the third—and it is one that I do not think gets talked about enough, and it is not covered by this law but needs to be said—if some of the most effective and vociferous lobbyists on behalf of Chinese interests in the United States for a long time was your corporations who had a pretty good deal going in China with regards to manufacturing and the like and would come here and argue in favor of outcomes and policies that favored China.

And by the way, China would weaponize this openly. They would in fact, bring in CEOs of corporate America and encourage them to go back and talk to your Member of Congress and tell them they better not do that, because if they do, companies like yours are not going to do very well in China, and that was weaponized against us, too.

That is not illegal but it is most certainly troubling and something we need to have our eyes open to as well as we move forward.

Senator CORNYN. Well, that is a perfect segue into my last question, and this has to do with outbound investment transparency. As you know, the Senate has passed legislation providing for a reporting requirement for American companies who are investing in China.

It is not a prohibition. It is merely a disclosure requirement. Because the unique circumstances that you are well aware of that China provides there is no division between civilians or the private sector and government.

Under Chinese law the private sector—so called private sector is required to share any and all information that might be of use to the People's Liberation Army or to the Chinese intelligence agencies.

And it is not a stretch to say that due to the tactics of people like—or strategies, really, of people like Deng Xiaoping, who said hide your motives and bide your time, we have seen massive U.S. investment in China, which has not only helped them rebuild their economy, which is fine, but more ominously rearm their military—modernize their military so that they become a threat not only to their neighbors in the region but to world peace.

We can all imagine a nightmare in which China decides to take Taiwan, which President Xi said he is committed to do so. I think it just makes sense for us to have more transparency so that as policymakers we can then figure out what is the right policy.

I could care less whether American companies want to build more Burger Kings or Starbucks in China, but I do care if American companies are investing in dual purpose technology or in ways that would undermine the national security of the United States.

Do you share that concern?

Senator RUBIO. Absolutely, and in fact I shared it beyond just simply what you have discussed. This was a few years ago when the Thrift Savings Plan—the retirement 401(k), basically, for Federal workers—was investing in funds they are going directly to Chinese military use.

So you think about it. There were people serving in the armed forces of the United States whose retirement funds were being invested in companies that were building the weapons designed to one day blow the ship that they served on in the Indo-Pacific.

And in the case of other private sectors, you are right, every sector is not created equal in terms of the threat they pose to our country. But at a minimum we should have insight into whether American investment dollars, be they institutional or individual, are going through the funding of activities designed to undermine the United States of America. That is a core national security interest.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, and God speed.

Senator RISCH. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Shaheen. I welcome the opportunity to work with you in this Congress.

Senator Rubio, congratulations on your nomination. If you are watching the hearing, you probably notice Senators coming in and out, and most people understand why that is, but for those who do not we have a lot of other hearings, a lot of other responsibilities.

We get in a queue and kind of know when our questioning time is coming up. I decided that I would show up albeit 11 minutes late and stay, because this is so important to the country and to me, but I think for those of you who have watched this hearing that was gavelled in at 10:00 what you have seen is a nominee who is extremely well prepared.

We are used to seeing nominees who know a lot about a couple of things and sometimes who know very little about virtually everything. But I think you have seen a hearing with a nominee who, agree or disagree with the points he has made, he is not talking

out of a briefing book. He is not having to thumb through a binder to decide how to answer a particular question.

I have always been struck in working with Senator Rubio on this committee since I came to the Senate in January 2013 that he has a very well developed sense of the world and a passion and interest in all corners of it.

I was particularly happy that he was nominated for two reasons. One, we have worked together significantly on legislation touching many different areas over the years, and one was referred to by Senator Shaheen—legislation to send a clear message that NATO and the U.S. participation in NATO is not just simply an executive priority that could come and go depending upon the Article 2 Commander in Chief, but it was also something so important that Congress would say that the membership of the United States in NATO is something that Congress would want to weigh in on should there ever be a decision by an executive that we should back out of NATO.

And I think sending that message from Congress has been a very important thing that has led to a NATO that is expanding—Finland and Sweden. Where the polling would have been *de minimis* 10 years ago for joining NATO are now in, and I think a strong message from Congress is part of that.

Obviously, the fear of Russia is a huge part of it, but a strong message of congressional support is part of it. I am particularly proud that the Virginia National Guard has now struck a deal under the state partnership program where we are partners with the military in Finland, a very capable military, and the first exercises of the Virginia Guard with the Finnish military will start next month. I am very excited about that.

The second reason I was particularly gratified to see Senator Rubio nominated for this position is he cares about the Americas. I cast my first vote in a presidential election in 1976.

I have not seen a single Administration, Democratic or Republican, that has devoted enough attention to the Americas. We devote attention to it in a time of crisis, and then move our attention elsewhere.

It seems like Secretaries of State have often thought that the world only has an East-West axis and not a North-South axis, and Senator Booker addressed that with his questions around the attention that should be paid by the United States to Africa. I feel that very strongly about the Americas.

I do not have to ask Senator Rubio questions to gauge his interest and attention level. Everyone who comes before the committee tells us they are really interested in the Americas, only to find that they end up spending all their time somewhere else.

I do not have to ask that question of this nominee to know that he has a passion about the nations that are our nearest neighbors, a passion about the nations who are so connected to us in our cultural roots and in our family ties.

And it is so important not just because China and other nations are now getting into the area. I do not want to have a new Monroe Doctrine that we only care about it to keep Europe out of it. We only care about it to keep China out of it.

We ought to be paying attention because we are connected to these nations, and things will go better for us if things go better for them.

So to you, Senator Rubio, I am very, very happy that you are nominated for this position.

Two comments, then a couple of—then one particular question.

One, the status of career ambassadors. I think it is a norm for every Administration to ask ambassadors to tender their resignations, and it is certainly the norm for the political ambassadors to be politely let go the day that the new Administration comes into place, and I think that is an expectation that everybody has. We get that.

For the career ambassadors that are in place, they have been asked to tender their resignations to the incoming Administration, and that is normal.

But I would hope that the Administration would consider, if they are career, keeping them in place until their successors are ready, because to swap out a career ambassador for a career chargé does not advance our ability in any way to operate in nations.

There is a cachet that comes with being a confirmed ambassador that really helps you with continuity and diplomacy in these nations. So I know that that is a decision that the President makes, but I hope as you have a conversation with the national security and diplomacy team you might encourage the Administration, yes, you are going to replace the politicals with career chargés, but do not replace the career ambassadors unless or until you are ready to put somebody in place, which we know can often take quite a while for the Administration to even forward nominees, much less the time to get through the committee process. That would be a comment.

And then second is more for colleagues, really, rather than for Senator Rubio. One thing I have tried to be consistent on in my service on this committee is fight against unilateral executive application of military power unless it is in pure instances of imminent self-defense—active self-defense or self-defense against imminent hostilities, and I have been able to get this committee to pass significant war powers resolutions under three different Presidents now—President Obama, a Democrat, President Biden, a Democrat, and President Trump, a Republican.

And I just wanted to assure everybody that I am going to continue to be a stickler that the nation should not be at war without a vote of Congress, except in the instances of imminent self-defense, and I will do that because I have done that under Presidents of both parties, and I will continue.

Senator Rubio, now to the question, and you alluded to this very briefly in one of the comments that you made about the nation of Paraguay.

Not only do we not devote enough attention to the Americas, but when we do, we devote attention to the headaches, and the headaches abound in the Americas and elsewhere.

And so we have talked about Haiti, a problem. We have talked about Venezuela, a problem. But so often we do not pay attention to lift up, elevate, provide resources to, celebrate, the nations in the Americas that are doing things right.

And so when I travel through the region—and I am sure you have heard the same thing—I hear these nations that are doing things right why will you not you pay attention to us? Ecuador threw out a pro-China government, put a pro-U.S. Government.

All they wanted—all they wanted was a trade deal. We want to be closer to the United States. We are the only nation on the Pacific coast of the Americas that does not have a trade deal with the United States.

This Administration—I have been critical about the Biden administration—did not do anything to advance that cause. Talk to us about some of the nations in the Americas that you think are doing things right, and what we ought to do to help those nations because we will be much more likely to spread the right if there are other nations in the region that are doing better and better and better than if we are just trying to lecture people about how to improve.

Senator RUBIO. Just as a general matter, one of the things that has always struck me is that the region—and maybe this is true in other parts of the world as well, but particularly in the region—it is almost better to be America's adversary or enemy than friend, because the impact of friendship or the benefits of friendship are not tangibly clear to a lot of them, and you know, I have seen that express time and again over multiple years.

It is easy to pay attention to a headache. You are going to sanction, you know, some country that is not—is acting in anti-American ways, but the people that are sort of doing it the right way or want to be cooperative they are ignored, and the countries that are doing it the right way are ignored.

So I think there are a number of countries that right now as we speak—and I always say this with caution because I may not mention one country, and they say, well, they left us out—but I just want to point to a few that I think are present and clear for us.

You mentioned one with Ecuador. Ecuador was actually left out of CAFTA because at the time the people in charge did not want to be a part of anything with us.

They are facing some real security threats that are unique to Ecuador's history, and they are facing these threats because you have got violence and gangs coming over from the Colombian border and then pushing up through Ecuador as a transit country, but they bring with it the turf fights and the gangs to the point where last year there was a real threat to the stability of the government, where they took over television stations and things of this—these armed elements did.

And there is a lot we can do and have done but can do. Not a lot—we are not talking about a lot of money. We are not even talking about money in many cases, just equipment to help them at least to restore some sense of stability.

The other thing that Ecuador—these are just off topics, but I think they are all relevant—Ecuador faces a very significant challenge with illegal fishing off their coasts by Chinese fishing fleets who violate their territorial waters on an almost daily basis in massive quantities, and it is an ecological crisis as well on top of it. That is a country that can use our help tremendously.

I think about the Dominican Republic. People do not talk about the Dominican Republic enough, and they face a real challenge because of Haiti and the instability next door.

They were also one of the countries that emerged from COVID the fastest, and not just—because the tourism returned quicker there, and they really have been able to do some positive things.

I think Argentina—I know people, some have not met the new president of Argentina. This is a serious well trained economist. If you sit down and talk to him for a few minutes, he has real clear ideas about economic development and is doing some really necessary things in terms of restructuring the direction of Argentine economics in a way that I think is very positive.

Senator KAINE. Can I just say to every other nation out there that thinks you are a good guy, he was about to mention you but my time has expired. But please focus on the good guys, and let us help them do better and better and better and be good examples in the region.

Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Excellent point, Senator Kaine. Excellent point.

Senator Curtis, welcome to the committee.

Senator CURTIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member. It is great to be with you today. Great to be on this committee.

Senator Rubio, for the last 7 years, from a distance of about 600 feet—that is what separates the House chamber and the Senate chamber—I have watched and admired your work from a distance, and on a few but very fortunate times I have had the chance to actually be wind at your back on some of your work supporting Taiwan and protecting Hong Kong dissidents as we work together on some legislation.

Now, in a twist of events, I sit not far from where you once sat, and there is another symbolic 600 feet between us, between the State Department and the Senate, and I am excited to work with you in your new role, and I would like to continue to be wind at your back on a lot of issues and none more important to me than China.

And if you remember really nothing else about our short interchange today please know that that is very important to me, and I hope to work with you on what I view as the aggression of China and in many ways their global push for military and economic supremacy I think is a threat in many ways.

China is imposing its—what they call the “China One” principle on the world, which is very different than, you know, from our China policy.

Can you kind of describe how we can push back on that, and how we need to make sure we are shaping that conversation?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, and the first is to understand that the “One China” policy is and the U.S. policy toward the issue of Taiwan has been consistent and reaffirmed by every Administration since 1979.

It is the combination of the Taiwan Relations Act with the Six Assurances that make clear that the United States, we are not going to pressure Taiwan in any arrangement. We are not going to tell you when we are going to stop, if ever.

We make no commitment to not helping them in their national defense. We are not going to force any outcomes, and frankly, we are going to do everything, and we reject any effort to coerce, intimidate and/or forcibly drive Taiwan to do whatever China wants them to do. And that has been our position and that will continue.

That was the position under President Trump's first Administration. I anticipate it will continue to be in the second Administration.

I think within that context it is important for us to find every opportunity possible to allow Taiwan to engage in international forums where important issues are discussed and they are not represented.

Irrespective of what China claims about "One China" principle, they are not represented, and so the views there need to be—need to be made. They need to have an opportunity in these forums to be made clear.

But I think stability is critically important.

Here is the one thing I would point to here with regards to stability. If the Chinese are in fact serious about stabilizing U.S.-China relations and finding avenues of which we can cooperate and avoid conflict then they will not do anything rash or irrational when it comes to Taiwan or the Philippines, for that matter.

The actions they are taking now are deeply destabilizing. They are forcing us to take counter actions because we have commitments to the Philippines, and we have commitments to Taiwan that we intend to keep.

And so if they want to destabilize the relationship or they want to help at least create some pathway for stabilization of our relationship with them, even as we remain engaged in global competition and in some cases more adversarial than others, they really need to stop messing around with Taiwan and with the Philippines, because it is forcing us to focus our attention in ways we prefer not to have to.

Senator CURTIS. As a matter of interest I actually lived in Taiwan in August 1979, 3 months after that act that you referred to, and I think you are very accurate.

I think for a minute about Europe, and there are some countries it feels like in Europe because of their presence—Poland, Czech Republic, and Baltics—that are more in tune with this issue.

But as a whole it feels like some European nations are in denial of some of the things you have just said. Could you talk a little bit about how we work with our NATO friends over there, and how we get them to appreciate this and actually play a part in this?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think in the case of NATO I think I would expand it to really talk about the European Union and the EU, which I think is increasingly every single day coming to the realization of the threat that China's mercantilist policies and unfair trade policies are posing to them.

They are flooding the European market with their cheaper electric cars, or attempting to do so. There is a dispute now about the importation of aluminum on sector after sector. You are seeing the EU confronting the reality.

By the same token, you know, like many countries around the world including ours to some extent there is a quandary involved.



There is an intermeshing economic relations that you cannot just walk away from. But you also recognize the long term threat the Chinese practices are having on your economic lives.

And so I think that is an area in which the Europeans are—some more than others are increasingly aware and willing to be more forceful. Italy has been willing to lean into it more than perhaps some other countries in the region. Hopefully, that will continue to change.

On the security front—look, an event in the Indo-Pacific. Say—let us leave Taiwan out of it for a moment, and say it is the Philippines. OK. In the last 48 hours there was this massive—I do not even know how to describe it, but this massive ship that the Chinese have built that is, like, headed toward the Philippines and the Philippines feels threatened by it, rightfully so.

We have seen this on a daily basis with the harassment and so forth, but on a daily basis. If, God forbid, there is some miscommunication or some inadvertent conflict emerges there, and we have obligations to them, the impact that will have on the entire globe—the impact that it will have on the entire globe is enormous and that includes Europe.

So they have a selfish vested interest in seeking for the Chinese to curb their behaviors. I would also point to the Europeans that what the Russians have done with Ukraine would not have been possible without the assistance of China.

Whether it is the sharing of technology or aid in evading sanctions or selling their oil in secondary markets, the Chinese have been hidden, but clear to everyone watching, partners in the Russian endeavor, and the Europeans know this, and they need to be continually reminded of it because it reveals the nature of what we are dealing with.

Senator CURTIS. That was actually my next question, so I am going to skip that one. But thank you for addressing that.

I want to turn to Hong Kong. I mentioned I lived over in that area, and I actually remember as a young man in the 1980s shopping for a camera in Hong Kong.

As a businessman in the 2000s I tried to sell my product over there in Hong Kong. I have been over there a number of times as a tourist and just enjoyed that beautiful city, and unfortunately, today none of that is possible. As a matter of fact, I actually have a warrant for my arrest over there because of the work in the House that I have done over there.

Can you talk a little bit about the role there? And what is even worse is Hong Kong is now playing a role in facilitating sanctions evasion and money laundering, and can you address that issue?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think it is important to take 30 seconds down memory lane. Hong Kong was turned over by the U.K. with a strong set of assurances that it would remain autonomous and independent.

It would be governed by the Chinese, but independent. They would have a democracy. There would be free enterprise. They would be left alone. In essence, they would—you know, that is the promises they made.

They have violated every—over time they have violated every promise. They basically broke the deal, just like they lied about all

the island chains that said they were not going to populate and militarize, and they have done so as well.

And so today we cannot consider Hong Kong to truly be autonomous anymore. It is not. It is now under the full control, especially on national security matters, of Chinese authorities, and it should not be surprising to us that these deeply rooted banking institutions that are in Hong Kong who long have served as financial capital on the global scale are now being used to the benefit of the Communist Party and to evade global sanctions, and I think there has to be a growing recognition of that.

I also think it is important to remind those sectors in finance that are still involved there that the Chinese national security now that has now been implemented in Hong Kong allows them if they do not like what you are doing to basically trump up any charges they want, go into your offices, raid the boxes, see all of your files, threaten to jail you, and they have done so in some cases.

So it is no longer a hospitable place for people to conduct financial activity. So I think we just have to call it for what it is. The notion that Hong Kong is now some autonomous entity that operates within China's system but independent of it and the decisions they make is a complete work of fiction.

Senator CURTIS. Yes, and I hate to—one more quick question, but I also want to point out before we go on how good it could have been for Hong Kong and China had they kept that agreement. I think that would have been a whole lot better for China.

Last question as we run out of time. Obviously, there is a lot of conversation about Panama in the news. Can you talk about the Chinese influence in the Panama Canal, what Americans should know?

Senator RUBIO. Yes. Well, let me tell you I actually did not print a lot—I mean, things to read, like, verbatim here, but there is one that I thought was interesting that I wanted to share, and I am not going to put it out there for everybody, the whole thing, but maybe I will submit it for the record.

But I just—this thing with Panama and the canal is not new. I visited there. It was 2016. I think I have consistently seen people express concern about it, and it is encapsulized here in quote after quote.

Let me tell you, the former U.S. Ambassador who served under President Obama said, “the Chinese see in Panama what we saw in Panama throughout the 20th century, a maritime and aviation logistics hub.”

The immediate past head of U.S. Southern Command, General Laura Richardson, said, “I was just in Panama about a month ago, and flying along the Panama Canal and looking at the state owned enterprises from the People's Republic of China on each side of the Panama Canal they look like civilian companies or state owned enterprises that could be used for dual use and could be quickly changed over to a military capability.”

We see questions that were asked by the ranking member in the House China Select Committee, where they asked a witness and they agreed that in a time of conflict China could use its presence on both ends of the canal as a choke point against the United States in a conflict situation.

So the concerns about Panama have been expressed by people on both sides of the aisle for at least the entire time that I have been in the U.S. Senate, and they have only accelerated further.

It is a very legitimate issue that we face there, and I think there is a—I am not prepared to answer this question because I have not looked at the legal research behind it yet, but I am compelled to suspect that an argument can be made that the terms under which that canal were turned over have been violated because while technically sovereignty over the canal has not been turned over to a foreign power, in reality a foreign power today possesses through their companies, which we know are not independent, the ability to turn the canal into a choke point in a moment of conflict, and that is a direct threat to the national interest and security of the United States, and is particularly galling given the fact that we paid for it, and that 5,000 Americans died making it.

That said, Panama is a great partner on a lot of other issues, and I hope we can resolve this issue of the canal and of its security and also continue to work with them cooperatively on a host of issues we share in common including what to do with migration.

Senator CURTIS. Thank you.

Senator, I am out of time. Thank you so much. I yield.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator Rubio, I think that you are right about doing an analysis of the turnover documents, but I think even before that we ought to do an analysis of the original documents that went into place, because they were very strong documents giving us control over a 5 mile wide on each side of the canal path and was very specific.

So I think a legal analysis from beginning to end is critical.

Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Senator Rubio, nice to see you again. Thanks for taking the time with me, and thank you for being willing to serve.

I want to start with the Pacific Islands. As you know, it is an area of focus of mine and the Indo-Pacific is—look, we have been through several Administrations, and they all say the same thing. They all talk about the future being in the Indo-Pacific and that it is the most important region in the world. That continues to be true.

My concern is that specifically when people talk about the Indo-Pacific they are mostly talking about China. They may be talking about other East Asian countries, but there is very little conversation about Pacific Island nations, and we have got some auspicious things happening, but we have also got some challenges in front of us.

The embassy in Kiribati has stalled. The Solomon Islands, as you know, are sort of contemplating making themselves available for PRC military forces.

So we passed the Compact of Free Association. It is a bit of a mixed bag, and I would like to just hear your theory of the case here about how to have some continuity.

Obviously, it is a new Administration. It is going to be a new State Department. But I think some of the things that have hap-

pened over the last 4 and even 8 years in terms of Pacific Island relationships have been good for the United States of America.

So give me your theory of the case, not generally Indo Asia Pacific, but specifically these small island nations with whom we want stronger ties.

Senator RUBIO. Sure. So I think the first, obviously, is the ability to engage bilaterally with each of these individual nation states, you know, and that opportunity is already there. I think we should continue to build on it, and it is important and bears great fruit.

I think the second—and it is an open question, which I certainly want the State Department to look at, and I think policymakers on the Hill need to consider as well—is, you know, we are dialogue partners in the Pacific Island forum. And the question is whether we are fully utilizing that ability to be at the table in that forum.

Now, you know that forum includes Australia and New Zealand, which are bigger than some of these, but nonetheless important elements of it. And look, I think our expectations of the forum is—and they have had some internal friction with some of the member states, you know, about how—who is going to lead it and how the succession. So we hope they can work that out.

But it is an existing forum, which I think could potentially as a dialogue partner provide us the ability to not just engage bilaterally with the individual nation states but also collectively.

And we might not agree on a hundred million things, but there might be some things we can do through that forum. At a minimum, have a presence at it at a high enough level that shows our level of commitment and interest has been elevated even further, and then, ultimately, some real deliverables.

I do think that given—again, we keep saying they are small but they—you know, they are important both because of geographic location and their presence in international forums, and I do think that whether it is the Millennium Challenge Grant, whether it is through the successor to OPIC, there are opportunities as well to leverage some private sector engagement from the American side and the U.S. side or the broader North American side on some of the—whether it is energy needs or resiliency needs or other development projects that they may have.

So I think we have to explore that both bilaterally with individuals by ensuring that we have people there but also explore whether we are fully utilizing the Pacific Island forum as a dialogue partner to its full effect.

Senator SCHATZ. And you know that China engages in debt trap diplomacy which can be effective for their needs, but it is usually—you know, people get figured out eventually, and I think one of the areas where we can provide something that there is no other country that can provide is in the resilience space.

In a severe weather context, we are really the only folks that really know how to prepare for, respond to, and rebuild from disaster.

