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S. HRG. 117–4

NOMINATION OF HON. ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO BE SECRETARY OF STATE—PART II

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JANUARY 19, 2021

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations

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CONTENTS

Page

PART I

Risch, Hon. James E., U.S. Senator from Idaho 1
Durbin, Hon. Richard J., U.S. Senator from Illinois 2
Menendez, Hon. Robert, U.S. Senator from New Jersey 6
Blinken, Antony J., of New York, Nominated to be Secretary of State 9
Prepared statement 11

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Statements Submitted to the Committee Supporting Hon. Antony J. Blinken's Nomination to be Secretary of State—[Placed in the Record by Senator Robert Menendez] 85
Remarks Made in the Senate by Senator John McCain Opposing the Confirmation of Antony J. Blinken to be Deputy Secretary of State— *December 16, 2014*—[Placed in the Record by Senator John Barrasso] 121
Additional Questions for the Record Submitted by Senator James E. Risch
Responses to Questions Submitted Prior to the Hearing of January 19, 2021 to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch 129
Responses to Follow-Up Questions Submitted Prior to the Hearing of January 19, 2021 to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch 141
Questions for the Record Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch—[as originally submitted—questions only] 155
Responses to Questions Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch—[Secretary-Designate Blinken's First Responses to Senator Risch's Questions] 281
Responses to Questions [Questions #1 to #167] Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch—Reformatted and Resubmitted [continued in Part II] 473

PART II

Responses to Questions [Questions #168 to #472] Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch—Reformatted and Resubmitted [continued from Part I] 703
Responses to Questions Resubmitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Senator James E. Risch 1055
Responses to Questions Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken by Other Members of the Committee 1297

NOMINATION OF ANTONY J. BLINKEN TO BE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE—PART II

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:04 p.m. Russell Senate Office Building, Room 301, and via Webex, Hon. James E. Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Rubio, Johnson, Romney, Graham, Barrasso, Portman, Paul, Young, Cruz, Menendez, Cardin, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, Merkley, and Booker.

Also Present: Senator Durbin.

[Due to the total number of pages, it was necessary to divide this hearing transcript into two parts.]

Responses to Questions

[Questions #168 to #472]

Submitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken

by Senator James E. Risch

SECRETARY-DESIGNATE BLINKEN'S REFORMATTED QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES [CONTINUED FROM PART I] [1]

[PRINTER'S NOTE: The questions and responses that follow are copies of the original material received by the committee. Throughout, there are a few blank pages, as well as consecutive short pages with very little text. These pages appeared in the original documents received from the Department of State and are the result of typing errors. They are not an indication of an incomplete response.]

[1] The first set of responses were considered unacceptable [see the footnote on page 281 in Part I for a more detailed explanation]. The State Department offered to reformat what the Transition Team had sent into the numbering system used in the as-submitted Risch QFRs. These responses were not substantively different from what the Transition Team had sent. This also included the questions that had been omitted from the first response document.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#168)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Several members of the EU's eastern bloc have experienced a rise in corruption, a decline in rule of law, and a strain on democratic institutions. Free and independent media in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria has been reduced and persecuted. Ruling parties have consolidated power in important industries and in the government. This past year, Bulgaria saw large anti-corruption protests sweep the country. The EU has implemented rule-of-law conditionality to disbursement of EU funding as a means to combat this trend.

a. Does the United States have a role to place in EU and EU member states' anti-corruption efforts? If yes, what is that role?
b. As an EU member and a NATO ally, what will you do to push anti-corruption efforts in Bulgaria to ensure stability and security in the country and prevent malign actors from gaining footholds in the country and hence in the EU and NATO?

Answer:

NATO was founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. Those shared values make our societies stronger and more resilient to those who would seek to threaten or divide us. And NATO is stronger because it is an alliance grounded in our democratic values, rather than transactions or coercion. The United States, therefore, is committed to working with our Allies to uphold our democratic commitments, including on corruption. President Biden has long recognized that corruption is a national security issue. In the spring of 2014 he gave a major address in Romania, outlining, for example, how corruption made countries more vulnerable to foreign interventions. If confirmed, I will ensure that fighting corruption will remain a centerpiece of a values-based foreign policy agenda.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#169)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

China sees the EU's periphery as a gateway into Europe. As a result, it has followed Russia's example and invested economically and politically in several countries, including Serbia, Ukraine, and Belarus, as well as several EU countries. These investments prey on corrupt officials and entities and utilize corruption as a geopolitical tool.