So, you know, the United States Navy has always been helpful in this context, but that is something we should continue to focus on.

Staying in the Pacific, and I am glad you mentioned the Philippines, you know, my theory of the case here is that—not that

China has decided that its risk appetite is higher, but rather that the things that they are doing are not so risky at all, and that is because we have not been in a position to impose consequences.

I think one of the places where we have a good and growing partnership, and obviously, bilateral economic and treaty obligations is the Philippines, and in addition to the enhanced defense cooperation agreement, and in addition to the Luzon corridor economic partnerships, I am just wondering how you see that growing democracy, one of our best allies on the planet, how you see that as strategically important for the United States.

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think it is important. First of all, it is always been strategically important for the United States. Obviously, our military presence there diminished greatly as a result of some of the decisions that were made within the Philippines, but now you see a willingness to see us return.

Look, we are not looking to militarize the Philippines, and this is not—we should—I think it would be a mistake to solely view it as a security arrangement.

There are long ties between the United States and the Philippines that date back to 1899 and the Spanish-American War, and so I think it is important to build on that as well.

I think there are real economic opportunities that we should be exploring, and so it is one that we need to show a commitment of. I will be frank—I think where this kind of fell off was, and I am not getting involved in internal Filipino politics but I am telling you during Duterte it was a little tougher to work with them, and obviously, there is some issue going on there internally as well. I will leave that to their electorate and their politics to solve.

So I think to the extent that over the last few years you have seen a reinvigoration of American interests, it is not simply driven by the fact that the Chinese are harassing them. It is also driven by the fact that there has been a more welcoming attitude toward our posture and our position there, and that is one that when that opportunity presents itself we should embrace. But then we need it to show results so that it becomes enduring. In essence, when your engagement with a country leads to economic development, whether it is outbound U.S. investment in the Philippines or what have you, then that becomes enduring.

Then it makes it difficult no matter who is in charge to walk away from the alliance because the alliance is more than just military and a military presence. It also involves jobs and businesses and investment and economic opportunity.

And we need to look for ways to emphasize that. I think it would be a mistake to simply view it as a military or defense alliance.

Senator SCHATZ. Absolutely. And coming from Hawaii it is the people to people ties that is the foundation of the relationship for sure.

I want to talk to you a little bit about our approach on the Korean Peninsula, and I am going to say something rather provocative. I think our North Korea policy is broken. I think it is broken on a bipartisan basis.

I think CVID is a fantasy. I think that the nonproliferation community wants to hold on to it for reasons related to other countries and non-pro priorities.

But it is clear to me that it is not working. Ten years ago you would have been laughed out of the room for suggesting that North Korea was able to develop maneuverable, hypersonic warheads, solid fuel ICBMs, submarine launched ballistic missiles. But all of that has happened. Forty launches in 2024, and more launches yesterday.

So I would just like you—I know you are a hawk. I know you have been a strong supporter of sanctions. I never have opposed a sanction against North Korea in my life. But I just think that we need to look at this thing realistically and say whatever it is that we have been doing, it is not working.

These guys keep getting more and more capable, and whatever sacrifices they are making internally in terms of the suffering of their people, they got the technical capacity. Like, I remember 10 years ago being told, well, they can do this, but they cannot do a nuclear tip. Oh, they can range Guam, but they cannot range Hawaii. Oh, they can range Hawaii, but they cannot range the continent.

They keep meeting and exceeding every technical mark that we think they cannot make, and we are attached to a policy that does not appear to be slowing them down in the least.

So is there an appetite for a rethinking of this, in my view, totally failed policy?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think there has to be an appetite for a very serious look at broader North Korean policies. And so I think it would be difficult for me today to come here and tell you this is going to be the official United States position on it, moving forward, because I do think because of the factors you have just pointed to, there are some things we have to look at in a broader perspective.

Now, to his credit President Trump—and look, I will be frank, I was one of the people very skeptical about it. But he sort of reached out to Kim Jong-un, walked away from negotiations twice.

Ultimately, did not reach something enduring, but here is what he was able to achieve in that engagement is he stopped testing the missiles. That did not stop the development of the program, but at least it calmed the situation quite a bit.

I think what you are alluding to—and I am not saying this is going to be the policy of the United States, because that policy is set by the President and ideally set through a process that involves a bunch of stakeholders rethinking and being creative about it.

But I do think what you are pointing to is the following. You have a 40 something year old dictator who has to figure out how to hold onto power for the rest of his life.

He views nuclear weapons as his insurance policy to stay in power. It means so much to him that no amount of sanctions has deterred him from developing that capability, and in fact, has not even kept him from having the resources to develop it.

Unfortunately, recent events now also have them engaged in conflicts beyond the Korean Peninsula, in fact providing troops and weaponry to the Russians in their effort in Ukraine.

And so all of this needs to be taken in conjunction in looking at the policy and seeing what can we now do that destabilizes that situation, that lowers the risk of an inadvertent war, be it between

South Korea and North Korea, maybe including Japan at this point, and ultimately the United States.

What can we do to prevent a crisis without encouraging other nation states to pursue their own nuclear weapons program? That is the solution we would like to get to, and I just did not bring it in my folder today because we are not ready to deal. But it is important, and it is——

Senator SCHATZ. Well, and you got to involve the committee, and there are—you know, this is certainly multi agency, multilateral. The President has to drive some of this.

But I think none of this is possible without an acknowledgement of more than a decade of bipartisan failure in this space. And so if we can at least start with the premise that whatever we are doing right now is not working, we can start to work on something else.

Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator CRUZ.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I got to say, boy, that sounds good, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Not as good as it sounds to me. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Senator CRUZ. Well, congratulations, and I am looking forward to the next 2 years working together.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Senator CRUZ. And to Senator Rubio let me say congratulations to you as well. We are going to miss you on this committee. We are going to miss you in the Senate. But you are going to do an extraordinary job at Foggy Bottom, and I will say if they capture you and tie you up in the basement, we will send a team to pull you out.

You know, as I look back over the last 4 years of the Biden-Harris administration there are a lot of policies that have done a lot of damage—domestic policies, economic policies. But I think all of those pale compared to the damage that has been done to national security and foreign policy over the last 4 years.

Over the last 4 years this Administration has systematically undermined and abandoned our allies. And it has systematically shown weakness and appeasement to our enemies, and the consequence has been disastrous.

We have gone from 4 years ago, peace and prosperity to today, a situation with wars across the globe and every enemy of America stronger than they were when this Administration came into office.

I am confident the incoming Administration is going to change that direction. I am confident that President Trump and the White House and you as Secretary of State are going to shift us back to where we should be, which is standing by our friends and allies and standing up to our enemies.

Do you agree with that assessment? Is that what you intend to do as Secretary of State?

Senator RUBIO. Well, let me say, first, the foreign policy of the United States will be set by the President, and my job is to advise on it and ultimately to execute.

I think the President has been abundantly clear, and that is his policy is going to be driven about making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

As I said in my opening statement, everything the State Department does—every policy, every program, every dollar it spends, every initiative it takes—has to answer three questions: Does it make us safer, does it make us stronger, or does it make us more prosperous.

And if the answer is not yes to one of those three you are going to have a hard time moving that forward because that is the priority of the President, and that is the priority that, by the way, voters gave this President when they elected him.

You point to a number of things that I think are critically important and I will phrase it a different way, but I think we are saying the same thing.

We have lost deterrence in multiple theaters around the world. So, as an example—and I use this as a small scale example, but it is really an important one.

I think the year was 2020, 2019, the Wagner Group tried to get cute and came after some Americans operating in Syria, and fire from the sky rained down on them, and that group was pushed back pretty hard.

That is deterrence. They threatened us, and they knew what the response would be. I recall the consternation here and in other places when Soleimani met his demise, but I can tell you it impacted Iranian behavior for a substantial period of time.

No matter how tough they talked, it impacted their behavior. I think it is important to reestablish deterrence, and to the extent that that has been lost for a variety of reasons, the lack of deterrence is an invitation to war.

The lack of deterrence is an invitation to hostility. It prevents the very thing that we hope to achieve, which is peace and stability in the world, and I do think we have lost deterrence, and I think in some ways it has contributed to what happened in Ukraine. An item I know that is very close to you, and you have worked on, and we talked earlier today about is energy dependence.

I recall President Trump at both a NATO summit and at the United Nations, and I recall the United Nations one in particular. President Trump said Germany is dependent—entirely going to be left dependent on China—on Russia for its energy, and they laughed at him. There were diplomats in the hall that were snickering.

That is exactly what happened. It is one of the reasons why Putin believed he could invade Europe is because Europe would not push back because they depended on him so much for energy.

Now, Europe is to be congratulated. They have moved very swiftly, particularly the Germans, to diversify their energy resources. But one could argue that we may never have had that invasion had that dependence not existed, because maybe he would have thought the European response would have been more forceful than he anticipated.

So I do think reestablishing deterrence and strength is important because it prevents war, and it gives us leverage and diplomacy, which where we hope to solve 99.9 percent of the global disagree-



ments, we hope to solve through diplomacy, not through armed conflict.

Senator CRUZ. I think that is very well said, and I want to give several specific examples.

Number one, you and I are the only two Cuban-American senators. You are about to leave me as a lonely sole member of the Cuban-American Caucus. Thank you for that, Marco. And——

Senator RUBIO. You know, if there are three Cubans it is—they always call it a conspiracy. So——

Senator CRUZ. Now I have no one to play dominoes with. But look, issues of Cuba—both you and I share family stories of parents who fled oppression and came here seeking freedom.

As you know, as you talked about earlier today, this week the Administration delisted Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. I think it was an absolutely shameful and reckless decision. I think it was a political decision on the way out. I think it was designed to hamstring the incoming Administration.

I am unequivocal that I think the Cuban government are evil communist bastards. Given your new job, I suspect you might be slightly less forceful in saying so and slightly more diplomatic. But I know your heart on the question.

But let me ask you this. Do you believe Cuba is a state sponsor of terrorism?

Senator RUBIO. Without a question, and I will tell you why. Number one, the FARC, which is—you know, elements of the FARC, and for that matter in Colombia, these are narco terrorist organizations and have been.

They started out as ideological organizations and now have figured out they are Marxists but they want to make money selling cocaine. So they have done that.

They have had the full support of the Cuban regime throughout their entire existence. We know that Cuba has been friendly toward Hamas and Hezbollah—openly friendly toward Hamas and Hezbollah.

We know as well that the Cuban regime, for example, hosts not one but two countries' espionage stations within their national territory, 90 miles from the shores of the United States, and that provide valuable insights and cooperate with these elements.

We know that they have strong ties to Iran as well and the terrorist elements associated with them, and we know for a fact that there are fugitives of American justice—fugitives of American justice including cop killers and others who are actively hosted in Cuba and protected from the long arm of American justice by the Cuban regime.

So there is zero doubt in my mind that they meet all the qualifications for being a state sponsor of terrorism.

Senator CRUZ. Well, it is clear you are going to be confirmed to this position. You are going to be confirmed with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. I think it is likely you will be confirmed on January 20, on the first day the President is sworn in.

When you are confirmed, I think it is also likely—I hope on that very first day you will reverse that determination. You may not feel prepared to make that commitment now, but is there anything you want to say on that?

Senator RUBIO. Well, I would just say—again, I do not want to speak ahead of the Administration of these decisions. As I said, the President sets our foreign policy, and my job is to execute it. That is how our system of government works.

I would just remind anyone on this recent deal with Cuba that just happened over the last 12 hours, nothing that was agreed to is irreversible or binding on the new Administration.

And I think people know my feelings, and I think they know what the President's feelings have been about these issues when he was President previously, and nothing that the Biden administration has agreed to in the last 12 or 18 hours binds the next Administration, which starts on Monday.

Senator CRUZ. Good.

Let us turn to Israel.

In the last 4 years this Administration has been the most anti-Israel Administration we have ever seen. They have systematically undermined the government of Israel, particularly at a time of war.

The Biden State Department secretly asked other parts of the Administration to suspend anti-terrorism sanctions so they could pour unaccountable hundreds of millions of dollars into the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip.

They refused to implement mandatory congressional sanctions against Hamas terrorists for using human shields. They made incredible efforts to secretly circumvent mandatory congressional prohibitions on money going to the Palestinian Authority because of the PA's support for pay to slay.

Even after October 7 they secretly poured millions and even cash from American taxpayers into Hamas controlled areas. Meanwhile, they secretly implemented boycotts of Jews living in Judea and Samaria through the Development Finance Corporation and binational science and technology foundations.

They secretly manufactured files used to impose crippling financial sanctions on Israeli Jews and refused to provide those files to Members of Congress. Those sanctions were renewed just yesterday.

I have every confidence that President Trump and you will reverse these policies broadly and specifically, but I would like to ask you about some of them quickly.

Can you commit to ending anti-terrorism sanctions waivers related to Palestinian terrorism and implementing sanctions against those terrorists?

Senator RUBIO. Yes.

Senator CRUZ. Can you commit to ending discriminatory policies including Biden administration's secret boycott policies against Jews in Judea and Samaria?

Senator RUBIO. Yes.

Senator CRUZ. And can you commit to reversing the discriminatory sanctions against Jews living in Judea and Samaria?

Senator RUBIO. Again, yes. I think that the policy of—again without speaking out of turn, I am confident in saying that President Trump's administration will continue to be perhaps the most pro-Israel Administration in American history.

Senator CRUZ. And the final question—you and I talked at great length about the 1944 water treaty with Mexico. Mexico is in viola-

tion of that treaty. It is doing enormous damage to south Texas. Farmers and ranchers there are experiencing drought.

As the Secretary of State, tell me what the State Department can do to encourage and incentivize Mexico to comply with the treaty and provide the water that they are obligated to provide to the people of south Texas?

Senator RUBIO. I think I raise it in every engagement. We will be engaged with Mexican partners. We have to engage with the Mexican government, and it is important to elevate it and raise it at every one of those engagements.

And I do not just mean like sending a letter or somebody sending an email or just mentioning it. I am saying make it a priority, and it is a priority not just because it matters to Texas. It is a priority because these international agreements and arrangements only work if they are complied with, and if they are not complied with, and it becomes habitual other nations believe they can begin to violate them as well.

It undermines this entire commitment to multilateral agreements and so forth. And I think it is in the crevices of those agreements, whether they have been in place for a long time and no one is paying attention anymore, or it just does not matter enough and you ignore it because you do not want to destabilize the rest of your relationship. But it encourages it to happen more and more.

It is not the only irritant we have in our bilateral relationship with them and in our agreements. I imagine they have some with us as well. But it is one that needs to be prioritized and raised consistently as a priority, not just as an asterisk or a footnote.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, and you are going to do great.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to say, Senator Rubio, I want to start off by noting for the record that when I first got to the Senate, and I was in my first year, and you had just run for President, and I did not think you would know who I was, I was pregnant with my daughter and trying to change Senate rules so that I could bring her onto the floor so I could do my job and vote because I cannot come through the normal back door to vote because there are stairs there, and it is not accessible for wheelchairs.

And I remember in the middle of that battle rolling through the Senate floor to vote, and I heard "Tammy Duckworth" from across the Senate chambers, and you came running down from the top back of the Senate chambers to tell me, I am with you.

I will support you. You have the right to vote, and I will support you being able to bring your daughter—your child—onto the floor when she is born.

And I want to thank you for that kindness because you did speak to your leadership about it, and it was a moment of true bipartisanship but also as parents, and as someone who was new to the Senate I was extremely grateful to you for that kindness.

Senator RUBIO. I think what I exactly said is what is the big deal—this place is already full of babies.

[Laughter.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. Exactly. Exactly.

So I want to touch on a topic we discussed last month. Thank you for sitting down with me. I always appreciate the opportunity to sit down with nominees.

I appreciate also your earlier response to Senator McCormick about Americans detained abroad, and your commitment to tackling this head on.

As you and I also discussed last month I appreciate your attention and commitment to addressing the case of Illinoisans in particular that we discussed as well. Thank you for that.

Another topic—you already touched on some of the issues in the Indo-Pacific particularly around the PRC and the PR—DPRK. I would like to dive back into the issue of ASEAN and ASEAN nations.

Since coming to the Senate I make a point of visiting Southeast Asia annually to reinforce our friends and partners there and those that we want to become our friends and partners there, that the United States and particularly those of us in the Senate care deeply about these longstanding historic relationships and making sure that those relationships live up to their potential.

And as you know, respect for ASEAN centrality has been a core part of our foreign policy in that region. In fact, the first Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy correctly emphasized ASEAN centrality as an important principle.

Unfortunately, not all of President Trump's nominees this time seem to grasp the importance or in fact know what ASEAN is. Yesterday I was distinctly unimpressed when questioning Secretary of Defense nominee Hegseth, and he could not mention a single nation in ASEAN.

Particularly shameful when we have at least two major, non-NATO allies in the bloc, one of which Thailand is the longest treaty alliance that the United States has at over 190 years long.

What can you share with us today about how you would approach ASEAN as a whole and with individual member states to capitalize on some of the key opportunities and challenges facing the region?

I know you have spoken about the Philippines, but can you build on that?

Senator RUBIO. Sure. On ASEAN the first thing is, the group's utility begins by the fact that through its 10 members. They have also, I believe, have five or maybe it is six free trade agreements now with neighboring countries as well.

Look, though, we have to be very pragmatic in our approach and how we prioritize it. I think the group will always struggle to coordinate unanimity on the issue of their relationship with China.

If you look at the continental—Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia—because of their geographic presence, because of history, they lean a little bit more in the Chinese direction, and other countries do not.

I think it would be a mistake for us to sort of make it as a condition of our engagement with ASEAN to say you must pick a side, and you must pick a side now—are you with them or are you with us.

I think what I can safely say is that the overwhelming and vast majority of the nation states in ASEAN, if not maybe all, do not

want to live in a region in which China is the predominant power and they are viewed as tributary states to Beijing and welcome U.S. engagement in the region as both an economic and defense counterweight.

So I think we need to view this as—I think it would be a mistake to go in with sort of a cold war mentality of pick a side and pick a side now.

I think the broader approach is to say they have a vested interest in us being involved. We have a vested interest as an Indo-Pacific nation in involving ourselves through this forum and finding opportunities both holistically through the 10 nations and individually through whatever bilateral opportunities present itself.

Earlier—you may not have been here, but I was asked a question about Thailand, and there is a group of Uyghurs that are in Thailand that they are saying may be deported.

And I said this is one of our strongest, longest relationships in the region, and maybe one of the longest and strongest in the world, and that is where these relationships really come to bear.

Not to browbeat them in a public forum, but through strong diplomacy and using the benefit of that relationship to go to Thailand and see if we cannot get them to not deport these people into the hands of Chinese authorities, knowing the atrocities that have been committed.

So that is a value added to this relationship. That is a bilateral relationship we have with Thailand. It is not the one we are going to have with every country in the region, but I do think the forum serves as a useful platform for us to be able to engage the region and individually these countries.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So you would agree with what the first Trump administration emphasized, which is that ASEAN centrality, and I think this is something that the new ASEAN chair Malaysia under Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim is saying with the Madani concept, which is growing that cohesion within ASEAN itself.

And in dealing with the organization while we continue to pursue those bilateral relationships with a stronger ASEAN can be cohesively as a unit allows them to better deal with countries like Myanmar, for example, and allows us to better have those relations with them and also for them cohesively to try to stand up to outside forces.

Senator RUBIO. One of the things that I think—and I think you saw this in the first Trump term and we will probably see again—is to the extent you see production sort of moving from China to other countries some of these countries stand to benefit from that, assuming they themselves are not the target of some tariff or what have you.

But I think there are benefits there in that regard. I would imagine that there are also some concerns they would share with us about maybe some of our other policies, economic or otherwise.

But I do think it is an opportunity that provides some real economic development benefit opportunities for a number of the countries in ASEAN. We would hope all of them, but certainly some more than others because of alignment of interests.

What I do think is we have to be realistic, and I just want to reiterate this because I think this because I think sometimes we go into these things viewing them with the lens of NATO or something else.

The key component to understand is we are probably never going to have sort of a overwhelming majority consensus on the role China is going to play. But I do think you could argue that the vast majority of countries in this forum, if not all, do not want to live in a region in which China is the predominant, overwhelming power and they all are viewed as sort of tributary states.

They are not interested in that, and they view the United States as a very logical and welcome economic and defense counterweight to that.

Senator DUCKWORTH. And I do think that even the mainland ASEAN nations that, as you in your words, lean more toward China, have suffered if you look at what happens with water.

We talk a lot about Mexico and water into Texas but also with the Mekong River in ASEAN with the 10 dams that China has built up rivers now affecting water and also arable lands further down the river, and initiatives like the Two Rivers Initiative which marries the Mississippi River, which is two-thirds of the border of my home State, along with the Mekong River, is a way for us to build some of these relationships and bring in American expertise.

A different place where we can also provide expertise is international disability rights. We have been working with ASEAN on developing disability rights and a cohesive approach to it in ASEAN.

But I think on an international scale whether it is ASEAN or Ukraine as they rebuild, I do think that disability awareness, rebuilding Ukraine to become more accessible, promoting disability rights around the world is something that is a way that we can engage with the rest of the world as well.

I would love to hear from you on disability rights around the world.

Senator RUBIO. And I say this, you know, sadly, it is going to be of critical importance to nations that are emerging from conflict, where we know in modern conflict people are injured in ways that are now survivable, but leave them for the rest of their lives with permanent disabilities.

And so I think it is going to be—in the case—from a very practical perspective, in the case of Ukraine it is going to be valuable because there are people that have been injured in that conflict that for the rest of their lives are going to have to deal with that, and it is conducive.

The other thing we have discussed is our diplomatic facilities around the world and whether they are—and understand that the number one job—the reason why we have embassies and consulates, yes, we represent U.S. interests in that country, but its number one obligation is to support Americans.

If you lose your passport, God forbid you go to jail, whatever it may be, that we have a presence there that can support Americans abroad, and it was stunning for me in our conversation to learn that there are a number of these locations around the world that

are not accessible to Americans with disabilities that needed to access them.

So it is something that we would have to look—we would be interested in looking at as well to make sure that just from our core obligation we are able to fulfill it.

Senator DUCKWORTH. And also it keeps many of your own staff members who may have disabilities from serving in some of these overseas missions.

As you said, highly trained well qualified regional experts, subject matter experts, may not be able to serve in some of these embassies where they can—it is not accessible for them.

So I thank you for bringing that up, and I will yield back my 9 seconds, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Oh, thank you so much.

Senator DUCKWORTH. You are welcome.

Senator RISCH. You are generous. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth. Those are important points.

Last but not least, welcome back, Senator Lee, to the committee, and I appreciate you have had your work cut out for you today in your new role as chairman of your committee.

But the floor is yours.