Will the Biden Administration make a concerted push on anti-corruption in the EU and its periphery with the dual purpose of benefitting European citizens and making it more difficult for malign actors like Russia and China to gain a foothold?

Answer:

President-elect Biden has long recognized that corruption is a national security issue. At a time when adversaries like Russia and competitors like China--regimes both plagued with endemic corruption--are challenging universal values and using corruption to expand influence beyond their borders, it's important for the United States and its allies to take a firm stand against corruption. Congress has taken important action to support this fight and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to continue to ensure that the U.S. is a global leader in countering kleptocracy and corruption.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#170)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In recent years, many European countries, including several in the EU, have seen elements of their democracies eroded. One major theme of this erosion is the shrinking space for media freedom in countries like Malta, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Belarus, Georgia, and Bulgaria. Independent media has been taken over by the state, purchased by pro-government oligarchs, and journalists have been threatened, harassed, and jailed by law enforcement or government agencies. Horrifically, several journalists have been killed in recent years. Chinese companies are quietly acquiring stakes in European media. And Turkey, a member of NATO that is ostensibly applying for EU membership, is the second worst jailer of journalists in the world. In reaction to this backsliding, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) recently reopened offices in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The EU adopted a mechanism to tie funding to upholding the rule of law.

a. How important is this issue to the Biden Administration? What will the U.S. do to support the EU's efforts to uphold rule of law, the independent journalists' efforts to report thenews, and the remaining media outlets continued operations?
b. Under your leadership, how will the State Department work together with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to further the cause of free speech and free media in Europe and Central Asia?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration will restore democracy and human rights to the center of U.S. foreign policy. In addition to ensuring proper focus on media freedom and freedom of expression in our own programming and diplomatic engagement, we will work with international partners. For example, Sweden has just assumed the chairmanship of the OSCE, and has often been a strong partner of the U.S. in defense of free expression and free media. We can work together to support the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media. I also support the ongoing independent journalistic work of RFE/RL, whose reporters provide indispensable, objective reporting in the region.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#171)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If development, diplomacy, and defense are co-equal legs of the U.S. national security stool, pursuing "development for development's sake" is not a viable policy. The recent merger of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to "unite [their] aid with [their] diplomacy", suggests that our British allies would agree.

a. Should U.S. international development efforts be linked to U.S. national security interests? If not, why not?
b. If confirmed, how will you structurally address development issues within the interagency and ensure that U.S. development, diplomacy, and defense priorities are, in fact, effectively aligned and coordinated?
c. In addition to elevating the Administrator of USAID to a cabinet-level position, do you support calls to elevate USAID to a Cabinet-level agency and to create a development directorate on the National Security Council? If so, how would that change the current arrangement, whereby USAID serves under the foreign policy direction of the State Department?
d. If confirmed, you will sit on the boards of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Development Finance Corporation. How do these agencies fit into the national security architecture? How do you intend to balance their development mandates with U.S. national security priorities?

Answer:

Yes. If confirmed, I will work closely with counterparts across the interagency to ensure that U.S. development, diplomacy, and defense priorities are effectively aligned and coordinated. President Biden has stated his intention to elevate the Administration of USAID to a cabinet-level position. I will work closely with the Administrator for USAID to ensure that the State Department and USAID are effectively advancing common objectives. I appreciate the support from Congress for the Millennium Challenge Corporation and Development Finance Corporation, which can be important tools in advancing development and foreign policy priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

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Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#172)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Initially fueled by non-transparency and unchecked travel, then exacerbated by deliberate disinformation, a deadly novel coronavirus that should have been contained at its source in China instead has been allowed to spread across international borders, sicken over 70 million people, claim over 1.6 million lives, shutter schools and businesses, and wreak havoc upon the global economy. The impact of this pandemic will be felt for generations to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare two critical truths: (1) infectious diseases do not respect borders and a threat anywhere can quickly become a threat everywhere; and (2) the global architecture for global health security is woefully ill-equipped and underprepared.