Senator LEE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Rubio, for your willingness to serve in this position.

I am going to make a bold prediction and say that you are likely to be confirmed. That is my prediction. I cannot speak for others but I believe that nonetheless, and it is a bittersweet moment.

I am back on the committee after 12 years of being away from it. You and I came to this committee and to the Senate the same time, both in our late 30s, the youngest members of the Senate at the time, although you had me by exactly 7 days—7 days older.

Notwithstanding the fact that you were the older between us, you have got all of your hair and it is not a single gray hair in there. But I have deeply enjoyed working with you as a colleague and getting to know you as a friend.

We have kids that are about the same age, and I have watched yours grow, and it has just been a delight getting to know you, Jeanette, and your kids, and I hope that will continue.

But I will miss having you here, not only as my Spanish teacher, not only as my source of Bible insights and my source of comedic material, but also for your great insights on foreign policy, domestic policy and everything else we do here. You have just been great to work with, and you will be missed in the very likely event that you are confirmed.

Let us talk first about the Western Hemisphere, an issue that I know is near and dear to your heart and mine, and we will start with the Panama Canal.

President Trump has recently talked a little bit about the fact that there are some questions arising about the status of the Panama Canal. When we look to the treaty at issue, the treaty concerning the permanent neutrality and operation of the Panama Canal, we are reminded that some things maybe are not quite as they should be there right now.

Given that the Chinese now control major ports at the entry and the exit to the canal, it seems appropriate to say that there is at least an open question—there is some doubt as to whether the canal remains neutral.

Would you agree with that assessment?

Senator RUBIO. Yes. Here is the challenge. Number one is, look, I want to be clear about something. The Panamanian government, particularly its current office holders, are very friendly to the United States and very cooperative, and we want that to continue.

And I want to bifurcate that from the broader issue of the canal. Now, I am not—President Trump is not inventing this. This is something that has existed now for at least a decade in my service here.

I took a trip to Panama in 2017—when on that trip to Panama in 2017 it was the central issue we discussed about the canal, and that is that Chinese companies control port facilities at both ends of the canal, the east and the west, and the concerns among military officials and security officials including in Panama at that point, that that could one day be used as a choke point to impede commerce in a moment of conflict.

That is going back to then but I earlier to the—before you got here, and I do not want to have to dig through this folder to find it again, but basically cited that the—how the immediate past head of Southern Command, just retired General Richardson, said she flew over the canal, looked down and saw those Chinese port facilities, and said those look like dual use facilities that in a moment of conflict could be weaponized against us.

The bipartisan China Commission over in the House last year had testimony and hearings on this issue, and members of both parties expressed concern. The former Ambassador to Panama under President Obama has expressed those concerns. This is a legitimate issue that needs to be confronted.

The second point is the one you touched upon, and that is, look, could an argument be made—and I am not prepared to answer it yet because it is something we are going to have to study very carefully, but I think I have an inkling of I know where this is going to head—can an argument be made that the Chinese basically have effective control of the canal anytime they want, because if they order a Chinese company that controls the ports to shut it down or impede our transit they will have to do so.

There is no independent Chinese companies. They all exist because they have been identified as national champions. They are supported by the Chinese government, and if you do not do what they want they find a new CEO, and you end up being replaced and removed. So they are under the complete control of their government.

This is a legitimate question, and one that Senator Risch had some insight as well—he mentioned that in passing—that needs to be looked at. This is not a joke. The Panama Canal issue is a very serious one.

Senator LEE. And so the mere potentiality of that, the ability to exercise that control even until such time as they do do it, as they do shut it down, is a concern, is it not?



Senator RUBIO. I listened 48 hours ago to FBI Director Wray in one of his exit interviews he gave to the press, and he said the Chinese are embedded in our utilities and critical infrastructure.

Now, he did not say every single day they are shutting off to power in the United States. He said that if there is a conflict, they are embedded, and they could shut off the power in key places.

We have all identified that as a threat. The fact that you can do it—you do not have to do it every day. No one is claiming that the Chinese are shutting down the canal every day.

What the claim is, the very legitimate concern is, that if these companies control both ends of that canal in a time of conflict, and the Chinese tell them shut it down, and do not let the U.S. go through there we got a big, big problem—a big economic problem and a big national security and defense problem.

The ability to do it alone is a threat. We should not ignore it. It is not a joke. It is a legitimate issue, and it needs to be solved.

Senator LEE. Excellent, and that feeds right into the next thing I wanted to ask you about, which just involves areas of dual use capabilities throughout the Western Hemisphere—you know, ports, infrastructure, critical minerals, and so forth.

We have had policies from the Biden administration involving the supercilious use of untargeted foreign aid and sort of cultural coercion in order to persuade them to or in an effort to coerce some of these countries to adopt policies that are contrary to their established cultural norms—abortion rights, LGBT policies and curriculum, and so forth.

That probably has not helped in this conflict, in this still somewhat soft conflict in which many of these countries are opening their doors to China. I cannot imagine that will have helped.

How will your approach to Chinese incursion in the Western Hemisphere be different from those of the current Administration?

Senator RUBIO. Well, there are a couple points. The first is the Chinese incursion in the hemisphere involves, number one, investment of dollars. Like, as an example, they go into some country. They say, here is \$5 million or \$10 million to build a stadium.

But in exchange you have to let us build out your three—you know, your 5G network using Huawei, Safe Cities, and the like, and by the way, here is a couple million dollars for you and your friends as a bribe.

OK. That is their first level of engagement. They go in, and they—and then some ways they create deals that you cannot possibly pay back, so now you have got a debt that you cannot pay back, and they have you trapped, and now they have got your vote at the U.N. and your cooperation on X, Y and Z, and that happened in Panama, by the way.

In 2016–2017 that was well understood that part of the investments they made in Panama were conditioned upon Panama's ability to convince the Dominican Republic and other countries to flip their recognition away from Taiwan.

That happened. So that is number one. The second element of their involvement is they go into a country, and a Chinese company will buy up the lithium mines or access to the rare earth minerals in these long term contracts.

And that exists in allied countries. The Argentines will tell you there are a number of business deals that the Chinese and Chinese companies have gotten a hold of in Argentina, that even if they wanted to back away they cannot get out of the deals because of the way they were structured. So that is number two.

And then number three is their presence. The Chinese are actively involved in military installations in the Western Hemisphere on the island of Cuba, 90 miles from our shores, only a few hundred miles from where Space Force operates and NASA and Cape Canaveral, only a few miles from MacDill where we have Central Command and Special Operations Command, only a few miles from Southern Command, only a few miles from Eglin Air Force Base and the test range we have out in the Gulf of Mexico—all of these things.

This is real, and it is operating right off the coast of the United States. They have a presence in our region. So we have to acknowledge that this is happening, and then we have to be present and have counters to each of these, and/or there has to be consequences for each of these.

Fortunately, the United States has strong relationships in multiple key countries in the region, and I think we have the opportunity to build upon that in ways that can attract the sort of investment that they would rather have than the Chinese investment.

But right now it is not available. It is not happening. There is no American alternative to what the Chinese are offering.

So, hopefully, we can provide the openings for that.

Senator LEE. Indeed, and I appreciate your enthusiasm and thoughtfulness in providing that answer.

Now, you touch on another issue when you reference the significance of agreements made by prior Administrations. Obviously, the Javier Milei administration in Argentina would not have been as likely to enter into those arrangements as his predecessor was.

The United States—we have to keep this in mind. The Constitution, of course, allocates the treaty making and binding power and spreads it out between two branches. The President can enter into a treaty, can sign a treaty, but that treaty is not ratified unless two-thirds of the Senate does it. So it flips the usual legislative process because it is a different type of legislation.

Would you agree with me that that type of arrangement, which is submission of a treaty after the President has entered into it—after the President has signed it—the submission of that treaty to the Senate for ratification and the ultimate ratification by the Senate is a necessary precondition for an international agreement to be binding on the United States of America?

Senator RUBIO. To be binding beyond the Administration that entered into it. This was the case of the JCPOA which was being sold to people as a treaty, but it was not, and the reason why it was a political agreement. It was basically a political arrangement between the current Administration and the regime in Iran, and that is why President Trump had the authority to pull us out of it when he did.

I think what is important understand about treaties in general—and we talked about treaties here today with Mexico with a num-

ber of other treaties that people may not be aware of—every treaty by definition, OK, is a surrender of sovereignty at some level as a nation.

But you do it, and you enter into it. Why? Why do you enter into a treaty even though you are surrendering some sovereignty? Because you have concluded that that surrender and the benefit of it to the national interest or the national security far outweighs the surrender of sovereignty and the consequences of it, and that is why it is so critical that the Senate be involved in that deliberation.

Because an individual Administration may get that calculus wrong, but when you have this overwhelming majority that concludes that it too agrees that that surrender of sovereignty is exceeded by the benefit of the treaty, now you know you have—you have increased your chances to have something that is good and makes sense.

And so, you know, I agree with your view of it, and I think that is the way I would hope we would pursue arrangements in the future if we enter into any.

Senator LEE. That is why it takes two-thirds. Thank you so much, Senator Rubio.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Senator Rubio, we know you have an appointment at the White House at 3 o'clock. Senator Shaheen has one brief question for you. I have a couple of brief remarks, and then we will get you on your way.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Senator Rubio. I think that was a very impressive display of your knowledge of the global situation.

But the one area that you mentioned but we have not really talked about is the Arctic, and given what is happening in the Arctic and China's designs on the Arctic, can you just speak to what you think our posture ought to be with respect to the Arctic?

Senator RUBIO. Well, we are an Arctic power. The Russians are a legitimate Arctic power. The Chinese are not. Whether they are a near Arctic power or—I do not know what the term they came up with to give an excuse for them to be up there.

I think—frankly, I know you did not ask me this question, but it is one I welcome the ability to talk about is some of this discussion with Greenland, putting aside all the things that are going on in the media.

I think we need to understand that Greenland has been strategically important to the United States and to the West for a very long time. In fact, in 1941 at the outbreak of World War II, the United States was signed up as a protectorate even though Denmark had been occupied.

You think back into the—I think Harry Truman tried to buy Denmark. Harry Truman had made an effort to try to buy it for, like, \$100 million. He was rebuffed, and then the U.S. has maintained through a mutual defense agreement there the opportunity to have military bases, and they had them for a while.

Why? The reason why is because of where it is located geographically. Yes, the access to the minerals on Greenland are critically important. But as more navigable space is opening up in the Arctic, particularly this northern passage that goes from Russia to

China—Russia to Asia and could cut transit times by as much as 40 percent, the Arctic is going to become incredibly critical.

And so we have to have a presence there. We have to have a presence there, not just saying, OK, we have a base—we have 200 people, or we have a flag flying.

We have to have the ability, for example, to have the ships that can navigate on the naval level and keep those shipping lanes open if, in fact, they are being threatened.

We have to have partners along the Arctic region that will join us in ensuring that the Arctic region is open for free and flow of navigation as these as these passages open up, because global trade is in many ways going to be infused by it.

We have positions within the State Department that I think in the past have been diminished or people just have not paid a lot of attention to—I just had this conversation the other day with Senator Murkowski—that all of a sudden I think people are interested in serving in Arctic affairs and in Arctic posts because this issue of Greenland has opened our eyes to the broader geographic importance of the Arctic region, which long has been a curiosity or something people have not talked about.

But I think now we have the opportunity to see it for what it is, and that is if not the most important, one of the most critical parts of the world over the next 50 to 100 years will be whether there is going to be freedom of navigation in the Arctic and what that will mean for global trade and commerce.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

I am going to order that Senator Rubio's responses—written responses to the questions regarding his relationship with this committee be filed for the record.

I am also going to order that the letters in support of Senator Rubio's confirmation be entered in the record.

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

Senator RISCH. And finally, I want to say thank you, Senator Rubio, for providing us with the benefit of your testimony. Your responses and your knowledge was outstanding.

This committee takes oversight of U.S. foreign assistance extremely seriously. You know well that transparency and accountability are paramount.

To that end, I want to flag for you my work with the Office of the Inspector General on the State Department's Bureau for Global Health Security and Diplomacy, PEPFAR, and the Biden administration's failure to uphold long standing United States laws protecting life in global health assistance.

In addition to my request for an investigation I have been holding over a billion dollars in U.S. foreign assistance since September of last year and will continue to do so until I can be sure that not one single American tax dollar will be used to perform or promote abortions overseas as that is required by U.S. law.

I look forward to working with you on this in addition to the many issues that we discussed here today.

Finally, I will note for the information of members of the committee that the record will remain open until tomorrow, Thursday,

January 16 at 1 p.m. for members to submit questions for the record.

Thank you. God bless you. We wish you well.

The committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:51 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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

### INDO-PACIFIC

*Topic: Economic Engagement in the Indo-Pacific*

*Fair and reciprocal economic engagement with Indo-Pacific partners can boost the U.S. economy and increase U.S. influence at China's expense. President Trump achieved such an agreement with Japan during his first term.*

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to pursuing beneficial economic initiatives with complementary Indo-Pacific economies that also support other U.S. policy goals? What would be your priorities in this regard?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to pursuing beneficial economic initiatives with complementary Indo-Pacific economies that also support other U.S. policy goals. President Trump's priorities of working in the national interest to strengthen American national security, build our alliances, expand the American economy, bolster the American energy industry, and support American jobs and American workers will guide our approach in this regard.

*Topic: U.S. Allies and Partners*

*Deep security cooperation and alliance burden-sharing in the Indo-Pacific is vital to U.S. interests and to deterring China's aggression.*

*Question.* Do you commit to prioritizing security access challenges in the region if confirmed? What will be your priorities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to prioritizing security access challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

*Question.* Do you commit to further deepening security cooperation with Taiwan in terms of both equipment and training, as required by the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to following the legal requirements of the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act, which states that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall use the authorities to strengthen United States-Taiwan defense relationship, and to support the acceleration of the modernization of Taiwan's defense capabilities.

*Question.* Do you commit to deepened security cooperation with the Philippines?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to further strengthening the U.S.-Philippines alliance, to include security cooperation.

*Topic: China in Europe*

*Question.* Should China play any role in any peace process regarding Ukraine or in the reconstruction of Ukraine?

*Answer.* China's material assistance has significantly enabled Russia's ability to prosecute its war in Ukraine. The United States will seek to end the war in Ukraine as expeditiously as possible.

*Topic: China Reciprocity*

*Question.* Do you commit to the following with respect to China: to conduct an early review of and action on counterintelligence threats at Mission China and other high-threat posts; to take necessary steps to push back on the Chinese government's restrictions on U.S. use of the diplomatic pouch; to push back on the PRC's restrictions on the movement of U.S. diplomats and their interactions with different parts of Chinese society; to directing your Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, as well as senior management leadership, to prioritize issues related to the Chinese government's harassment, surveillance, and abuse of U.S. diplomats, in-

cluding to ensure that such incidents are reported properly by Mission China back to Washington and receive attention from senior leadership; and to update this committee on these matters regularly?

Answer. Yes.

Topic: State Department Personnel Footprint

*Aligning State Department staffing with U.S. strategic imperatives is vital. Today, that means aligning staffing to support strategic competition—not just doing what the Department has always done. For example, the committee heard recently that while the U.S. has 33 officers total in the Pacific Islands, it has 80 at the U.S. consulate in Casablanca, Morocco alone.*

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to initiating a rigorous assessment of the State Department's footprint to ensure it is aligned with the strategic imperatives of competing with China?

Answer. Yes.

Topic: China House

*The Biden administration created China House to improve coordination of China policy across the State Department, but execution is not living up to this goal.*

Question. Do you commit to undertaking a revamp of China House that ensures the Department drives coordinated policy outcomes and that Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and their teams are accountable for progress toward such policy outcomes?

Answer. Yes.

#### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Topic: Iran Policy

*There is growing agreement that the Obama-Biden approach to Iran has ended in failure and directly contributed to the assault against Israel and the crisis in the Middle East. Israel's military operations—despite the Biden Administration's hand-wringing—have severely degraded Iran and present an opportunity to force the regime to make concessions.*

Question. Do you believe we have an opportunity to further constrain the regime? What are the major pillars of a new Iran strategy?

Answer. The Iranian regime is at its weakest point in recent memory, and perhaps ever. Their air defenses have been badly damaged and their proxies have been decimated. The pillars of an effective Iran strategy will include enforcement of sanctions coupled with meaningful engagement with the international community to change the regime's malign behavior.

Question. Many believe it is way too early to consider any negotiated agreement with Tehran until they feel the full pressure of US economic sanctions and military deterrence. What are your thoughts on the timing of any negotiation with Tehran?

Answer. The United States should be open to any arrangement that will lead to safety and stability for America's interests in the Middle East, but one in which we remain clear-eyed about the threat the Iranian regime poses to regional peace and security.

Topic: Syria Policy

*Assad's ouster from Syria in December represents a generational opportunity for Syrians to take back their country, but reservations about the new regime's terrorist history and radical ideology remain. The end of the Assad regime also marks the end of the post-World War I "settlement" after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Syria also represents a generational opportunity to engage with all the countries in the region in an effort to ensure that the people both Syria and its neighbors can live and prosper in peace.*

Question. What conditions will you be watching as Secretary of State to ensure Syria does not become a terror haven that threatens U.S. national security while supporting the aspirations of the Syrian people?

Answer. The fall of the Assad regime has created a window of opportunity for Syria to stabilize and leave behind the Assad family's brutal legacy of sponsorship of terrorism and aggression against its neighbors. However, any successor government or interim administration in Damascus should be judged by its actions rather than its words.

*Topic: Israel-Saudi Normalization*

*Despite the events of & October and the attack against Israel, it remains in our interests to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel.*

*Question.* Do you see Israel-Saudi normalization as a viable pathway to heal the region after the trauma of Hamas' October 7 terrorist attack?

*Answer.* Achieving normal relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in particular would set the conditions for regional peace and prosperity, not only in the Middle East, but in other parts of the world. This will, in turn, reduce the threat of terrorism to the U.S. homeland and to our and our allies' interests worldwide. Achieving normalization of relations between Israel and its regional neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, was a major strategic objective of the first Trump administration and will continue to be a major priority in the second Trump administration.

*Topic: Houthi Threat*

*The Biden administration labelled the Saudis as a "pariah", delisted the Houthis as a terror organization, and did all it could to undercut Saudi military efforts in Yemen. Four years later, the Red Sea is virtually closed to international shipping and the US is actively bombing Yemen—clearly Biden's approach did not work.*

*Question.* Do you support re-designating the Houthis as a Foreign Terror Organization?

*Answer.* Yes.

EUROPE

*Topic: Support for Ukraine*

*Question.* Given the current dynamics on the battlefield in Ukraine, do you believe that Putin has any incentive to come to the negotiating table? If not, what can the US do to pressure Putin to talk and increase President Trump's leverage at the negotiating table?

*Answer.* President Trump has been steadfast in his commitment to seeking an end to the war. Ukraine's forces have imposed considerable costs on the Russian military and people, thereby creating strong incentives for Putin to come to the negotiating table.

*Topic: Biden Failures in Ukraine*

*Question.* Do you believe that Putin succeeded in successfully frightening and deterring the Biden administration from providing the decisive support to Ukraine and strong sanctions needed to bring the war to a speedier conclusion?

*Answer.* The Biden administration's policies failed to deter the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Trump administration will not hesitate to take necessary steps to restore and strengthen deterrence against aggression.

*Question.* As Secretary of State, how would you restore American deterrence and make Putin worry about what the United States is going to do—rather than the other way around?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would work to advance President Trump's vision of peace through strength by restoring the credibility of American deterrence. Putin should make no mistake about the resolve and capability of the United States under the leadership of President Trump.

*Topic: NATO*

*Question.* What is your plan to engage NATO Allies on increasing burden sharing, investing in defense industrial capacity, and aligning on global security issues beyond Europe, such as in the Middle East and Indo-Pacific?

*Answer.* President Trump has made it clear that allies share burdens and need a common vision of a robust security profile. If confirmed, I will work with the President and with our allies across the globe to advance those goals.

*Topic: European Economic reliance on China*

*Question.* How will you ensure Europe accelerates efforts to reduce its economic overreliance on China while making sure Europeans don't grant themselves an unfair advantage over American companies?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will advocate that our European friends and allies become more self-sufficient, and will advocate for the President's policies concerning the need for a level economic playing field.

## SANCTIONS

*Topic: REPO Act*

*Last year, The Rebuilding Economic Prosperity for Ukrainians (REPO) Act was signed into law. As a result, the G-7 will provide Ukraine an additional \$50 billion in assistance paid for by interest earned off immobilized Russian sovereign assets (i.e., interest earned on Putin's own money—not that [off] U.S. or European taxpayers). \$300 billion in Russian sovereign money remains immobilized globally. Most of this money is in Europe. The REPO Act authorizes the U.S. to confiscate and repurpose the underlying assets for the benefit of Ukraine and directs the U.S. to work with partners and allies to do the same.*

*Question.* Will you commit to keep all options on the table and work with our G-7 partners on the potential to confiscate the full \$300 billion in immobilized Russian sovereign assets for Ukraine?

*Answer.* President Trump has consistently demonstrated both skill and resolve in a wide variety of negotiations, including those dealing with sanctions. If confirmed, I will support the President's efforts to negotiate with Russia's leaders.

*Topic: Ghost Fleets*

*Since the invasion of Ukraine, hundreds of illicit Russian shadow fleet vessels sustain Russia's oil trade. These ships are very old, not well maintained or staffed, engage in risky navigation practices, and lack adequate insurance. This illicit oil trade continues to fund the Russian war machine and poses a significant risk of a major oil spill or collision at sea. A similar shadow fleet also continues to fund the Iranian regime's malign behavior and presents many of the same risks.*

*Question.* What steps will you take to curtail the growth of these shadow fleets?

*Answer.* The existence of the Russian and Iranian "shadow" fleets demonstrates that the current policies and sanctions imposed by the United States and other nations have not achieved their goals. If confirmed, I will lead a review of all of our sanctions policies so as to ensure that the President has the tools he needs to negotiate agreements that will resolve the problems that led to the imposition of sanctions in the first place, and I will, if confirmed, ensure that Congress is kept fully informed of the conclusions of that review.

*Topic: Office of Sanctions Coordinator*

*In December 2020, President Trump signed into law a provision that I spearheaded which re-established an Office of Sanctions Coordinator within the State Department. This office is intended to coordinate in three main ways: 1) within the Department itself; 2) across the executive branch and the interagency; and 3) for foreign countries for questions concerning U.S. sanctions policy.*

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to provide this office the attention, support, and resources needed to ensure its success and the fulfillment of its statutory mandate?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to ensure that the Office of Sanctions Coordinator at the State Department has the attention, support, and resources it needs, both within the Department and in the Interagency to fulfill its statutory mandate.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the nomination of a qualified sanctions professional with expertise in the sanctions field to serve as the Senate-confirmed head of the office?

*Answer.* This is a question that I will be better able to address if I am confirmed. Filling Senate-confirmed vacancies will be among my highest priorities, if confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to work with my office and this committee to ensure that this office succeeds and fulfills its statutory mandate?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to working with your office and this committee to ensure that the office succeeds and fulfills its statutory mandate.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to direct the State Department to brief my office and this committee in a timely fashion with respect to sanctions policy developments as they occur?

*Answer.* Yes. I respect Congress's important role in the development of sanctions policy.



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

*Topic: UNRWA*

*Many in the Senate have long advocated for the reform of U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), a bloated and misguided organization that has outlived its mandate. Since October 7, calls to reform and eliminate UNRWA have grown within Congress.*

*Question.* Do you support the elimination of UNRWA? What does a post-UNRWA environment look like to you?

*Answer.* UNRWA's role, however inadvertent, in enabling the terrorist attacks and massacres of October 7, 2023 was unacceptable. It is clear that a significant number of UNRWA employees and beneficiaries were terrorists from Hamas and other militant groups who utilized UNRWA resources and access as they planned and carried out an unprecedented terrorist offensive against Israel in which dozens of Americans were killed, tortured, or kidnapped. It is also clear that Hamas and other terrorist organizations were able for many years to channel U.N. resources into the building of their military and terrorist operational capabilities. Never again should a U.N. agency be allowed to play such a role.

*Question.* How can we ensure that any follow-on organization does not follow in UNRWA's footsteps?

*Answer.* That UNRWA became a resource for Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza was the result of failed U.N. leadership. The U.N. system must be reformed to hold derelict U.N. agency leaders accountable for the consequences of their programs on the ground.

## POLITICAL MILITARY AFFAIRS

*Topic: AUKUS*

*It has been over 3 years since AUKUS was announced and little has been done to show substantive progress from it. AUKUS was created to streamline cooperation among our closest allies and partners, but onerous technology sharing restrictions continue to limit our ability to seamlessly transfer and co-produce advanced capabilities under Pillar II.*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you create an anticipatory release policy for the transfer of AUKUS Pillar II technologies that are not covered by an exemption under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations?

*Answer.* Given the challenges in the submarine industrial base, Pillar II of Aukus may be the near term success objective. The U.S. and its trilateral partners need to not self-constrain the development and delivery of critical Pillar II technology where possible to reflect the new Administration priorities.

*Topic: Prioritizing Security Assistance*

*The preponderance of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is earmarked for Middle Eastern partners and what remains is allocated in a piecemeal fashion to advance a variety of foreign policy goals other than building the capacity of U.S. allies and partners to counter Chinese aggression.*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you prioritize allocating FMF to states on the front line of resisting Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific?

*Answer.* FMF and other security assistance programs should be prioritized based on risk and reflect the priorities of the new Administration.

*Topic: FMS Reform*

*The Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Direct Commercial System (DCS) processes are poorly suited to meet the urgent challenges of today's security environment. FMS and DCS are characterized by lengthy delays, a lack of predictability and transparency for both U.S. industry and our partners, and the unwillingness of the USG to prioritize requirements according to threats.*

*Question.* Do you believe the current FMS and DCS based arms transfer process provides for the timely delivery of military capabilities at a scale sufficient to enable allies to share the burden of deterring China and other U.S. adversaries?

*Answer.* The Department is committed to a Security Assistance processes that expedites assistance to allies and partners and provides predictability and transparency where possible.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to implementing a policy that creates a time-based process for making licensing decisions of Direct Commercial Sales cases and for technology release decisions of Foreign Military Sales cases?

*Answer.* The Administration will pursue policies that provide Security Assistance to partners in the most expeditious way possible to reflect the new Administration's priorities.

*Topic: Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)*

*The nuclear weapons landscape has deteriorated rapidly under the Biden administration. Given the current two-peer nuclear armed environment with Russia and China both accelerating their nuclear buildup, it is imperative that our nuclear posture adapt accordingly.*

*Question.* Do you believe the Trump Administration needs to produce a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) or does the Biden Administration's 2022 NPR and its November 2024 Nuclear Weapons Employment Strategy provide sufficient nuclear policy guidance for the incoming Trump Administration?

*Answer.* The Trump Administration will require significant modifications from the Biden Administration nuclear weapons policy and strategy. This process may not require a year long Nuclear Posture Review given near term and immediate steps that can be taken.

#### WESTERN HEMISPHERE

*Topic: Fentanyl*

*Fentanyl and other synthetic drugs are responsible for nearly all fatal drug overdoses in our country. China remains the primary source of precursor chemicals being used by Mexican cartels to manufacture and traffic these deadly drugs into the US.*

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support imposing visa and financial sanctions on any agency or instrumentality of a foreign state that facilitates significant financial transactions for opioid and illicit precursor traffickers?

*Answer.* Trafficking of illicit synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, has wreaked havoc on America. If confirmed, I would work shoulder to shoulder with the White House and my fellow Cabinet officials to hold accountable the facilitators of the opioid crisis.

*Topic: Venezuela*

*There have been more than a dozen failed attempts to restore democratic order in Venezuela. The United States and Europe have tried engagement and economic pressure, including individual sanctions on hundreds of regime officials.*

*Question.* Please describe your views on the conditions under which there can be a successful transition to democratic order in Venezuela.

*Answer.* As I discussed during my hearing, the Biden administration was mistaken to have allowed the Maduro regime to fool them. If confirmed, I would treat Venezuela not as a country run by a government but as one run by a narco-trafficking organization.

*Topic: Cocaine Production in Colombia*

*Colombia remains the top producer of cocaine in the world. Cocaine overdose deaths in America have skyrocketed, alongside deaths related to fentanyl and synthetic opioids. Unfortunately, the Colombian Government refuses to eradicate the coca plant used to produce cocaine, and cocaine production is at record highs in Colombia.*

*Question.* If confirmed, would you support the provision of U.S. technical assistance to Colombia for aerial eradication programs in Colombia?

*Answer.* Under the Petro administration, coca and cocaine production has skyrocketed, with much of it ended up in America's communities. That is unacceptable. If confirmed, I commit to pursuing efforts to reverse this trend.

#### AFRICA

*Topic: U.S. Credibility in Africa*

*The Biden Administration's Africa policy resembled a marketing campaign targeting African elites, diaspora communities, and its domestic base with flashy events and promises. Instead of substantive engagement with clear objectives, it pursued poorly conceived Presidential and diplomatic ini-*

*tiatives and questionable development programs. One example is a U.S.-backed railroad, marketed as countering China but, as of now, primarily facilitating the PRC's mineral extraction. U.S. credibility has faltered, leaving Africans asking, 'Where is the United States?' Meanwhile, strategic competitors expand their influence.*

*Question.* How will you steer U.S. policy in Africa differently if confirmed?

*Answer.* As I highlighted in my hearing, there are a lot of opportunities for the United States on the continent over the coming years. A lot of challenges too. If confirmed, I commit to taking a long-term, strategic approach toward Africa. The United States has many friends in Africa. If confirmed, I will focus on building strategic partnerships that serve both America's strategic interests and those of our friends on the continent. Unless we do so, it will not be possible to develop pragmatic solutions to problems, or to seize opportunities to advance U.S. diplomatic and economic interests.

*Topic: Sudan*

*The war in Sudan is among the world's most devastating conflicts, posing a severe humanitarian crisis. Without U.S. leadership, the conflict risks destabilizing the region, enabling exploitation by malign foreign actors like Russia and Iran, and causing the collapse of a nation central to the Red Sea and Horn of Africa regions.*

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you ensure the United States is leading in resolving the Sudan conflict and stabilizing this critical region?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review our diplomatic engagements in Sudan and with other countries so as to ensure that the President is in a position to lead the effort to bring the conflict to an end and reach agreement on how best to work with our allies to alleviate this humanitarian crisis.

*Question.* How will you structure the Department's engagement with the belligerents, the Sudanese people, like-minded partners, and the various proxy actors involved in this war?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will order a full review on how best to engage the belligerents, the Sudanese people, partners in the region, and other relevant actors in an effort to bring this conflict to a close.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with this Committee to ensure the U.S. leads on ending the war in Sudan?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure U.S. diplomacy is fully authorized, resourced, and postured to not only alleviate the humanitarian crisis and end the war in Sudan, but ensuring the U.S. leads in that effort.

*Topic: Chinese Malign Influence*

*China's presence in Africa is well-established and continues to expand across many countries. The United States has approached countering China mainly through the lens of competition, often without the requisite level of commitment and resources needed to compete effectively and build enduring, mutually beneficial partnerships that reflect American values.*

*Question.* What steps will you take to enhance U.S. presence and engagement in Africa, not merely as a response to competition but to foster stable, effective, and strong partnerships that advance U.S. interests and our African partners?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to working with experts within the Department and across the interagency to develop the most effective engagement strategy that successfully counters China's malign influences, while offering an attractive alternative that advances the U.S. interest on the continent by building strong partnerships with responsible and capable African partners.

*Topic: Somalia*

*Twenty years after the fall of the Siad Barre regime, and 12 years since the United States recognized the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in Mogadishu, Somalia remains a failed state. The US and other members of the international community—bilaterally and through multilateral missions—are engaged kinetically to defeat al-Shabaab, support the development of functional state institutions, and meet the dire humanitarian needs of large portions of the Somali population. The security and governance conditions in Somalia are not uniform, varying significantly across the Federal Member States.*

*Question.* As Secretary of State, if confirmed, how will you approach the US relationship with Somalia and its Federal Member States, including Somaliland? Will you pursue a new strategy toward Somalia?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to working with experts within the Department and across the interagency to assess our current approach toward the government in Mogadishu and the governments of Somalia's Federal Member States as well as Somaliland, and to develop a pragmatic strategy for the Department's engagement going forward based on the assessment's findings. This will ensure that the tremendous resources that the American people have invested since the collapse of Somalia more than three decades ago are deployed to best effect.

*Topic: Countering Disinformation and American Public Diplomacy*

*In Sub-Saharan Africa, the United States faces serious challenges to countering the narratives of global malign actors and anti-West military juntas.*

*Question.* Is the State Department adequately invested in public diplomacy in Africa?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the Department has adequate resources for all its responsibilities, including the important work of public diplomacy.

*Question.* As Secretary of State, how will you ensure that we tell the positive story of American partnership and investment, while also countering dis- and mis-information and use public communications to engage in strategic competition?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to working with the Department and interagency to ensure we are effectively telling the American narrative in Africa, while countering the disinformation efforts of the PRC, Russia, and other malign actors without engaging in censorship.

*Topic: Staffing Issues in AF Bureau*

*The Bureau for African Affairs is woefully and disproportionately understaffed and under-supported, with critical posts in Washington and at Embassies vacant.*

*Question.* As Secretary of State, if confirmed, do you commit to addressing the specific challenges faced in staffing the Bureau of African Affairs and to working with this Committee to develop legislative fixes as needed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that the entire Department is adequately staffed to meet its statutory requirements.

#### STATE MANAGEMENT (& OVERSIGHT)

*Topic: DEIA*

*Over the past 4 years, the State Department has gone to the extreme pushing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). Frequently, the advancement of DEIA was done at the expense of merit, with promotions and plum positions going to those who could fall in line the fastest and the loudest on DEIA. It is far past time for the State Department to drop DEIA and return to merit for all personnel issues.*

*Question.* Do you think the State Department should drop DEIA and return to merit? What other policies will you pursue to address this overreach?

*Answer.* DEIA is contrary to law. If confirmed, I will require that all employees of the Department and related agencies work in an environment free from discrimination; that they are fairly evaluated; and that none of them are penalized for real or perceived infractions of the Biden Administration's DEIA policies.

*Topic: Embassy Construction and Risk Management*

*My Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 2022 (SECCA 2022) was enacted more than 2 years ago as a way to force the Department to re-balance its risk calculus, yet the State Department has yet to fully implement it.*

*Question.* Do you support fully implementing SECCA 2022 to reduce to costs at embassies and consulates?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the implementation progress of SECCA 2022 to ensure efficient costs at embassies and consulates. It is important to ensure the efficient use of taxpayer resources.

*Question.* Will you promulgate guidance that requires all parts of the Department, including the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, to implement SECCA 2022?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review any pending guidance and seek input from all Bureaus to determine any future guidance will make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Question.* Do you support a greater risk tolerance within the Department, especially in senior leadership, to better allow our diplomats to get outside of embassy walls to advance U.S. national interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review security and safety protocols for senior leadership and diplomats to ensure it will make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Topic: Embassy Construction and Risk Management*

*The recently enacted State Department Authorization Act included my legislation, the Embassy in a Box Act. This bill requires that the Department reduce bureaucratic hurdles to build new embassies in the South Pacific and Caribbean faster in order to better compete with the Chinese in those regions.*

*Question.* Do you fully support implementing my Embassy in a Box Act? Would you promulgate guidance on doing so to the Department within your first 90 days as Secretary?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review how the department can fully implement the Embassy in a Box Act and take action within the first 90 days to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Topic: State Department Authorization*

*We have successfully passed a State Department authorization bill for four straight years, following nearly two decades without any authorizations. As Chairman, I welcome your input on potential provisions for inclusion in this year's State Department authorization. However, over the past 4 years, the Department has sent requests far too late, often several months into the process.*

*Question.* Do you support the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's responsibility to enact a State Department authorization? Do you pledge to provide this committee with any State Department requests for authorization no later than April 1, 2025?

Answer. Yes, I support enactment of a State Department authorization. If confirmed, I will ensure timely requests for authorization are sent to Congress.

*Topic: Congressional Travel*

*As you personally know, Congressional Delegations (CODELs) and Staff Delegations (STAFFDELs) serve a critical oversight mission. However, in a departure from historic practices the Department has repeatedly denied or pushed-back on CODELs and STAFFDELs.*

*Question.* Do you pledge to support fully CODELs and STAFFDELs that seek to travel to U.S. missions?

Answer. Yes.

*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.

*Topic: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the State Department*

*The department has made a great amount of forward progress leveraging innovative AI and data centric capabilities to advance the mission, including through the modernization of the Operations Center and tools such as StateChat.*

*Question.* Will you continue to support and expand these efforts?

Answer. If I am confirmed, the assessment and use of innovative technologies to help the State Department staff work more effectively and modernize the State Department will be important to ensure the Department operates the best way it can to support American diplomatic and national security policy. An effective, modern, and equipped State Department is critical for American national security and diplomatic success.

*Question.* Will you support the adoption of modern commercial software solutions to modernize critical operational platforms such as Visa and Passport adjudication and to assist other department functions in areas such as diplomatic security?

Answer. If I am confirmed, the assessment and use of innovative technologies to modernize critical operational platforms such as Visa and Passport adjudication and to assist other department function areas, such as diplomatic security, will be an important priority. An effective, modern, and equipped State Department is critical for American national security and diplomatic success.

*Question.* Will you encourage the adoption of AI to advance our data driven diplomacy efforts?

Answer. Yes.

#### FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

*Topic: Global Health Security and International Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Act Implementation*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you work to align policy and budget coordination for global health security and diplomacy under the Coordinator for Global Health Security and Diplomacy at the Department of State, as envisioned by the Global Health Security and International Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response Act?

Answer. If confirmed, I will do my best to comply with the law and to align policy and budget priorities across-the-board.

*Topic: Foreign Assistance Transparency and Accountability*

*You were the original champion of the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act in the Senate.*

*Question.* Do you stand by the argument that the American people deserve to know who and what they are funding overseas?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree that, in addition to prime implementers, sub-prime grantees and contractors should also be disclosed to the American people?

Answer. Yes.

*Topic: Abortion*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you uphold all laws prohibiting the provision of U.S. foreign assistance to perform or promote abortion, or to lobby for or against the legalization of abortion, overseas?

Answer. Yes.

*Topic: PEPFAR*

*Dysfunction between the two principal implementers of U.S. global health assistance—the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—have long plagued U.S. global health programs. That’s why Congress placed responsibility for coordinating the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) within the Department of State. PEPFAR is now recognized as one of the most successful U.S. foreign assistance programs and has saved millions of lives, strengthened health systems and supply chains, and advanced key U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security goals.*

*Question.* Do you agree that the PEPFAR model, including the coordinating role played by the Department of State, has been successful?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work within the PEPFAR framework to review its outcomes and to inform Congress of the Department’s findings.

*Question.* What is the future of PEPFAR? With an increasing number of partner countries reaching epidemic control and taking greater responsibility for managing their own epidemics, should U.S. country teams be allowed to use PEPFAR funds to advance broader development objectives, or should PEPFAR budgets be reduced while allocations for other development objectives are adjusted?

Answer. If confirmed, I will address these questions after an evaluation of PEPFAR outcomes and the process by which PEPFAR is administered and coordinated.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

*El Salvador*

*For over 33 months, the Bukele government has been operating outside of normal constitutional order under a State of Exception that has given the government an extraordinarily broad range of security powers. The State of Exception has resulted in tens of thousands of Salvadorans being arbitrarily arrested without due process, countless allegations of torture and disappearances, mass trials and a lack of access to families and counsel for detainees.*

*Question.* Do you believe democratic governance and human rights issues should be a priority for U.S.-El Salvador relations, just as such issues are a priority for relations with Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua?

*Question.* Do you commit to publicly expressing concerns over actions that undermine democratic governance and human rights in El Salvador?

*Question.* Do you assess that El Salvador's State of Exception is a sustainable solution to El Salvador's gang violence, and do you believe it should be U.S. policy to support the continuation of the State of Exception?

*Answer.* El Salvador is a key partner of the United States. The Department's public and private engagements will be guided by the U.S.'s interests, shared priorities, and areas of opportunity for deepening cooperation. And if confirmed, I will evaluate the relevant U.S. policies needed to advance security and stability in Central America.

*State Department Management*

*Question.* Do you support maintaining the U.S. Agency for International Development as a separate agency from the U.S. Department of State?

*Answer.* Support for the mission of USAID cannot be separated from the larger issue of faithful stewardship of the hard-earned tax dollars of American taxpayers. Congress entrusts several Departments and agencies with authority to administer funds it appropriates for foreign assistance in a manner consistent with the President's policies and priorities.

*Question.* Will you oppose any potential efforts to consolidate USAID into the Department of State?

*Answer.* The Secretary of State is responsible for coordinating all foreign assistance. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that foreign assistance funds are spent wisely and in a manner that advances the President's policies and priorities.

*Question.* Do you commit to consulting with the Committee at least 45 days in advance of any plans to institute a hiring freeze or make other significant organizational changes?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult, as appropriate, with the relevant congressional committees.

*Question.* Do you agree to appear before the Committee in advance to discuss any plans to change the footprint of the Department of State workforce?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek to keep all relevant congressional committees appropriately informed.

*Consular Affairs*

*With the Passport and Visa Processing Centers located in my home State of New Hampshire, I have closely monitored recent efforts, including through State Authorization, to improve passport services, including the launching of the online passport renewal program and the expansion of passport agencies.*

*Question.* What areas still require improvement, and how will you prioritize enhancing visa services as well as passport services within the Department's broader modernization efforts to improve services for Americans and ensure previous backlogs and delays remain a thing of the past?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with my staff, especially in the Bureau of Consular Affairs to identify ways to effectively modernize, streamline, and enhance visa and passport services to improve services for Americans and minimize unnecessary delays and backlogs.

*Question.* How, if at all, are changes expected to impact the Consular Affairs Bureau's passport and visa workforce including contractors?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my staff, especially in the Bureau of Consular Affairs to identify what, if any, workforce changes will help to effectively modernize, streamline, and enhance visa and passport services and to improve services for Americans while minimizing unnecessary delays and backlogs.

#### *Syria*

*Question.* Following the fall of the Assad regime, what is your assessment of the key challenges to re-opening Embassy Damascus and how long do you think it could take to re-open the Embassy on a permanent basis?

Answer. If confirmed, I will instruct the State Department to conduct a formal assessment to determine whether to reopen Embassy Damascus and to develop options to do so as quickly as is advisable to advance our national security interests.

*Question.* In the absence of a full embassy, what steps will you take to ensure we have a strong and consistent diplomatic presence to engage stakeholders in Syria?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department uses its Syria Regional Platform and other relevant platforms such as Embassy Amman to engage Syrian stakeholders as needed to advance U.S. interests in Syria.

#### *Disinformation*

*As you know, the Global Engagement Center, which led and coordinated U.S. efforts on countering foreign propaganda and disinformation, was not reauthorized by the Continuing Resolution Congress passed in December.*

*Question.* Do you agree that the State Department should have a dedicated effort, including experts, focused on identifying, exposing and countering foreign information manipulation and interference?

Answer. In my testimony before the Committee, I highlighted how I've been subjected to foreign disinformation campaigns. These efforts are not only designed to disrupt our political landscape, tarnish reputations, and create chaos, but they also seek to erode America's credibility worldwide. The U.S. State Department plays a crucial role in countering such propaganda and promoting the merits of America abroad.

*Question.* What is your plan to ensure that these important countering disinformation functions continue?

Answer. In my testimony before the Committee, I discussed how efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation have sometimes led to the censorship of individuals voicing their political views, both domestically and internationally. The most effective strategy against foreign propaganda campaigns that aim to undermine America's global reputation is to proudly highlight our strengths. America has much to boast about, and we should confidently share our narrative.

*Question.* Will you commit to update me on efforts to respond to foreign information manipulation and interference within 60 days of your swearing in as Secretary of State?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to advance a foreign policy that puts America and Americans first; and I will ensure you remain apprised of all relevant information.

#### *Alliance Building*

*Question.* What partnerships that the Biden administration initiated, such as AUKUS or the Quad, will you seek to maintain and build upon?

Answer. In my testimony to the Committee, I described AUKUS as a model for forming consortium-like partnerships with allied nations to tackle specific challenges. Similar to the Quad, this initiative is a response to the increasingly assertive actions of the Chinese Communist Party. These are pragmatic measures we can implement to bolster America's position.

*Question.* What role will our alliances and partnerships play in maintaining U.S. competitiveness, particularly if the Trump administration levies tariffs or other actions in the trade and technology domain?

Answer. For decades, the U.S. has outsourced jobs, technology, and intellectual property to foreign countries. This shortsightedness has devastated vital industries and once-prosperous communities, simultaneously contributing to the ascendancy of the Chinese Communist Party. We intend to collaborate with our allies and partners to foster trade that advantages American citizens, safeguards our essential supply chains, and repatriates jobs to the United States.



*Western Balkans*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining and building upon the U.S. approach to date regarding sanctions for significant human rights violations and corruption in the Western Balkans, as well as Russia's harmful foreign activities in the Western Balkans?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would continue to support human rights and good governance, including in the Western Balkans. Where appropriate, I would support using sanctions and other tools of statecraft to advance U.S. interests and principles.

*Question.* What would be your approach to supporting the Euro-Atlantic accession processes for Albania, Bosnia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would welcome further alignment between the nations listed and the United States. Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro are NATO members and as such, U.S. treaty allies. Many of these nations are also aspirants to EU membership. The United States has been supportive of further European integration while EU accession remains an EU-driven process at the discretion of EU member states.

*Georgia*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that support for Georgian democracy will be at the heart of U.S. policy toward the Republic of Georgia?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will pursue a foreign policy toward Georgia that is in our national interest and supportive of Georgian democracy.

*Question.* Will you commit to supporting additional sanctions against individuals blocking Georgia's Euro Atlantic integration, including those engaging in or supporting the activities of sanctioned oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit that any and all sanctions will be considered to advance the objectives of U.S. foreign policy, including any additional sanctions that might be appropriate in the case of Georgia.

*Belarus*

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to supporting a Special Envoy for Belarus, as required by the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit that any and all sanctions will be considered to advance the objectives of U.S. foreign policy, including any additional sanctions that might be appropriate in the case of Georgia.

*Question.* How will you work to support the release of the more than 1,200 political prisoners in Belarus, especially those like Ihar Losik, Viktor Babaryka, Siarhei Tsikhanouski, Maria Kalesnikava and Mikalai Statkevich?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I affirm that adequate diplomatic efforts will be devoted to securing the release of wrongfully detained individuals, including any and all political prisoners in Belarus.

*Fentanyl Trafficking*

*Question.* How will you work with interagency partners and the Mexican government to address this issue, and what specific additional steps do you believe both our governments must take, including to address fentanyl coming to the Western Hemisphere from the PRC?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I would seek to deepen cooperation with the Government of Mexico and also work with my fellow Cabinet members to ensure that our efforts to identify and punish traffickers are coordinated and effective.

*Women, Peace and Security*

*Question.* What specific actions will you take to ensure the State Department leads the interagency in meaningfully and fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security Act with respect to peace processes and humanitarian responses around the world?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with relevant Bureaus to ensure meaningful implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Act.

*Iran*

*As a co-sponsor of S. Res. 599, I have been very concerned about 2,500 Iranian dissidents located in Ashraf-3 in Albania. The Iranian regime is using coercion and threats against the Albanian government—including what ap-*

*pear to have been cyber-attacks—to influence the treatment of the residents of Ashraf-3.*

*Question.* If confirmed, will you work with the Albanian government to ensure that it fulfills all its obligations as the host to the community at Ashraf-3?

Answer. Yes.

#### *Peace Through Strength*

*President-elect Trump has often spoken about his vision for a ‘peace through strength’ policy when it comes to U.S. foreign policy and national security. In the 2024 Republican Party platform, a return to ‘peace through strength’ included calls to “strengthen alliances” and “strengthen Economic, Military, and Diplomatic capabilities.” If confirmed as Secretary of State, you will be charged with formulating and executing the Administration’s foreign policy goals and leading America’s premier foreign affairs agency.*

*Question.* How do you see the State Department and America’s civilian development and diplomacy tools contributing to a comprehensive approach to advancing ‘peace through strength’?

Answer. The U.S. State Department plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety and security of American citizens. By bolstering diplomatic ties with allies and partners, we unlock opportunities for greater economic and security collaboration. This increased cooperation fortifies our domestic defense commitments. For instance, safeguarding essential supply chains from manipulation by adversaries necessitates a unified approach with our international counterparts.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you work alongside America’s other national security agencies to ensure your Department is empowered and equipped to successfully execute U.S. foreign policy and deliver for the American people?

Answer. Over my 14-year tenure in the Senate, particularly while serving on the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I gained a profound insight into the vital roles our national security agencies play in safeguarding our Nation. The U.S. State Department stands at a unique crossroads of defense and intelligence, being actively present in over 170 countries. Under President Trump’s leadership, the State Department, like all other agencies, will prioritize America’s interests foremost.

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#### RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

*Question.* Do you commit that you and your Department will fully support the work of, and closely cooperate with, the bipartisan Commission on Reform and Modernization of the Department of State (“Commission”)?

Answer. There’s a broad sense that the State Department as an institution, and its key components, the Foreign Service and Civil service, need reform. The last major reforms were legislative reforms reflected in the Foreign Service Act of 1980. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to advance a foreign policy that puts America and Americans first; and I will ensure you remain apprised of all relevant information. As Secretary of State working with the Commission, we can deliver significant reforms over the next 4 years.

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#### RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS

*Question.* The State Department has facilitated the successful evacuation of thousands of Afghans, including many who worked closely with the United States, since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. These evacuation efforts are critical in ensuring that Afghans who have supported U.S. forces and other allies and partners in the country are not harmed for their affiliations with the United States. If confirmed, will you support continuing the State Department’s efforts to evacuate Afghans who have been thoroughly vetted?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review this program to ensure careful and thorough vetting, and take steps to ensure that Afghan partners who supported our forces and diplomatic missions in Afghanistan are not harmed for their affiliations with the United States.

*Question.* You have been a leading voice in Congress for the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China, and an outspoken critic of China's genocide and persecution of these populations. Specifically, you have been outspoken on the case of Gulshan Abbas, the sister of international Uyghur advocate, Rushan Abbas. Gulshan remains in Chinese prison and has been for over 6 years now. Another case of concern is Ekpar Asat, a Uyghur entrepreneur who has been imprisoned for almost 9 years now, and whom I represent through the Tom Lantos Commission's Defending Freedoms Project. If confirmed, will you work to secure the release of both Gulshan and Ekpar, as well as other Uyghurs and ethnic minorities that have been detained?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will maintain the Department's commitment to advocating for the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China. My commitment to advancing the case for the release of Gulshan Abbas and Ekpar Asat remains. I will also commit to ensuring that the appropriate Bureaus keep Congress fully informed about the Department's efforts in these and other cases.

*Question.* We have worked together to address the rise of wrongful detention of American nationals overseas. Senator Risch and I recently passed portions of our Countering Wrongful Detention Act, which contains measures to deter wrongful detention and better support wrongful detainees and their families. If confirmed, will you continue efforts to address this practice, and to return home wrongfully detained Americans overseas, including U.S. citizen Ryan Corbett who remains unjustly held by the Taliban?

*Answer.* This Committee has done significant work to address the rise of wrongful detentions. The safety and security of all Americans is my highest priority. If confirmed, I will commit to implementing the Countering Wrongful Detention Act. I will continue efforts to deter the unjust detention of Americans, support the families, and bring home all our hostages and wrongful detainees held abroad, to include Ryan Corbett.

*Question.* U.S. leadership on malaria through the President's Malaria Initiative and contributions to the Global Fund have contributed to remarkable progress against the disease, while promoting security and economic growth in Africa. Though malaria elimination is within our sights, the disease continues to infect around 245 million individuals and kill approximately 600,000 each year, the majority of them young children. However, with advances in vaccines and other innovations, the Trump administration has the potential to eradicate malaria—or at least come very close. Will you support USAID's efforts and ensure continued U.S. leadership in the global effort to eradicate malaria?

*Answer.* The United States is a global leader in efforts to eradicate malaria. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Administration's global public health team, including its members at USAID, to review and coordinate our humanitarian efforts around the world, including the effort to eradicate malaria.

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RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

*Like you, I understand the importance of promoting America's ideals, values and priorities across the globe. Central to this mission is our commitment to international religious freedom, human rights and democracy.*

*Question.* If confirmed, what is your strategy to holding countries accountable for failing to protect the rights of their citizens, whether it be religious freedom or human rights?

*Answer.* I am grateful that Congress requires the Office of International Religious Freedom and the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to provide annual country reports on religious freedom and other fundamental human rights. I will work closely with them and with the relevant regional Bureaus to raise these issues at every appropriate opportunity.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER MURPHY

*Question.* Numerous countries, including both partners and adversaries, have steadily increased their use of transnational repression to silence critics outside of

their borders through cyber-attacks, physical intimidation, and retaliation against family members. Disturbingly, these campaigns are increasingly occurring within the United States, representing a disturbing attack on our sovereignty. As Secretary, how would [you] confront the threat of transnational repression from foreign governments?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with fellow cabinet members to ensure that the State Department is actively engaged in the Interagency effort to share information about the sources and methods of these threats to our internal security. If confirmed, I will also make clear to both partners and adversaries that the United States will not tolerate such violations of our sovereignty.

*Question.* What additional tools do you believe the Department needs to counter transnational repression and deter adversaries who have embraced new methods for silencing those who oppose them?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with fellow cabinet members to ensure that the Department is working effectively with its counterparts and, if confirmed, will commit to working with them to ensure that Congress is fully briefed concerning utilization of and coordination of existing resources.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR TED CRUZ

*Iranian Drone Attacks Against U.S. Citizens*

*The State Department is required to submit periodic reports identifying Iranian persons who have used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) against Americans (Div. K, P.L. 118–50). On September 4, 2024 the State Department submitted the first report required by that legislation, covering the period from October 2023 to July 2024. The report said “The State Department does not possess evidence that any Iranian persons were directly involved in the act of launching UAVs in these attacks.” The choice to interpret the statute as requesting identification of those “directly involved” appears to have been made to avoid having to identify Iranian persons.*

*The Iranian regime is the primary source of drone attacks in the region. Since October 2023 Iran has facilitated more than 170 proxy militia drone and rocket attacks on U.S. servicemembers in the Middle East, including the Tower 22 drone attack in Jordan by that killed three U.S. Soldiers and injured many others.*

*Question.* Is it your assessment that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is involved in launching UAV attacks against American citizens?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you believe that the IRGC bears responsibility for proxy militia drone and rocket attacks against U.S. citizens?

Answer. Yes.

*Hamas and Human Shields*

*At your hearing, you extensively condemned Hamas, including for its use of human shields. To counter that strategy, in 2018 I authored and secured into law congressionally mandatory sanctions against Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists for using human shields, which were renewed in the 2024 supplemental (P.L. 118–50, Division O, Sec. 4). The Biden administration has not submitted those required reports or imposed the required sanctions.*

*Question.* Do you believe that Hamas uses human shields?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Will you commit to fully enforcing sanctions against Hamas for the use of human shields?

Answer. Yes.

*China’s Ongoing Genocide of Uyghurs*

*At the beginning of the Biden administration, State Department officials refused to acknowledge that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was engaged in a genocide against the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang that was ongoing, in part because the Biden administration already knew it would be reliant on supply lines that run through Xinjiang for their Green Agenda.*

*Question.* Do you believe that the Chinese Communist Party is engaged in a genocide against the Uyghurs and other religious minorities in Xinjiang that is ongoing?

*Answer.* Yes.

#### *China and COVID-19 Cover-Up*

*The oppression and opacity of the CCP significantly contributed to the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. China couldn't have gotten away with the cover-up on its own. Instead, China used the World Health Organization (WHO), where it had systematically seized power, to facilitate the cover-up. President Trump decided in July 2020 to withdraw from the WHO for those reasons, and the Biden administration overturned this decision upon taking office and rejoined. That pattern has been repeated again and again, across dozens of international organizations. As you alluded to at your hearing, China has taken them over, made them unaccountable, and used them to advance Chinese interests against the U.S. and our allies. Additionally, in many cases, the Trump administration withdrew from those organizations and the Biden administration rejoined them.*

*Question.* Do you believe that the CCP was culpable for the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Please give your assessment of the extent to which the Wuhan Institute of Virology was involved in the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Answer.* The Wuhan Institute of Virology is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Question.* Do you assess that the World Health Organization helped China cover up the origins of COVID-19?

*Answer.* The World Health Organization failed to hold China accountable for its role in the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *Iran's Nuclear Arsenal*

*The Trump administration put Iran's nuclear program in a box. President Trump withdrew from the catastrophic Obama-Iran nuclear deal in 2018, imposed maximum pressure in 2019, and invoked the U.N. snapback mechanism to re-impose international sanctions in 2020. For that entire time Iran was deterred from making significant advances on their nuclear program. They did not even enrich uranium above 5 percent or cascade advanced centrifuges.*

*Starting in November 2020, the Iranian regime gambled—unfortunately, correctly—that it could start rushing to a nuclear arsenal, and the incoming Biden administration would let them. In December the regime approved a new law calling for major nuclear advances. In January they started enriching to 20 percent at Fordow, the underground enrichment bunker built into a mountain that the Obama-Iran nuclear deal left open. How did the incoming Biden administration respond? In February—immediately after being inaugurated—they rushed to the U.N. to rescind President Trump's snapback, again allowing international sanctions to expire. For the next 4 years, they continually dismantled pressure on the regime and refused to impose sanctions. The Iranian regime has now achieved a nuclear breakout time of zero.*

*Question.* Do you intend to go the United Nations and again trigger snapback sanctions, either by doing so unilaterally or with the help of our allies?

*Answer.* I believe it is in our national security interest for the U.N. Security Council to snap back the sanctions that were suspended under the JCPOA, by whatever mechanism brings greatest pressure to bear on the Iranian regime's nuclear program. If confirmed, I will execute the President's guidance and work with our allies to ensure the snapback takes place.

#### *Iran's NPT Standing*

*Since 2007, it has nearly always been the position of the United States that Iran is not a member in good standing within the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Even pursuant to the grievous Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran would not have returned to being a member in good standing until the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reached a "Broader Conclusion" (BC) verifying the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. As traditionally understood, Article IV of the NPT entitles member states to the benefits of peaceful civil-nuclear technology to the extent that they are members in good standing with*

*the NPT. In the first Trump administration, Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation Jeffrey L. Eberhardt confirmed to the SFRC in writing that “Iran’s standing as a non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the NPT cannot be described as ‘good.’”*

*Question.* Do you agree with that assessment that Iran is not a member in good standing with NPT?

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you believe that Iran should be entitled to the use of civilian nuclear technology even if they are not a member in good standing of the NPT? If so, why? If not, why not?

*Answer.* No.

*Question.* Do you consider Iran to be entitled to benefit from nuclear technology pursuant to Article IV the NPT? If yes, please explain why. If no, please explain why.

*Answer.* Iran’s obligations under the NPT are of serious concern to the Administration. Its lack of transparency and access by IAEA inspectors requires a rigorous review of the available intelligence to ensure Iran’s civilian nuclear ambitions are not diverted or cover for a covert nuclear program.

#### *Taiwan’s Symbols of Sovereignty*

*In 2015, the State Department issued guidelines that prohibited all symbols of Taiwan’s sovereignty on U.S. soil, including military uniforms displaying the Taiwanese flag or the name “Republic of China.” This policy was a response to an incident where the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) raised the Taiwanese flag at its Twin Oaks facility in Washington, DC. At the request of the Chinese Embassy, the Obama Administration issued a memo to prohibit TECRO employees from entering State Department facilities, prohibit Twin Oaks from raising the flag of Taiwan, and restrict any display of the flag of Taiwan on U.S. Government property.*

*The Trump administration left the Obama-era policy in place for far too long but ultimately ended it in January 2021 when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued guidance lifting “self-imposed” restrictions on the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, including allowing the display of Taiwan’s symbols of sovereignty on U.S. soil. While Secretary Antony Blinken committed to leaving that policy in place “for the time being” during his confirmation process, the State Department reversed it.*

*I fought against that Obama-era policy, and have pushed legislation, reversing that policy—language that has been repeatedly advanced by this Committee. It is the repeated, explicit policy coming out of this Committee to reverse that policy.*

*Question.* Will you commit to reverting to the Trump-era policy of allowing our Taiwanese allies to display their symbols of sovereignty on U.S. soil?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to working with this Committee to strengthen and bolster our unofficial ties with Taiwan.

*Question.* What more can be done to bolster and insulate Taiwan diplomatically?

*Answer.* The United States should work with Taiwan’s diplomatic allies, particularly in the Western hemisphere and the Pacific, to ensure its diplomatic relations remain intact. The United States should also work with these diplomatic allies of Taiwan to be able to mitigate China’s malign influence.

#### *Nord Stream 2*

*Putin would not have invaded Ukraine if he didn’t think he could activate Nord Stream 2 as an alternative to Ukraine’s gas infrastructure. He would not have thought he could activate Nord Stream 2 if the Biden administration had not waived congressionally mandated sanctions on the pipeline, enabling construction to be physically completed. After Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration imposed sanctions. Those sanctions need to be maintained and the pipeline needs to be kept permanently offline. In your testimony, you also spoke about how Putin weaponizes energy.*

*Question.* Will you commit to maintaining existing sanctions on Nord Stream 2?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit that any and all sanctions will be considered to advance the objectives of U.S. foreign policy, including the preservation of existing sanctions and any additional sanctions on Nord Stream 2.

*Question.* Please provide your assessment of the role of Nord Stream 2 in Putin's strategic calculations to invade Ukraine.

*Answer.* Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, European reliance on Russian natural gas offered Putin's regime a source of leverage. Nord Stream 2 was aimed to weaken the economic and strategic position of transit countries in Eastern Europe, notably Ukraine. Following the invasion, we have seen European nations take steps to reduce their economic reliance on Russian energy, diminishing Russia's ability to continue to use energy dependence as a tool of intimidation.

*Question.* Please provide your assessment of any negative consequences to U.S. national security if Nord Stream 2 were to be reactivated.

*Answer.* U.S. LNG exports to Europe are important to both Europe's energy security and to U.S. economic relations with European allies. The reactivation of Nord Stream 2 would have deleterious economic and political ramifications for the United States and our European allies

#### UNRWA

*The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has for decades provided material support for Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, including personnel, facilities, and physical materials that have been used to further their terrorist activity. We know that the Biden administration has funneled hundreds of billions of dollars into the Gaza Strip largely through UNRWA. Hamas diverted much of this funding to build the infrastructure necessary for carrying out the horrific October 7 attacks against Israel. Since the start of the Hamas war more evidence of UNRWA's support for terrorism has emerged. Congress prohibited the Biden administration from funding UNRWA, but administration officials circumvented that prohibition by using UNRWA infrastructure. Now it appears as if the U.N. will play a critical role in rebuilding Gaza, and they may use or even bolster UNRWA. All of that is completely unacceptable.*

*Question.* Will you commit to fully terminating any cooperation that the U.S. has with UNRWA?

*Answer.* During his first term, President-elect Trump rightly ended U.S. funding for UNRWA, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the administration to take similar actions.

*Question.* What will you do to ensure UNRWA plays no part in rebuilding Gaza, and is indeed defunded and terminated?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with our allies and partners in the region to ensure entities that aided Hamas play no role in the rebuilding of Gaza.

#### Egypt/Muslim Brotherhood

*The Biden administration has withheld millions of dollars in assistance for security and counterterrorism from our Egyptian allies, allegedly on human rights concerns. What we don't know is exactly why they are doing it and exactly what the Biden administration is asking for.*

*Under the Obama Administration, the United States repeatedly, inexplicably boosted the Muslim Brotherhood, which openly advocated terrorism against the United States. Those extremists were boosted at the expense of moderate Arab allies, and they consistently misled the public about their goals. In 2022, the Biden administration blocked \$130 million in aid to Egypt.*

*Question.* How do you perceive the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood?

*Answer.* In many countries, extremists associated with the Muslim Brotherhood have sought to impose a radical Islamist order. Too often, these extremists have employed or supported terrorism that constitutes a serious threat to our allies and our security interests. The clearest example is Hamas, which grew out of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

*Question.* Will you commit to ensuring that the State Department under the Trump administration provides ample transparency in its foreign assistance aid to allies and friends—whether it decides to cut it or not?

*Answer.* Yes.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to refer all U.S. citizens' property and financial claims against Honduras to the United States Department of Justice Foreign Claims Settlement Commission for review and adjudication?

*Answer.* I view the protection of U.S. investments as a core function of the diplomacy mission of the Department of State. If confirmed, I will closely monitor these cases.

*Question.* The State Department has trouble responding to large scale evacuations and other crises. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan noted the unitality of establishing a Diplomatic Reserve Corps as recommended by the report Blueprints for a More Modern Diplomacy. The Blinken State Department recommended establishing such a reserve as has the American Academy of Diplomacy. Will you support legislation to establish such a reserve?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and appropriate bureaus within the Department to ensure America's diplomatic corps has the size and skills to advance our national interests.

*Question.* On December 2023, you joined other Members of Congress, including me, in supporting democracy in Guatemala as certain sectors of Guatemalan society, led by the country's Attorney General, attempted to prevent the democratically elected President, Bernardo Arevalo, from taking office. These sectors falsely claim that President Arevalo's election was illegitimate. At the same time, led by Guatemala's Attorney General, these individuals have filed a dozen spurious lawsuits against Arevalo in an attempt to oust him from office. What is your plan to support Guatemala's democratically elected President—one of only a handful of leaders in the region who has maintained a diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, and who has committed to fighting corruption, countering migration and strengthening respect for human rights?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would pursue a balanced approach toward the government of Guatemala, deepening cooperation where appropriate and pursuing reforms where possible and needed.

*Question.* Latin America has one of the highest rates of violence against journalists in the world. I would like to work together on this concerning sign of democratic backsliding in the Western Hemisphere. Press freedom is a fundamental pillar of democratic societies and rule of law. How will you dedicate diplomatic efforts and assistance resources to combatting repression against journalists in the region?

*Answer.* As I noted during my hearing, journalists in our hemisphere are under threat from the same violent criminal organizations that actively harm American citizens. If confirmed, I will evaluate the opportunities and challenges for combating repression against journalists in the region.

*Question.* The genocide and ongoing conflict in Sudan require consistent and high-level attention to resolve the humanitarian crisis and contribute to a durable peace. Partners of the United States, including the UAE and Egypt specifically, have fueled the conflict and contributed to the humanitarian crisis. Will you urge President-elect Trump to prioritize the expeditious appointment of a qualified Special Envoy for Sudan? Do you commit to engaging the UAE and Egypt to cease their actions that are worsening the crisis?

*Answer.* As I stressed in my hearing, this is a real genocide that needs more public attention. In addition, the ongoing Sudan conflict and its associated humanitarian crisis pose a threat to our allies and partners in Africa and the Red Sea region. If confirmed, I will review our diplomatic activities and organization concerning Sudan to ensure U.S. diplomacy is optimally postured to work with all relevant actors to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and bring the conflict to an end. This includes ensuring we have qualified personnel working both to address the urgent humanitarian crisis and to stop the fighting.

*Question.* The State Department plays a critical role in war powers issues, including the implementation of the War Powers Resolution of 1973. What procedures will the Department follow under your leadership to ensure that Congress receives appropriate and timely reports under the War Powers Resolution?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek the views of Members of Congress on use of force issues, as appropriate, and ensure that Congress is kept apprised of U.S. military operations, consistent with Executive Branch precedent.



*Question.* How will the Trump Administration understand the meaning of “introduction of U.S. armed forces into hostilities” for the purposes of the War Powers Resolution of 1973? How will the Trump Administration define “self-defense” for the purposes of Article II of the Constitution?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult with the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Department of Justice in the interpretation of these terms.

*Question.* With respect to the U.S. conflict with the Houthis, will the Trump administration assess that U.S. armed forces have been introduced into hostilities for the purposes of the War Powers Resolution?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Office of the Legal Adviser and regional experts to ensure U.S. positions on this issue are consistent with the law and advance U.S. foreign policy interests.

*Question.* Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to use military force without public, democratic debate?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress to ensure that U.S. military and use of force questions are informed by the views of Congress and the general public.

*Question.* Do you commit to waiting for specific statutory authorization from the Congress before supporting hostilities in Mexico or elsewhere, consistent with the War Powers Resolution and the Constitution’s Declare War Clause?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would assess these issues with the input from the Department’s experts in the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

*Question.* Do you recognize that there are legal constraints on a President’s authority to use military force? What are those limits? Do you agree that congressional authorization is required as a constitutional or statutory matter prior to the use of military force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult closely with the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Department of Justice to ensure that U.S. military force is employed in a manner that is consistent with the law.

*Question.* Under what circumstances and in what manner will you engage with Congress prior to supporting the use of military force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek the views of Members of Congress on use of force issues, as appropriate, and ensure that Congress is kept apprised of U.S. military operations, consistent with Executive Branch precedent.

*Question.* Does international law play a role in determining when the United States can go to war, and if so what is it?

*Answer.* The Office of the Legal Adviser and other interagency lawyers from the Department of Defense and Department of Justice play a central role in advising on the international legal implications of the employment of U.S. military force. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with these legal experts on the international legal issues associated with the use of force.

*Question.* Do you commit to consulting with Congress prior to pursuing, or recommending that the Trump Administration pursue strikes or hostilities against another nation?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek the views of Members of Congress on use of force issues, as appropriate, and ensure that Congress is kept apprised of U.S. military operations, consistent with Executive Branch precedent.

*Question.* Do you commit to coming to Congress for authorization before relying on any interpretation of an existing authorization for use of military force (AUMF) that would apply it to a nation not explicitly named in that authorization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek the views of Members of Congress on use of force issues, as appropriate, and ensure that Congress is kept apprised of U.S. military operations, consistent with Executive Branch precedent.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with Congress to repeal and reform outdated AUMFs in order to end US forever wars?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing, together with legal experts from the Office of the Legal Adviser, existing statutory authorizations for the use of force.

*Question.* Do you believe airstrikes, offensive action, or other kinetic action against Mexico—essentially, starting a war on our southern border—are serious and realistic options? Under what legal authority would this use of military force be conducted? What manner of consultation would you conduct with the Government of Mexico? How do you assess this type of severely destabilizing military action in Mexican territory impact migration?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would assess these issues with the input from the Department's experts in the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in addition to other Department and interagency stakeholders.

*Question.* Following the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, how will the Trump administration work to prevent the outbreak of a broader conflict in the Middle East?

*Answer.* As President Trump has said, the best way to prevent further war in the Middle East, or any other region, is to implement a policy of peace through strength that makes clear to any would-be adversaries that they will pay a high price for attacking us.

*Question.* Do you agree that it is not in the U.S. interest to engage in another war in the Middle East? Do you agree that it is not in the U.S. interest to engage in military actions that further destabilize an already volatile region?

*Answer.* As I have noted, the United States does not seek further war in the Middle East or any other region. Indeed, President Trump has done more than any other world leader to advance the cause of peace in that region. But the best way to avoid further war is to ensure our adversaries know the Trump Administration will do what is necessary to defend Americans and American interests from attack.

*Question.* Do you agree that American participation in another war in the Middle East cannot happen in the absence of an authorization for use of military force by Congress, following an open debate during which the American public can be informed of the benefits, risks and consequences of such conflict?

*Answer.* As I have noted, if confirmed, I will seek the views of Members of Congress on use of force issues, as appropriate, and ensure that Congress is kept apprised of U.S. military operations, consistent with Executive Branch precedent.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR MIKE LEE

*Question.* As a general rule, in cases where a treaty does not prescribe withdrawal mechanisms, does the President have the flexibility to withdraw us from treaties unilaterally? In other words, what is the role of the Senate in treaty withdrawal?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing with experts in the Office of the Legal Adviser the full set of legal implications, including separation of powers issues involving Congress, in connection with the potential withdrawal by the United States from any existing treaty obligations.

*Question.* In the case of NATO, the threat of the U.S. no longer being in the alliance is what may compel upward movement in allied defense spending. Can the President credibly level a threat to withdraw from the alliance?

*Answer.* Presidents from both political parties have argued that the U.S. has shouldered the burden of Europe's defense for too long. As I stated in my testimony before the Committee, the United States does not possess infinite resources. Like any other country, we must judiciously allocate our finite resources in ways that serve the best interests of Americans. And in turn, so must our European allies.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

*Question.* Pro-democracy activists have been imprisoned and sentenced in Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong government—which operates these Economic and Trade Offices in the U.S. (HKETOs)—has taken brazen steps of placing bounties on the heads of activists in the United States, including a U.S. citizen. Hong Kong is not a foreign government and, especially in light of these threats, should not have diplomatic personnel and privileges separate from the PRC. As Secretary of State, how

will you hold key Chinese and Hong Kong accountable officials for their repression in Hong Kong?

*Answer.* Hong Kong remains an area of concern because of the ongoing repression. If confirmed, I commit to look for ways to hold the requisite Chinese and Hong Kong officials accountable for their repression in Hong Kong.

*Question.* The PRC's attempts to silence Uyghur dissidents overseas continues. This includes the case of Dr. Gulshan Abbas, who has been unjustly detained by the Chinese government in Xinjiang since 2018 due to her American citizen sister's (Rushan Abbas) advocacy for Uyghur human rights here in the United States. If confirmed, what steps will you take to secure the release of Dr. Abbas—an unjustly detained family member of American citizens—and others like her, and what will you do to hold China accountable for such transnational repression tactics aimed at intimidating and silencing American citizens?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will press Beijing about its transnational repression tactics and push back against its method of intimidating and silencing American citizens about the subject of Uyghur human rights.

*Question.* New START, the last bilateral arms control agreement between the U.S. and Russia, is set to expire in 2026. Given Vladimir Putin's increasingly inflammatory nuclear rhetoric—including Russia's suspension of New START implementation—Chinese nuclear expansion, and our own efforts at nuclear modernization, how do you plan to engage partners as well as adversaries on nuclear arms control and prevent the outbreak of another nuclear arms race?

*Answer.* Given Russia's non-compliance with the New Start Treaty and the Chinese nuclear breakout, any new arms control treaty must address the new tri-polar nuclear world. If confirmed, I will only pursue arms control agreements that enhance security and are both verifiable and enforceable.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

*Question.* Elizabeth Tsurkov Case: If confirmed, you will enter office with a major power vacuum in the Middle East. President Biden affirmed a plan to remove US forces from Iraq this year, but Syria has fallen in the meanwhile. A Jewish Princeton doctoral candidate—Elizabeth Tsurkov—has been held by the Iranian-backed terrorist group Kataib Hezbollah for almost 2 years. This group, and several others that have targeted American military personnel and civilians, receive financial support from the Iraqi government. What would you do to free Elizabeth Tsurkov while maintaining regional stability?

*Answer.* The safety and security of all American citizens, to include our men and women in uniform, is my highest priority. My heart goes out to the Turskov family. Since Ms. Turskov is not an American citizen, the U.S. government's ability to assist in returning Elizabeth to her loved ones is limited. If confirmed, the Department will continue to engage the Iraqi authorities, as appropriate, to support their efforts to locate and return Elizabeth Turskov.

*Question.* Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu Case: As you know, Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu, a well-known academic and anti-corruption expert who has taught and conducted research at several U.S. universities, was detained by the Azerbaijan government in July 2023. The charges against him have been resoundingly condemned by numerous international institutions and human rights organizations as fabricated and politically motivated. During his detention, his health has deteriorated and he has not received adequate medical treatment. If confirmed, do you commit to raising his case with the government of Azerbaijan?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to seeking input from several bureaus and offices that oversee regional and human rights issues and will work closely with them to determine how and under what circumstances we should raise our concerns about Dr. Ibadoghlu's case.

*Question.* Dr. Gubad Ibadoghlu Case: Do you commit to urging the Azerbaijani authorities to consider the possibility of resettling Dr. Ibadoghlu to another country on humanitarian grounds so that he may reunite with his family and receive proper medical treatment?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I commit to seeking input from several bureaus and offices that oversee regional and human rights issues and will work closely with them to

determine how and under what circumstances we should raise our concerns about Dr. Idaboglu's case.

*Question.* Paid Internship Program: I'm proud to have been part of a bipartisan effort to create a Paid Internship Program at the State Department. This program has enabled the State Department to recruit civil service employees and Foreign Service Officers from a wider variety of backgrounds, expanding the pool of talent from which the Department recruits. The Foreign Service now attracts young people who could not participate when interns were unpaid, or when funding did not include housing or travel assistance to Washington, DC, and abroad. It's critical that an American's economic situation does not disqualify them from serving their country. If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the continuation and expansion of this paid internship program?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to supporting opportunities to ensure the most talented American interns can contribute to making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Question.* Paid Internship Program: Will the paid internships include stipends for housing and travel assistance, both domestically and abroad, for interns whose permanent address is not located near the location of the internship?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to supporting opportunities to ensure the most talented American interns can contribute to making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Question.* International Exchange Programs: At a time when China is significantly outpacing the U.S.'s investment in public diplomacy, building strong ties and mutual understanding between the United States and underrepresented communities across the world is more important than ever. Department of State international exchange programs provide unique engagement opportunities with emerging leaders from the United States and citizens of other countries that many Americans aren't regularly exposed to. These programs pay invaluable dividends for U.S. interests abroad. For example, the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) provides emerging African leaders opportunities to visit the United States and study business, civic engagement, or public management. After completing their 6-week professional experience at U.S. institutions, 98 percent of 2024 Mandela Washington Fellows reported an increased understanding of U.S. culture and values. International exchange programs are a key tool in America's foreign policy toolbox because participants return to their home communities with a deeper understanding of our values. As Secretary of State, do you commit to robustly supporting the State Department's invaluable international exchange programs?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to supporting exchange programs used by the Department to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

*Question.* International Exchange Programs: How do you plan to take advantage of strategic relationships built through exchange programs to deepen the United States' diplomatic ties with African countries?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that any strategic relationships built through exchange programs are effectively used by the Department to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ

*The Compacts of Free Association (COFA) govern the relationships between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau, collectively known as the Freely Associated States (FAS). In 2023, after several years of negotiations, the United States signed agreements with the FAS to extend the economic provisions of the Compacts. The U.S. Congress overwhelmingly passed the bipartisan Compact of Association Amendments Act in March 2024, which approved these important new agreements. Our alliance with these nations in this strategic part of the Pacific is vital to U.S. national interests.*

*Question.* Do you commit to working with the FAS countries and across the U.S. interagency on implementation and finding opportunities to continue to strengthen U.S. partnership with our trusted allies?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to working with the FAS countries and across the U.S. interagency to strengthen U.S. partnership with the COFA States.

*World War II-era unexploded ordinance (UXO) continues to be a challenge in the South Pacific, especially in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and the Republic of Kiribati. Removing these remnants of war not only helps improve the safety and economic opportunity for Pacific Islanders, but also provides an opportunity for the United States to further strengthen ties that serve our foreign policy and national security interests in the region. The State Department recently increased funding for UXO removal in the Pacific Islands, but the scale of the problem is immense and many of these programs are in their infancy.*

Question. Do you support efforts to increase UXO removal efforts in the Pacific?

Answer. Removal of World War II-era unexploded ordinances remains an important challenge in the South Pacific and an important part of the partnership between the United States and a number of countries in the South Pacific.

*The United States is the largest funder of humanitarian aid in the world.*

Question. Do you believe that U.S. humanitarian aid supports U.S. diplomatic interests?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony before the Committee, we will evaluate every activity to determine whether it makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

Question. Should the United States remain a leader in providing humanitarian aid to people suffering from both natural disasters and the impacts of war around the world?

Answer. As I noted in my testimony before the Committee, we will evaluate every activity to determine whether it makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous. I should also note that people of the United States are also suffering from natural disasters and the impact of transnational crime and malign actors within the United States. If confirmed I will work with the President and other Cabinet members to make a careful review of our priorities, both at home and abroad.

*Humanitarian access is essential for delivering lifesaving aid, yet it is increasingly restricted by conflict parties and their backers in places like Sudan, Syria, and Yemen where state and non-state actors impose bureaucratic and administrative impediments on the NGO community to block, limit, or otherwise control humanitarian assistance, contrary to various domestic and international laws, policies and practices. U.S. diplomatic leadership can reduce these barriers, as seen in prior negotiations that re-opened cross border access points into Syria and unlocked visas for humanitarian workers to get to Sudan. Without such humanitarian diplomatic support, humanitarian organizations—including those funded by the U.S. Government, will likely be unable to reach millions of people in need.*

Question. How do you plan to use diplomatic and political channels to ensure humanitarian organizations have safe, unfettered access to conflict affected populations based off an independent evaluation of their needs, even in areas controlled by adversarial governments or non-state actors?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use all the authorities of my office to advocate for this outcome.

*Humanitarian principles—neutrality, independence, and impartiality underpinned by a ‘do no harm’ approach—seeks to ensure that aid is not used as a political tool, and that vulnerable populations in conflict zones can trust and access the humanitarian assistance they require to survive. Breaches of these principles increase risks for aid workers and program participants, hinder the timeliness and efficacy of a humanitarian response and can—as seen in Sudan—exacerbate famine conditions. The United States has a history of championing humanitarian principles and sustained diplomatic engagement is crucial to maintaining their application in the most dangerous and complex humanitarian operational environments in the world.*

Question. How will you ensure that U.S. foreign policies, including sanctions, do not inadvertently politicize or obstruct lifesaving aid, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will oversee a review of U.S. sanctions policy and administration to ensure that it is achieving its intended goals and that administrators un-

derstand that inadvertent harm not only does not result, but also that it be remedied in situations in which such harms are found to occur.

*Risks to aid workers in conflict zones are escalating.*

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure that the United States leads in advocating for their safety and holding perpetrators of such violence accountable for their actions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult with experts in the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, among other bureaus, to identify more effective ways to bring accountability to perpetrators of such violence.

*After more than 20 months of unrelenting conflict and grave violations of international humanitarian law, Sudan's catastrophic hunger is deepening, violence is continuing unabated, humanitarian access remains constrained by the warring parties, the spillover effects on regional countries dealing with their own internal humanitarian crises are growing, and external actors are fueling the war with limited and delayed attempts at accountability. As international diplomacy continues to fail and the conflict fragments further, there is no end in sight for the humanitarian catastrophe; 30 million people will need humanitarian assistance in Sudan in 2025—five million more than in 2024 and the largest figure in recorded history.*

*Question.* As Secretary of State, what level of priority will your department assign to ending the war in Sudan?

*Answer.* The ongoing Sudan conflict and its associated humanitarian crisis pose a threat to our allies and partners in Africa and the Red Sea region. If confirmed, stopping the genocide and the conflict as a whole as well as alleviating the looming humanitarian crisis in Sudan will be an important priority.

*Question.* Can you commit to work with the Senate to nominate and confirm a new Special Envoy for Sudan in the first 60 days of the Administration?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review our diplomatic activities and organization concerning Sudan to ensure U.S. diplomacy is optimally postured to work with all relevant actors to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and bring the conflict to an end, this includes ensuring we have qualified personnel working and leading efforts on Sudan.

*Question.* Can you commit to retain a U.S. leadership role in the Aligned for Advancing Lifesaving Peace in Sudan (ALPS) Group?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the U.S. has a leadership role in all constructive efforts to end the violence, address the humanitarian challenges, and restore stability.

*Question.* In the absence of a national level ceasefire, which is increasingly unlikely in the short- or medium-term, what strategies will the United States employ to improve the humanitarian response and protect civilians, in consultation with civil society and local Sudanese responders?

*Answer.* As I have noted, if confirmed, I will review our diplomatic activities and organization concerning Sudan to ensure U.S. diplomacy is optimally postured to work with our allies to bring the conflict to an end, including by assessing prospects for a national ceasefire. I commit to working with experts throughout the interagency to quickly get humanitarian aid to Sudan to protect civilians and save lives, engaging responsible stakeholders in Sudan and the region as appropriate.

*Ministers in the Israeli Knesset, such as National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, have repeatedly stated their desire for Israel to annex territory in the West Bank. This directly contradicts decades of bipartisan U.S. policy supporting a two-state solution.*

*Question.* Do you oppose Israeli annexation of West Bank territory?

*Question.* How would you address such actions if pursued?

*Answer.* The starting point for promoting peace between Israelis and Palestinians should be denying terrorist organizations and terrorist regimes, especially the Iranian regime and its militant proxies, the ability to reach into Israel or the Palestinian territories to destabilize those communities and act as a spoiler to peace. I do not support imposing sanctions on our allies while they are under existential threat from terrorist adversaries.

*Over the past decade, the PRC has sought more leadership roles and policy influence in U.N. bodies. Recently, Chinese diplomats have held leader-*

*ship roles in the Food and Agriculture Organization, Interpol, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the U.N. Industrial Development Organization, and the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The PRC engages heavily in the agency's work, is a significant donor, and Chinese experts have held leadership roles in the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) as China seeks to obtain support for China's internet protocols, 5G technology, and other digital standards.*

**Question.** How can the United States roll back the PRC's increasingly dominant role in U.N. international rulemaking bodies, especially those that govern technology policy, law enforcement, and human rights?

**Answer.** As I mentioned during my testimony before the Committee, the PRC has weaponized U.S. built institutions against our national interest. While the State Department will play a leading role in pushing back on PRC's increasingly dominant role in U.N. international rulemaking bodies, we must also seek out new alliances and arrangements to protect our national interest.

*For decades, the United States has exerted economic and military pressure on Iran in response to its hostile policies. Despite the immense pressure of the first Trump Administration and continued pressure under the Biden Administration, Iran continued to develop its nuclear program. Over the past year, as dangerous escalation occurred between Israel and Iran, senior Iranian officials stated that such escalation could lead to it acquiring a nuclear weapon, which would be unacceptable. At the same time, Iran has shown a willingness to come to the table to discuss a new agreement with the United States, and Persian Gulf Arab states similarly want to see U.S. policy toward Iran change to promote regional stability. The People's Republic of China has already shown its interest in facilitating Saudi-Iran rapprochement and could continue additional diplomatic overtures.*

**Question.** How will you seize on the current momentum to avoid further conflict and escalation with Iran?

**Question.** How will you advise President Trump if the Iranian regime continues to signal interest in finding a deal to end its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief?

**Answer.** As a result of Israel's defensive actions against Iranian-led attack, the Iranian regime is militarily weaker and more vulnerable than at any point in several decades. Tehran's weakness has opened an unprecedented window of opportunity to compel the regime to cease permanently its destabilizing behavior, sponsorship of terrorism, and nuclear program. That said, we must remain clear-eyed that any concessions made to the Iranian regime could enable Tehran to rebuild their military capabilities and restart their sponsorship of Hezbollah and other related entities.

*Various forms of sanctions on Iran have remained in place since the founding of the Islamic Republic. The United States and its partners have sought to cut Iran off from critical military technology, oil sale proceeds, and other goods and funds that could benefit Iran's regime. However, in many cases, Iran and its allies have found ways to deflect the damage of those sanctions away from the elites. The result of these sanctions have not seen Iran change its behavior, but continue to fund its destabilizing extraterritorial activities and enrich an elite tied to the survival of the regime. Sanctions have however had a devastating effect on the general population of Iran, cutting them off from vital technologies that could enrich civil society orgs, skyrocketing the cost of food and medicine, and plunging the average Iranian's wages significantly.*

**Question.** How can U.S. sanctions be better targeted to change the regime's threatening and problematic behavior?

**Answer.** The first step in making U.S. sanctions more effective in changing the Iranian regime's behavior will be to enforce them fully.

**Question.** What is your assessment of how sanctions have negatively affected average Iranians?

**Answer.** U.S. sanctions on the Iranian regime and its terrorist proxies are intended to deny the regime the means with which to threaten international security and attack the United States and our allies. The Iranian people are not the intended target of these sanctions.

**Question.** Would you support internal U.S. Government studies to provide to members of this committee the data available to the Department of State, in con-

junction with data available to the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), on the impacts of these sanctions on limiting the growth of illicit markets run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and impacts on the standard of living on the people of Iran?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the State Department, in cooperation with the Treasury Department, keeps Congress fully apprised of the status and results of our sanctions program concerning the Iranian regime.

*Authoritarian governments use internet shutdowns, misinformation campaigns, and censorship to choke off access to vital information and technologies, sway elections, and undermine voters' ability to make informed decisions. According to Freedom House, global internet freedom declined for the 14th consecutive year.*

*Question.* Given assessments of the declining state of digital freedom, what organizational and policy changes does the State Department need to address the rising challenge of digital freedom restrictions around the world?

Answer. In its early stages, the internet was envisioned as a boundless forum, crossing geographical divides, offering hope to dissidents and amplifying the voices of the marginalized. However, with technological progress, governments worldwide have gained the ability to curtail this freedom of expression. Regrettably, this trend has been observed in the United States as well. To maintain credibility in advocating for these rights internationally, we must first safeguard freedom of speech and expression domestically.

*Question.* What additional efforts would increase the effectiveness of State Department advocacy for the freedom of people around the world to access information as part of U.S. foreign policy?

Answer. The U.S. State Department possesses significant potential to advocate for the values of freedom of expression globally. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, for the U.S. to maintain credibility on this front internationally, it must fervently uphold and champion freedom of speech and expression domestically.

*Question.* In which ways should the State Department better coordinate with the other U.S. Government departments and agencies that are active in addressing digital freedom globally, including USAID and USAGM, to make the U.S. Government more efficient and effective?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to championing digital freedom at home and abroad, and commit to working toward great efficiencies within the Department's activities, including the alignment of purpose between USAID and USAGM.

*The Department of Defense now estimates that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030. At the same time, it is resisting U.S. calls for transparency and nuclear risk reduction.*

*Question.* How should the United States lower risk with China, given this rapid and opaque nuclear weapons buildup?

Answer. China is required under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith. If confirmed, I will work to pursue vigorous compliance with this provision of the NPT.

*Question.* What additional risks does this nuclear buildup present for Taiwan, especially given the potential for miscalculation and escalation?

Answer. The Chinese nuclear breakout includes significant investments in dual capable theatre ranged weapons that raise the risk of nuclear coercion against Taiwan in the event of a conflict.

*Question.* What steps should the State Department take to reduce the likelihood the PRC will seek to use nuclear coercion, or even nuclear use, against Taiwan?

Answer. The U.S. State Department must work along with its partners and allies to restore deterrence in the region. It must also provide assurance to its partners and allies of U.S. extended deterrence commitments.

*Opportunities might exist to expand the number of countries that officially recognize the state of Israel as part of the Abraham Accords.*

*Question.* How might the potential normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia affect U.S. interests, Israel's security, the potential for a Palestinian state, and broader Middle East stability?

*Question.* How will normalization of Saudi-Israeli relations rank in the priority of issues for you at the State Department?



Answer. Achieving normalization of relations between Israel and its regional neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, was a major strategic objective of the first Trump administration and will continue to be a major priority in the second Trump administration. Achieving normal relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in particular would set the conditions for regional peace and prosperity, which in turn would reduce the threat of terrorism to the U.S. homeland and to our and our allies' interests worldwide.

*Question.* How would the U.S. seek to balance a pathway to Palestinian statehood as part of any normalization process?

Answer. As I have noted, the most important immediate-term contribution the United States can make to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians is to deny terrorist organizations and terrorist regimes, especially the Iranian regime and its militant proxies, the ability to reach into Israel or the Palestinian territories to destabilize those communities and act as a spoiler to peace. Beyond these immediate steps, the United States has an interest in supporting any initiative that can help Israelis and Palestinians reach an agreement on the terms under which they will live side by side in peace.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

*Annexation of the West Bank*

*Shortly after President-Elect Trump's victory in November 2024, Israel's Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who is also in charge of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, said that he ordered his department to prepare for the annexation of settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, including to "prepare the necessary infrastructure for applying sovereignty." He added in his comments to the Israeli Knesset that the "only way to remove" the "threat" of a Palestinian state was to "apply Israeli sovereignty over the entire settlements in Judea and Samaria." Since October 7th, over 9 square miles of the West Bank have been declared as "state land," amounting to the largest land grab since the Oslo Agreement to date. In addition, at least 43 new illegal Israeli outposts have been established throughout the West Bank on Palestinian land.*

*In your confirmation hearing on January 15th, I asked you if you agree that "annexation [of the West Bank] would be contrary to security in the Middle East?" Your response did not answer the question directly.*

*Question.* Do you agree that Israeli annexation of some or all of the West Bank, as called for by some members of the Netanyahu government, would undermine President-elect Trump's goal of achieving peace and security in the Middle East?

Answer. The most significant factor that undermines our goal of achieving peace and security in the Middle East is the Iranian regime's longstanding policy of seeking to destabilize Israel and the Palestinian territories and to employ terrorist organizations as spoilers to peace. The most important and urgent contribution the United States can make to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians is to deny the Iranian regime the means and ability to continue this policy.

*Question.* Do you agree that the unilateral expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank undermines the prospect for the two-state solution?

Answer. As I have noted, I believe the most important and urgent contribution the United States can make to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians is to deny terrorist organizations and terrorist regimes, especially the Iranian regime and its militant proxies, the ability to reach into Israel or the Palestinian territories to destabilize those communities and act as a spoiler to peace.

*American Citizens Killed in the West Bank*

*I have made it a point to ensure that American citizens traveling or living overseas are treated fairly and justly regardless of national origin. That means that the United States must seek the release of American citizens who have been wrongfully detained and American citizens who have been wrongfully killed. There are a number of very troubling cases where American citizens have been wrongfully killed on the West Bank by either members of the IDF or extremist settlers, where the United States has yet to see any accountability. In May 2022, Palestinian-American journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, was killed while reporting on an IDF raid in the Jenin refugee camp. Since*

*October 7, 2023 three other American citizens have been killed in the West Bank, including two Palestinian American teenagers and a Turkish American woman. As Secretary of State, you will be responsible for the safety and security of all Americans abroad, including dual-nationals residing in, visiting, or working in the West Bank and Gaza.*

*Question.* Do you commit to holding accountable those who have killed or mistreated American citizens in the West Bank and Gaza?

*Answer.* The first task of the State Department and all other U.S. Government agencies is to keep the American people safe. If confirmed, I commit to taking all steps possible to hold accountable anyone who targets Americans, anywhere in the world, beginning in the immediate term with holding terrorists such as Hamas and its Iranian regime sponsors accountable for ongoing kidnapping, torture, and murder of Americans.

*Question.* Do you commit to supporting an independent and credible investigation into the killings of Shireen Abu Akleh and the killings of Ayşenur Eygi, Tawfic Jabbar, and Mohammad Alkhodour?

*Answer.* Americans are rightly devastated by every loss of our fellow Americans in the ongoing conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The vast majority of these tragic deaths, such as the deaths of dozens of Americans on October 7, 2023, are the consequence of the brutal Iranian regime-sponsored terrorist campaign against Israel. In each such case, the Trump Administration will urge and support a transparent investigation to establish culpability and accountability for the loss of American lives.

*Question.* Do you commit to treating cases involving Palestinian-Americans as you would cases involving any other American citizen and dual national?

*Answer.* The Trump Administration will always seek justice and accountability for harm that wrongfully befalls any American citizen, worldwide, regardless of that citizen's background or identity.

#### *Iran Diplomacy*

*As Secretary of State, Iran is likely to be one of the top national security challenges facing you and the incoming Trump administration. Most recently, Iran has moved to greatly accelerate its enrichment of uranium at the 60 percent threshold at the Fordow facility, which is buried deeply underground. While President Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, the president-elect has, at times, suggested he is willing to pursue new negotiations with Iran. On the campaign trail in September 2024, he stated on Iran that "We have to make a deal, because the consequences are impossible. We have to make a deal." Iran has made efforts over the years to undermine regional stability and has supported various militias and proxies in the region, but its nuclear program is of paramount concern.*

*During your nomination hearing, you said in relation to engaging Iran that "my view is that we need to be open to any arrangement that allows us to have safety and stability in the region but one which we are clear eyed."*

*Question.* Do you agree with President-elect Trump's view that the United States should engage with Iran on these matters?

*Answer.* As I noted in the confirmation hearing, my view is that the United States should be open to any arrangement that will lead to safety and stability for America's interests in the Middle East, but one in which we remain clear-eyed about the threat the Iranian regime poses. We should anticipate that any concessions made to the Iranian regime could enable Tehran to rebuild their military capabilities and restart their sponsorship of Hezbollah and other related entities.

#### *Holding Commercial Spyware Companies Accountable*

*Commercial Spyware technologies allow governments to gain access to an individual's digital devices, often without any action on the user's part. While intended for law enforcement purposes, high profile cases, unveiled by journalists and groups like the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab, Amnesty International, and Access Now, have documented the targeting of Russian- and Belarusian-speaking civil society and media figures residing in exile in Europe, civil society figures in Jordan, journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico and El Salvador, and pro-democracy activists in Thailand, just to name a few. US government officials are not safe from cyber-attacks. In recent years, US diplomats' devices were hacked with commercial spyware and US elected officials' digital communications were surveilled using simi-*

*lar technology. Spyware poses a grave threat to US national security, and must be addressed head-on.*

*Question.* Do you commit to using the tools at your disposal to hold commercial spyware companies accountable?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the tools at my disposal across the Department that could be used to hold commercial spyware companies accountable for committing illicit actions that threaten US government officials and diplomats and undermine American national security. Protecting US diplomats and other US government officials from commercial spyware is an important issue for the Department.

*Question.* Specifically, as Secretary of State, do you plan to use your authorities, such as visa sanctions against individuals who have abused or facilitated the abuse of commercial spyware technology, to crack down on this out of control industry?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the authorities, such as visa sanctions, that could be used against individuals who have abused or facilitated the abuse of commercial spyware technology in a way that undermines American national security. Protecting US diplomats and other US government officials from commercial spyware is an important issue for the Department.

#### *Protecting the Dissent Cable*

*You have been nominated to lead a large organization of 77,000 dedicated public servants. Any good leader must be open to a variety of perspectives, including dissenting perspectives. The State Department's dissent channel is a vital mechanism for the non-partisan experts in the Department to send a direct message to the Secretary of State expressing constructive dissent over U.S. foreign policy. I know you share my appreciation for the importance of this channel, because in February 2022 you introduced a bill to require the Department of State to release a public, unclassified version of the July 13, 2021, internal dissent channel cable that reportedly warned of the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban's ability to capture Kabul.*

*Question.* Senator Rubio, if confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that the dissent cable remains intact?

*Question.* Do you commit to protecting the drafters of dissent cables from any form of retaliation or harassment for expressing their views?

*Answer.* As I mentioned in my confirmation hearing, efforts to censor or otherwise punish competing points of view—as we've seen in this country and others across the globe—are wrong. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring constructive dissent is not only tolerated, but welcomed within the Department.

#### *Independence of IG*

*Inspectors General in the U.S. Government are essential for promoting accountability and transparency by independently auditing and investigating Federal agencies to detect and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and misconduct. They provide objective oversight and issue reports with recommendations to improve agency efficiency and compliance with laws and regulations. By holding agencies accountable, IGs help maintain public trust in government operations and safeguard taxpayer resources. In May 2020, President Donald Trump dismissed State Department Inspector General Steve Linick upon Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's recommendation, citing a loss of confidence. At the time of his removal, Linick was reportedly investigating Pompeo for potential misuse of government resources and the administration's decision to bypass Congress on arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The firing of Inspector General Linick was a dangerous attack on the institutional guardrails of Department as an institution.*

*Question.* Senator Rubio, if confirmed, will you commit to protecting the independence and integrity of the State Department's Office of the Inspector General, including by firmly opposing retaliation against the IG and its career staff members?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will closely review the work of the Office of the Inspector General and ensure it is appropriately resourced to address issues of fraud, waste, and abuse.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with the members of this committee on implementing the recommendations of the IG when it identifies instances of fraud, waste, misconduct, and abuse within the State Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Members of the Committee to ensure that IG recommendations are implemented appropriately.

*Career Workforce*

*The State Department's career workforce comprises over 77,000 non-partisan experts in the conduct of American foreign policy. Their faithful service to both Democratic and Republican administrations makes them a vital source of institutional knowledge to any incoming Secretary of State. In light of comments made by incoming Trump Administration officials and actions taken by the previous Trump Administration, it is vital to understand how you would protect the independence of the Department's rank and file and the Department's longstanding merit-based hiring practices.*

*Question.* Do you support, in principle, reclassifying certain career competitive service positions at the State Department to the excepted service under the incoming Administration's proposed reinstated Schedule F hiring authority?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* How would you decide which positions would be reclassified?

*Question.* How would you decide how many positions would be reclassified?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the White House and all relevant Bureaus at the Department to make those determinations.

*Question.* Do you intend to nominate any career employees to serve at the Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary level, including for positions traditionally held by career officials, such as the Under Secretary for Political Affairs?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the White House to nominate the most well-qualified individuals possible for these critical positions.

*Question.* At a time when a number of positions at the Department are already vacant, especially at our Missions overseas, what is your assessment of how a blanket hiring freeze at the State Department would impact operations?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing current Department staffing to ensure we are using American taxpayer dollars wisely.

*Office of Palestinian Affairs*

*Just as it is in the national interest of the United States to maintain a strong bilateral relationship with Israel, it is also in our interest to maintain a strong bilateral relationship with the Palestinians. A balanced and constructive engagement with both parties enhances the U.S.'s ability to serve as an effective mediator in the pursuit of a lasting peace in the region. Strengthening ties with the Palestinians can support efforts to promote stability, economic development, and democratic governance, which are essential for countering violent extremism, reducing tensions, and fostering mutual understanding.*

*Question.* Will you retain the position of Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs within the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the diplomatic activities, organization, and resourcing of the Near East bureau and other bureaus and offices, as appropriate, to ensure the State Department is optimally postured to conduct its essential missions related to the Palestinian territories.

*Question.* Do you support the continued existence of the Office of Palestinian Affairs, managed by a Senior Foreign Service Officer at Embassy Jerusalem with the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission and that reports directly to the Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the diplomatic activities, organization, and resourcing of the Near East bureau and other bureaus and offices, as appropriate, to ensure the State Department is optimally postured to conduct its essential missions related to the Palestinian territories.

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RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

*Question.* Visa processing delays continue to persist at our Embassies and Consulates around the world. Some posts have had innovative, internally driven ways to tackle the backlog, but those innovations have not been institutionalized or rolled

out as part of a broader strategy. As Secretary of State, what measures will you instruct the Department of State to undertake to reduce visitor visa wait times and address system delays worldwide?

Answer. I understand the frustration that long visa processing times cause for both American citizens and foreign nationals. If confirmed, my staff and I will have the opportunity to identify innovative processes currently implemented at individual posts that not only increase efficiency but also ensure the safety and security of Americans.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO SENATOR MARCO RUBIO BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

VISA PROCESSING

*Nevada's economy relies on business travelers who come to our State from across the country and around the world for conventions, trade shows, and conferences. This year, the business and professional events industry will employ 285,199 Nevadans and generate more than \$43 billion in direct spending statewide. We are also home to world class sports and entertainment events that draw visitors from around the world—from F1 races to UFC fights to the Super Bowl. Event organizers in Nevada and nationwide rely on reasonable visa interview and processing wait times at U.S. embassies and consulates in order to host would-be participants and attendees. Since the return of post-pandemic international travel, the State Department has made significant progress in reducing visitor visa wait times, but there is still much more to be done.*

*Question.* As the US prepares to host a decade of major global events—from the 2026 World Cup to the 2028 Summer Olympics—and as both leisure and business travel demand continue to increase, what steps would you as Secretary of State take to ensure reasonable wait times for visas at all U.S. embassies and consulates around the world? Specifically, what goals will you set for the Bureau of Consular Affairs in 2025 for business and tourist visa interviews and processing? And how will you work with this Committee to ensure transparency and accountability when it comes to the efficient processing of traveler visas systemwide?

Answer. As the US prepares to host major events like the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, we know that demand to visit the US will be at an all time high. If confirmed, my staff and I, especially in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, will work diligently to ensure an efficient, smooth, and effective visa process that protects America's security. We will aim to reduce wait times as much as reasonably possible while maintaining a secure and effective process compliant with US laws and work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure success, transparency and accountability.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS' RESTITUTION EFFORTS

*Eighty years after the end of World War II and 15 years since the adoption of the Terezin Declaration, Holocaust survivors and their families—both in the United States and around the world—as well as many European Jewish communities devastated by the Holocaust are continuing to seek a measure of justice for property wrongfully seized by the Nazis and their allies, or subsequently nationalized by Communist regimes.*

*Question.* In your new role as Secretary of State, will you continue to champion Holocaust restitution efforts as Secretary of State, ensuring the U.S. remains a leading advocate for survivors and their families?

Answer. The restitution available to Holocaust survivors and their families is of the utmost importance. If confirmed, my staff and I will continue to champion Holocaust restitution efforts, like those codified in the JUST Act, and ensure that the U.S. remains a leading advocate for survivors and their families.

OFFICE OF SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HOLOCAUST ISSUES

*Question.* Will you also commit to ensuring that the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues has the necessary resources and political support to sustain U.S. leadership in advancing international Holocaust restitution efforts as well as supporting Holocaust commemorations and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance?

Answer. If confirmed, my staff and I will continue to champion all applicable roles and efforts to support Holocaust restitution efforts, like those codified in the JUST

Act, and ensure that the U.S. remains a leading advocate for survivors and their families.

#### **DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**

*Question.* What specific diplomatic measures do you plan to pursue to encourage other governments, especially in Eastern and Central Europe, to return property or provide compensation to survivors and their heirs?

Answer. If confirmed, my staff and I will continue to champion all applicable roles and efforts to support Holocaust restitution efforts, like those codified in the JUST Act, and ensure that the U.S. remains a leading advocate for survivors and their families.

#### **DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**

*Question.* Last, how do you view the need for continued U.S. engagement on Holocaust-era restitution as part of a broader diplomatic strategy, particularly in light of the alarming rise of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion and the increasing challenges to democratic norms worldwide?

Answer. The alarming rise of antisemitism is not to be taken lightly. If confirmed, my staff and I will continue to champion all efforts to support not only reiterating the truth about the Holocaust but also supporting Holocaust restitution efforts, like those codified in the JUST Act. I will work to ensure that the U.S. remains a leading advocate for survivors and their families.

#### **IBWC**

*The Colorado River is critically important to Nevada, and many decisions over the next 2 years will determine the future of the river and the communities that depend on it. The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) plays an important role in the operation of the Colorado River and our relationship with the Republic of Mexico, particularly during times of unprecedented drought and water challenges. Dr. Maria Elena Giner is the U.S. Commissioner of the IBWC and has been integral to the progress that's been made over the last 4 years. Just last week, the Governors' representatives from the seven basin States, including Nevada, sent a letter, highlighting her incredible work and asking that continuity be maintained at the IBWC with her reappointment.*

*Question.* Will you provide full and fair consideration of this request to maintain Dr. Maria Elena Giner as U.S. Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission?

Answer. The post of the U.S. Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission is appointed by the President of the United States. If confirmed, my staff and I will support the selected appointees and policies of the President.

*Submitted by Senator James E. Risch*



January 6, 2025

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chairman  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
483 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
506 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen,

As leaders of faith communities across this nation, on the occasion of the nomination of Senator Marco Rubio to serve as Secretary of State, we write to express our collective gratitude for your steadfast leadership in advancing U.S. global health initiatives and assistance. In particular, we are grateful for your support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

We welcome and support the nomination of Senator Marco Rubio as Secretary of State. As a member of this committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee, he has been a powerful voice for the vulnerable. Throughout his tenure in the Senate, he has been dedicated to human rights and addressing the world's most urgent infectious diseases and global health needs. As his nomination is considered, we hope you will ask Senator Rubio about the upcoming replenishment of the Global Fund and urge him to support the U.S. pledging one-third of the Global Fund's three-year goal, as it has in the last several replenishments across administrations of both parties. This leverages the provision in U.S. law to limit U.S. contributions to 33% of the Global Fund's budget – propelling other donors to share the burden, knowing that they cannot unlock U.S. pledges unless they match it 2-to-1.

Thanks to the enduring support of Congress, the Global Fund has helped save the lives of more than 65 million people and brought care, compassion and dignity to countless more. The Global Fund is a cornerstone of the mission to uplift the vulnerable, allow all people to thrive and create a more secure world. Working closely with our bilateral global health programs, affected communities and faith-based organizations, the Global Fund combats the world's deadliest diseases and helps countries take responsibility for their own health systems. In 2023 alone, the Global Fund and its partners provided antiretroviral therapy to 25 million individuals, TB treatment to 7.1 million individuals and distributed 227 million mosquito nets to protect families from malaria.

In 2025, the U.S. will once again have the opportunity to realize its values and priorities by providing a strong pledge to the three-year replenishment of the Global Fund. We urge this body

to work with Secretary-designate Rubio, if confirmed, to recommit the U.S. to its historic moral and policy leadership position in the Global Fund.

Sincerely,



Senator Bill Frist, MD  
Chairman, Advisory Board, 2030 Collaborative

David R. Adams	Vice President for Missions, Emeritus, Cross Catholic Outreach	Boca Raton, FL
Tim Ahlman	Pastor, Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church	Gilbert, AZ
Matt Alexander	Co-Founder, OneWorld Health	Charleston, SC
Kenny Alphin	Artist, Big & Rich	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Guy Ames	Associate Pastor, Asbury United Methodist Church	Tulsa, OK
Kent Annan	Director of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership, Wheaton College	Wheaton, IL
Andi Ashworth	Author	Nashville, TN
Jamie Aten	Founder and Executive Director, Humanitarian Disaster Institute – Wheaton College	Wheaton, IL
Tiffany Atkinson	Executive Director, Freedom's Promise	Nashville, TN
Walter August, Jr.	Author, Sr. Pastor, & Chairman, Bethel's Family Church	Houston, TX
Rev. Dr. Rims & Judy Barber	Mississippi Human Services Coalition	Jackson, MS
Chris Beard	Lead Pastor, People's Church of Cincinnati	Cincinnati, OH
Rev. Dr. David Beckmann	President Emeritus, Bread for the World	Alexandria, VA
Kenton & Laurie Beshore	Senior Pastors, Mariners Church	Irvine, CA
Lisa Bevere	Author, Speaker, & Co- Founder, Messenger International	Colorado Springs, CO
Robert Binion	Pastor, New Song Presbyterian Church	Salt Lake City, UT
Emily Blackledge	President, African Leadership, Inc.	Nashville, TN
Cherie A. Booker, M.Div.	Metropolitan Interdenominational Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Tony Boos	Associate Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church	Troy, MI
Annette Bourland	Sr. VP and Group Publisher, Zondervan	Grand Rapids, MI
Leigh Brandenburg	International Missions Team, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church	Mt. Pleasant, SC
Kay Brocato	Living Waters for the World	Starkville, MS
Fr. Danny Bryant	Priest, St. Mary of Bethany Parish	Nashville, TN
Ann Kathleen Hoard Burlew	Board Member, SOTENI	Cincinnati, OH
Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia	Executive Director, Religions for Peace USA	Columbus, OH
Alex Campbell	Founder, The Kingdom Initiative	Cincinnati, OH
Rev. Letitia M. Campbell, Ph.D.	Presbyterian Minister; Director of Contextual Education I and CPE, Assistant Professor in the Practice of Ethics and Society, Candler School Of Theology, Emory University	Atlanta, GA



Josh Carney	Lead Pastor, University Baptist Church	Waco, TX
Victoria Lee Case	Founder/CEO, Untitled Financial	New York, NY
Carol T. Cavin-Dillon	Senior Pastor, West End United Methodist Church	Nashville, TN
Jim Cavnar	CEO, Cross Catholic Outreach	Boca Raton, FL
Curtis Chang	Executive Director; Redeeming Babel; Faculty, Duke Divinity School; Senior Fellow, Fuller Theological Seminary	San Jose, CA
Mary Beth Chapman	Author, President and Co-Founder, Show Hope	Franklin, TN
Steven Curtis Chapman	Artist, Co-Founder Show Hope	Franklin, TN
Rev. Barbara Clark	Trinity United Methodist Church	Knoxville, TN
Christopher Clements	Founder, The Rise UP Foundation	Phoenix, AZ
Jonathan Cobler	Lead Pastor, Church of Living Water	Olympia, WA
Rev. James E. Cole	Antioch United Methodist Church	Nashville, TN
Shannon & Kevin Conforti	Executive Director and Director(s) of Family Health, Christian Flights International	Lexington, KY
Jeremy Cowart	Artist & Founder, The Purpose Hotel	Nashville, TN
Chaz Corzine	Founding Executive Director, The Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Belmont University	Franklin, TN
Ian Morgan Cron	Author and Episcopal Priest	Franklin, TN
Rev. Beverly CroweTipton	Pastor, Zion United Methodist Church	Anderson, SC
Jason Cullum	Lead Pastor, Christ's Church	Jacksonville, FL
Dr. Larry Cuthill	Senior Pastor, Glenwood Presbyterian Church	DeLand, FL
Rev. John Daniels	Pastor, First United Methodist Church	Missoula, MT
David Dark, PhD	Author, Professor of Religious Studies, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Brandon Dasinger	Executive Director, Project 82 Kenya Pastor, Embrace Church	Canton, GA
Jalil Dawood	Executive Director, World Refugee Care	Plano, TX
Dale Dawson	Founder, Chairman, & CEO, Bridge2Rwanda	Little Rock, AR
Dave Deerman	President & CEO, Project Houston Community Development Corporation	Houston, TX
Frank Dimmock	Public Health Consultant	Decatur, GA
Melinda Doolittle	Artist	Franklin, TN
The Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake	Senior Pastor, Westminster Presbyterian Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Ryan Dupree	International Pastor, First Baptist Church	Columbia, SC
Jenny Eaton Dyer, PhD	Founder, 2030 Collaborative	Nashville, TN
David Evans	Consultant and Fractional Leader	Linthicum, MD
Jeremy Everett, MDiv	Executive Director, Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty	Waco, TX
Brent Fields	Missions Pastor, Rich Pond Baptist Church	Bowling Green, KY
Jerry Fincher	Atlantic Coast Church	New Smyrna Beach, FL
Jeff Ford	Director of Global Good, Crosspoint Community Church	Nashville, TN
Doug Fountain	Executive Director, Christian Connections for International Health	Alexandria, VA
Rev. Berry French	Executive Director, Presbyterian Campus	Chapel Hill, NC

	Ministry at UNC-Chapel Hill; Associate Pastor, University Presbyterian Church	
Rev. Steven D. Froehlich, MDiv, DMin	Pastor, New Life Presbyterian Church	Ithaca, NY
Dr. Gary Furr	Founder and President, Alabama Coalition For Healthy Mothers and Children	Birmingham, AL
Brad Gibson	Business Manager, Gibson Artist Business Management, LLC	Nashville, TN
Mike Glenn	Sr. Pastor, Brentwood Baptist Church	Brentwood, TN
Cat Goodrich	Pastor, Faith Presbyterian Church	Baltimore, MD
Jenna Goggins	Chief Operating Officer, L.E.A.D.	Paducah, KY
Jennifer Grant	Author and Editor	Chicago, IL
Natalie Grant	Artist	Brentwood, TN
Dr. Joshua Graves	Lead Minister, Otter Creek Church	Nashville, TN
Andrew Greer	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Eddie Grigg	President, Charlotte Christian College & Theological Seminary	Charlotte, NC
Kenneth Grizzell	Preaching Minister, Greenwood Park Church of Christ	Bowling Green, KY
Andy Gullahorn	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Scott Hamilton	Olympic Gold Medalist & Philanthropist	Franklin, TN
Tracie Hamilton	Philanthropist and Mother	Franklin, TN
The Rev. Dr. Terry Hamilton-Poore	Pastor, First Presbyterian Church	Birmingham, AL
Michael Hart	Associate Pastor, University Presbyterian Church	Orlando, FL
Michael C. Hart	Missions Pastor, First Baptist Church Tulsa	Tulsa, OK
Branden Harvey	Editor-in-Chief, Goodnews paper	Portland, OR
Dan Haseltine	Composer, The Chosen; Founder, Blood:Water	Nashville, TN
Rev. Josh McCrory Hatcher	Senior Pastor, Historic Trinity Lutheran Church	St. Louis, MO
Jen Hatmaker	Author & Speaker	Buda, TX
Brandon Heath	Contemporary Christian Recording Artist	Nashville, TN
Dr. William "Hess" Hester	Senior Pastor, Southern Hills Baptist Church	Tulsa, OK
Judi Hoffman	Pastor, St. John's United Methodist Church	Memphis, TN
Russ Holmes	Small Groups Pastor, Church at Rock Creek	Little Rock, AR
Rev. Amos Humphries	Senior Pastor, Park Lake Drive Baptist Church	Waco, TX
Christopher Ingram	Senior Pastor, Yates Baptist Church	Durham, NC
Cameron James	Artist, Speaker, Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Cal Jernigan	Lead Pastor, Central Christian Church AZ	Mesa, AZ
Lisa Jernigan	Co-Founder & President, Amplify Peace	Mesa, AZ
Philip E. Johnston, PharmD	Vice Provost, Belmont University, Retired	Nashville, TN
Nona Jones	Founder, Faith & Prejudice; Head of Faith Partnerships, Facebook	Gainesville, FL
Tina Jones	Children's Ministry Director, First Presbyterian Church	Greenville, SC
Randy Jumper	Missions Pastor, First Assembly North Little Rock	Little Rock, AR
Dr. Jim Keena	Professor of Pastoral Theology, Yellowstone	Bozeman, MT

The Very Rev. Becca Kello	Theological Institute Associate Rector and Chaplain to the Episcopal Campus Ministry, WKU	Bowling Green, KY
Velvet Kelm	President, The {M}edia Collective	Franklin, TN
Thomas Kleinert	Senior Minister, Vine Street Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Carmen Fowler LaBerge	Host, Connecting Faith	Nashville, TN
The Rev. Alex Large	Rector, Church of the Holy Apostles	Katy, TX
Dr. Todd Lake	Vice President for Faith-Based Engagement & Church Relations, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Jon Lee	President, The Living Water Project	Brentwood, TN
Renee Lewis	Executive Director, Project Medishare	Miami, FL
Rev. Michael Lockhart	Senior Pastor, Elevated Missionary Baptist Church	Franklin, KY
Penny Allison Lockhart	Leading Lady, Elevated Missionary Baptist Church	Franklin, KY
Chuck Love	Lead Pastor, Beechland Baptist Church	Louisville, KY
Charlie Lowell	Artist, Jars of Clay	Franklin, TN
Anne Lucas	Director of Medical and Short-Term Missions, E3 Partners	Birmingham, AL
Rev. Damon & Barbara Lynch, Jr.	Pastor & First Lady, New Jerusalem Baptist Church	Cincinnati, OH
Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador	General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church	Indianapolis, IN
Ray Martin	Executive Director Emeritus, Christian Connections for International Health	Springfield, VA
Sarah Masen	Artist	Nashville, TN
Suzanne Mayernick	Founder, Love One International	Brentwood, TN
Mike McBrayer	Minister, Vestavia Hills Baptist Church	Birmingham, AL
Jodi McCall	Missions Pastor, Seacoast Church	Charleston, SC
Joe S. McIlhaney, Jr., MD	Founder, The Medical Institute for Sexual Health	Plano, TX
Brian McLaren	Author, Speaker	Marco Island, FL
Dr. Tom McKechnie	President & Founder, Teach to Transform	Louisville, KY
Justin McRoberts	Artist, Author, Songwriter	Martinez, CA
Santiago "Jimmy" Mellado	President and CEO, Compassion International	Colorado Springs, CO
David Meyer	CEO, Hand of Hope, Joyce Meyer Ministries	St. Louis, MO
Jon Middendorf	Senior Pastor, OKC First Church of the Nazarene	Oklahoma City, OK
Brett & Emily Mills	Co-Founders, Jesus Said Love & Lovely Enterprises	Waco, TX
Russell Moore	Editor In Chief, Christianity Today	Nashville, TN
Steve Moore	Chairman of the Board, The Shalom Foundation	Brentwood, TN
Elisa Morgan	Speaker, Author, President Emerita, MOPS International	Denver, CO
Ken Morris	Director, Lifeway Global - U.S.	Antioch, TN
Jeff Moseley	President & Founder, Fair Trade Services	Brentwood, TN
Heidi & Erik Murkoff	Author & Co-Founders, What to Expect Project	Los Angeles, CA

Bryant Myers, PhD	Professor of International Development, Fuller Theological Seminary	Pasadena, CA
Jennifer Nettles	Artist, Sugarland	Nashville, TN
Roxanne Nichols	Director of Label Operations, Provident Label Group	Franklin, TN
Samuel Okpaku, MD, PhD	President & Founder, Center for Health, Culture and Society	Nashville, TN
Michael O'Neal	CEO, OneWorld Health	Charleston, SC
Andrew Osenga	Artist/Podcast Producer, The Pivot Podcast	Nashville, TN
Paul Osteen, MD	Associate Pastor, Lakewood Church	Houston, TX
Shep Owen	President, LifeNet International	Washington, DC
The Rev. Steven J. Pankey, DMin	Rector, Christ Episcopal Church	Bowling Green, KY
Justin Park	Family Ministry Director, Rock Point Church	Chattanooga, TN
Pearl Parks	Missions Coordinator, LCBC Church	Mechanicsburg, PA
Jennifer Parks	Lay Leader, Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church	Gilbert, AZ
Jackie Patillo	President and Executive Director, Gospel Music Association	Nashville, TN
Charlie Peacock	Music Producer and Artist-in-Residence, Lipscomb University	Nashville, TN
Priscilla Perkins	Co-President, John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development	Jackson, MS
Todd Perry	Executive Director/CEO, Pujols Family Foundation	St. Louis, MO
Christian Postel	CEO, Lexington Leadership Foundation	Lexington, KY
Mary Beth Powers	President, Catholic Medical Mission Board	New York, NY
Dan Raines	President, Creative Trust Ventures	Brentwood, TN
Richard Ramsey	Outreach Pastor, North Metro Church	Marietta, GA
Dr. Robert Rex Record	Chief Executive Officer, Family Medicine Residency Faculty, Christ Health	Birmingham, AL
Katie Richards	President and CEO, Siloam Health	Nashville, TN
Marlene Rickert, FNP-BC	Medical Director, Hope for Haiti Foundation	Raleigh, NC
Dr. Samuel Rodriguez	President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference	Sacramento, CA
Ash Rogers	Executive Director, Lwala Community Alliance	Nashville, TN
Jim Romack	Lead Pastor, New Life Church	Everett, WA
Francis Rushton, MD	Mission Justice & Service Member, First Presbyterian Church	Birmingham, AL
Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero	President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Pastor, The Gathering Place	Orlando, FL
Rev. Edwin Sanders II	Sr. Servant, Metropolitan Interdenominational Church	Nashville, TN
Jo Saxton	Director, 3DM; Author & Speaker	Minneapolis, MN
Doug Serven	Pastor, Grace Church; Publisher, Storied.pub	Baltimore, MD
Anita Smith	President, Children's AIDS Fund International	Washington, DC
David E. Smith, MD	Director, Haiti Christian Development	Little Rock, AR
Emily Smith	Assistant Professor, Robbins College of Health	Woodway, TX

Jake Smith	And Human Sciences, Baylor University	Nashville, TN
Jason K. Smith	Executive Director, Blood:Water	Oklahoma City, OK
Michael W. Smith	Associate Pastor, OKC First Church of the Nazarene	Franklin, TN
Durwood Snead	Artist	Atlanta, GA
Anne Stafford	Former Global X: Director, North Point Ministries	Birmingham, AL
Dr. Clay Stauffer	Retired Pediatrician; University of Alabama-Birmingham	Nashville, TN
Dr. Ana Steele	Senior Minister, Woodmont Christian Church	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Antwan Steele	Director of Global Outreach, Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale	Gainesville, FL
Rev. Becca Stevens	Chief of Staff, Nona Jones Ministries	Nashville, TN
Jason Surratt	St. Augustine's Chapel; Founder, Thistle Farms	Charleston, SC
Andrea Summer, MD	Legacy Pastor, Seacoast Church	Charleston, SC
Rev. Adam Taylor	Pediatrician	Washington, DC
Cathy Taylor, DrPH, MSN, RN	President, Sojourners	Nashville, TN
Debbie Taylor	Dean & Professor, Gordon E. Inman College Of Health Sciences & Nursing, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Rob Taylor	Artist and Mother	Brentwood, TN
Steve Taylor	Senior Pastor, Calvary Chapel	Nashville, TN
John C. Thompson	Recording Artist & Filmmaker	Boise, ID
Nikki Toyama-Szeto	Pastor, Cornerstone Church	Arlington, VA
Tiffany Turner	Executive Director, Christians for Social Action	Old Hickory, TN
Brad Ulgenes	Vice President, Outreach, Soles4Souls	Helena, MT
Louis Upkins	Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church	Franklin, TN
Dr. David Vanderpool	Author, Speaker, Entrepreneur	Dallas, TX
Meredith Walker	CEO, LiveBeyond	Austin, TX
Rev. Jim Wallis	Co-Founder/Executive Director, Amy Poehler's Smart Girls	Washington, DC
David Walmer, PhD, MD	Founder, Sojourners	Durham, NC
Kathy Walmer, MSN, CPNP	Chairman & Founder, Family Health Ministries	Durham, NC
Barrett Ward	Executive Director, Family Health Ministries	Nashville, TN
Pastor Rick and Kay Warren	Founder, Live FashionABLE	Lake Forest, CA
Patricia Watlington	Co-Founders, Saddleback Church	Chattanooga, TN
Christof A. Weber	Children's Nutrition Program of Haiti	Washington, DC
Demetria Howard White	Executive Director, SIL LEAD, Inc.	Jackson, MS
Rev. Chad Wible	Director of Academic Computing/Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Tougaloo College	Sunset Hills, MO
Rev. David Wiggs	Lead Pastor, Embrace Church	Tulsa, OK
Morgan Wills, MD, MATS	Senior Pastor, Boston Avenue United Methodist Church	Nashville, TN
Jessica Wolstenholm	Former President & CEO, Siloam Health	Brentwood, TN
	Author & Co-Founder, Gather & Grow	

*Submitted by Senator James E. Risch*



Chairman James Risch  
Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

January 8, 2025

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen,

I write to urge the swift confirmation of Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) to serve as the 72<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of State of the United States. Throughout his time in public service, Sen. Rubio has built his legislative career on advancing the national interests of the United States and ensuring our country is well positioned to protect itself against adversaries. He has a unique understanding of the threats we face, particularly from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and has made it his mission in Congress to help address our national security vulnerabilities so the government is better equipped to protect its citizens from foreign threats.

At Parents Defending Education Action, we witnessed this proactive and America-first approach from Sen. Rubio firsthand. Last year our partner organization, Parents Defending Education, released a comprehensive report exposing how the CCP had funneled more than \$18 million into school districts across 34 states and Washington, D.C. Shortly after our report went public, Sen. Rubio introduced legislation to fix the security gaps our report had identified. His *Protecting Education from Malign Foreign Influence Act of 2023* would have helped to prevent foreign money from known adversaries from flowing into our K-12 schools and universities, created more funding transparency at academic institutions that receive federal funding, and required the Department of Education to submit an annual report to Congress detailing any connections these schools have with these designated foreign countries.<sup>1</sup> Our organization proudly supported this legislation, and we also saw it as a testament to how seriously Sen. Rubio takes national security matters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Rubio, Colleagues Introduce Bill to Protect U.S. Schools From China's Influence." Press Release. Office of Senator Marco Rubio. December 8, 2023. <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/rubio-colleagues-introduce-bill-to-protect-u-s-schools-from-chinas-influence/>

<sup>2</sup> "STATEMENT: PDE Action Supports Protecting Education from Malign Foreign Influence Act of 2023." Parents Defending Education Action. December 8, 2023. <https://actionpde.org/statement-pde-action-supports-protecting-education-from-malign-foreign-influence-act-of-2023/>

Putting an end to foreign influence in our academic institutions is an important issue to millions of parents across the country. Polling has shown that nearly 90 percent of voters agree that “schools should be required to disclose when they accept money from foreign governments.”<sup>3</sup> Parents have also seen how foreign actors have exploited situations on U.S. campuses and classrooms to further their malicious objectives. Since the horrific terrorist attack on Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, terrorist-sympathizing demonstrations have erupted across U.S. schools and even more alarmingly, some of the protests have had direct ties to terrorist organizations. A report published earlier this year by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce detailed how an event held by students at Columbia University featured a speaker from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), a U.S. designated foreign terrorist organization.<sup>4</sup> As recently as last month it was reported that three students at George Mason University in Virginia were “expelled over their ties to terrorist groups” and one student was “charged with plotting a mass casualty attack at the Israel’s consulate in New York.”<sup>5</sup>

It is devastating to see what has transpired in our academic environments. But none of this should be surprising – over the past four years we have had leadership in the White House and throughout the Biden administration, including the State Department, who have been more interested in appeasing America’s enemies than holding them accountable. This has trickled down into other sectors of our society, including our schools, and created environments that have allowed the enemy’s propaganda to spread. To stop this disease from continuing to infect students’ minds, we need strong national leadership at the top to put an end to the anti-America and anti-West propaganda we have seen promulgated in our schools. Sen. Marco Rubio as Secretary of State will help reverse the foreign policy blunders and will be critical in advancing President Trump’s America-first agenda.

On behalf of parents across the country who want a school free of hate and a secure country, we urge you to expedite Sen. Rubio’s nomination to serve as America’s next Secretary of State.

Sincerely,



Michele Exner  
Director of Federal Affairs  
Parents Defending Education Action

<sup>3</sup> Parents Defending Education Poll: Foreign Funding in K-12 Schools. Parents Defending Education. July 25, 2023. <https://defendinged.org/press-releases/parents-defending-education-poll-87-of-voters-agree-that-schools-should-be-required-to-disclose-when-they-accept-money-from-foreign-governments/>

<sup>4</sup> “Antisemitism on College Campuses Exposed.” Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives. October 31, 2024. [https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_the\\_workforce\\_republican\\_staff\\_report\\_-\\_antisemitism\\_on\\_college\\_campuses\\_exposed.pdf](https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24_committee_on_education_and_the_workforce_republican_staff_report_-_antisemitism_on_college_campuses_exposed.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Daily Kickoff. Jewish Insider. December 20, 2024. <https://jewishinsider.com/2024/12/daily-kickoff-inside-trumps-mar-a-lago-majlis/>

*Submitted by Senator James E. Risch*



January 14, 2025

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations  
Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations  
Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen:

On behalf of the Global Business Alliance (GBA), I am writing in support of Senator Marco Rubio's nomination to be Secretary of State of the United States and to emphasize the critical importance of foreign direct investment (FDI) to U.S. economic growth and job creation.

GBA represents nearly 200 leading international companies, all of whom are major U.S. employers and globally headquartered in countries that are our nation's long-time friends and allies. International companies have invested over \$5 trillion into the U.S. economy, employ 8.4 million U.S. workers and offer compensation that is seven percent higher than the U.S. national average. Our mission is to advocate for the fair, non-discriminatory treatment of international companies operating in the U.S. while promoting policies that will encourage such companies to expand their U.S. operations, increase American employment and support U.S. economic growth.

Senator Rubio's distinguished career, including serving as Vice Chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence and as a senior member of the Committee on Foreign Relations, positions him well to lead our nation's diplomatic efforts. With the State Department's important role in FDI attraction through the SelectUSA initiative, his leadership will ensure that international companies continue to create jobs in the U.S.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Samford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" and last name "Samford" clearly distinguishable.

Jonathan Samford  
President and CEO  
Global Business Alliance



*Submitted by Senator James E. Risch*



**LAWRENCE G. KEANE**

SVP Gov't & Public Affairs, Assist. Secretary and General Counsel

[lkeane@nssf.org](mailto:lkeane@nssf.org) | 202-220-1340 x 249 | [nssf.org](http://nssf.org)

400 N. Capitol Street NW, Suite 475, Washington, D.C. 20001

January 17, 2024

The Honorable James Risch  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Foreign  
Relations  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Foreign  
Relations  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen:

NSSF® is the trade association for the firearm, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry. NSSF's mission is to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. On behalf of our more than 10,500 member companies nationwide, I write in support of the nomination of Marco Antonio Rubio, of Florida, to serve as the 72<sup>nd</sup> United States Secretary of State and urge his swift confirmation.

During his distinguished career in public service at both the state and federal level, Senator Rubio has sought to build bridges and seek consensus on difficult issues of the utmost consequence. A longtime member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, he has honed his foreign policy skills and worked across the aisle to advance the interests of the U.S. under multiple presidential administrations. Achieving the peace through diplomacy helps to ensure a robust export market, which directly impacts every sector of the U.S. economy, including NSSF's membership. Senator Rubio's grasp of foreign policy, leadership skills and understanding of America's most important interests make him an excellent candidate to be our representative on the world stage.

We are proud to offer our strong support and respectfully request you confirm Senator Rubio for this position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence G. Keane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lawrence G. Keane

*Submitted by Senator James E. Risch*

## U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION\*

January 20, 2025

The Honorable Jim Risch  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As the leading voice of the travel industry, the U.S. Travel Association strongly supports the nomination of Senator Marco Rubio to serve as Secretary of State, and we urge his swift confirmation.

The Department of State plays a vital role in protecting and promoting U.S. security and prosperity, including through services for U.S. citizens abroad, the provision of visas, and support for security-first programs like the Visa Waiver Program. International visitation delivers massive economic benefits to the United States, strengthens diplomatic ties, and promotes American values. Unfortunately, the United States has lost 41 percent of its share of long-haul travelers since 2000, and significant challenges remain in visitor visa processing, leaving these benefits on the table and up for grabs by other countries. Over the next four years, the United States will host an unprecedented number of global events, including the 2025 Ryder Cup, America's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the 2026 FIFA World Cup, and the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. With the right policies in place, these events can welcome 40 million international visitors and drive \$95 billion in economic activity.

The State Department needs a confirmed leader who is equipped to address the current challenges and committed to ushering in reforms to deliver greater security, efficiency, and prosperity. Through his role as a senator from Florida and member of your committee, Senator Rubio knows the economic, diplomatic, and security benefits of international travel and an effective Consular Affairs Bureau. As he said in his nomination hearing before your committee, "a key part of the State Department is customer service... improving that experience for the consumer is one of the top priorities we need to have."

It is crucial that we are prepared to maximize the opportunities of the decade of sports and events that lies ahead. We are confident Senator Rubio will lead the State Department with the focus needed to meet this moment, and we urge the Committee to report his nomination favorably to the full Senate as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Geoff Freeman  
President and CEO  
U.S. Travel Association

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION TEL 202 408 8422 FAX 202 408 1255  
1899 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor Washington, DC 20006 [ustravel.org](http://ustravel.org)