I requested information from the Trump Administration about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will share with you the contents of that request. If confirmed, will you commit to fully investigating the origins of the pandemic, including with regard to the safety protocols at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and associated research facilities, and to sharing that information with this committee in a timely manner?

Answer:

I support a robust and clear investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. An impartial public health investigation into the origins of any novel outbreak is vital to protecting against future re-emergence events. The Biden administration will comprehensively review all information available to us about the origins of SARS-COV-2 and will fully support the ongoing origins investigation being conducted under the auspices of the World Health Organization. It is imperative to have transparency on the early days of the pandemic, including to identify important lessons about how future pandemic emergence events can be averted.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#173)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The World Health Organization (WHO), as the guardian of the International Health Regulations and as the clearinghouse of global health data and best practices, plays a key role in advancing global health security. From combatting polio and eradicating smallpox, its record for addressing long-simmering global health challenges is remarkable. Yet, its record for responding to sudden onset emergencies is remarkably poor.

Much like the sudden onset global health emergencies that preceded it, including the 2013-2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the WHO was either unwilling or unable to mount an effective emergency response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China. Not only did it fail to use its bully pulpit to press the Chinese government for access and information in the critical first days of the outbreak, but the WHO provided political cover for China's reckless response, publicly validated disinformation, and condemned travel controls designed to mitigate the global spread.

a. Do you agree that the WHO is badly in need of reform? If so, what specific reforms are necessary to restore its credibility among the American people and the world? Will you seek to build upon and advance the reform agenda previously put forward by the Trump administration, which had won the support of the G-7 prior to the U.S. withdrawal?
b. Will you seek to leverage U.S. contributions to the WHO to incentive reforms? If not, how will you secure necessary reforms?
c. Should the WHO be given authority to enforce state obligations under the International Health Regulations – including for inspections and data transparency – or should enforcement be assigned elsewhere?
d. Should the WHO be given greater emergency response capacity (including through the rapid recruitment and deployment of emergency responders within 24 to 48 hours of an outbreak), or should it focus its energies on strengthening emergency preparedness in partner countries while emergency response is assigned elsewhere?
e. If confirmed, will you ensure that by joining COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the WHO-supported Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, the United States will not subsidize the distribution of the CoronaVac vaccine, developed by the Beijing-based Sinovac, or similarly substandard Chinese COVID-19 vaccines with an efficacy rate of just 50 percent?

Answer:

President Biden is committed to strengthening and reforming the World Health Organization to ensure that it can deliver on its vital global mission. It will be a high priority to swiftly review and develop options for advancing priority reforms during the initial weeks of

the Administration. The State Department will work closely with our interagency counterparts and partner countries, including the G-7, to build support for priority reforms.

In President Biden's day one letter to the WHO Director General, he pledged to be a constructive partner, and he also pledged to work to strengthen and reform the organization. We will work closely with the other Member States, including our European allies who have put forward specific reform proposals, to reform the organization.

Member state adherence to obligations under the International Health Regulations is critically important, and the new administration will both lead by example and urge other member states to improve their own adherence. We will also work with our partners to strengthen the IHR, including by exploring measures to promote greater member state adherence and transparency.

We will work with the WHO and with other Member States to improve the WHO's capacity for emergency response and its ability to support nations in strengthening public health preparedness. Preparedness and response capacities are closely linked and both vital to pandemic readiness.

We intend to join COVAX to support the multilateral and equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines. WHO certifies vaccines for use in COVAX that meet specified safety and efficacy standards. We will use our influence within the COVAX platform to ensure these standards are rigorously upheld.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#174)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How can the United States best incentivize greater commitment and investment in closing gaps in global health security within countries at high risk of outbreaks with pandemic potential?

Answer:

I am committed to advancing global health security capacity and ensuring that the U.S. approach is metrics-driven and catalyzes national preparedness investments among our partners. We will actively explore options for improving investments in global health security capacity, as well as new financing mechanisms to support preparedness in low-income countries.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#175)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the concept of an international incentive fund, as proposed in the Global Health Security and Diplomacy Act of 2020?

Answer:

COVID-19 has highlighted the lack of global preparedness financing for epidemics and pandemics. Health security financing is a shared global responsibility, and should involve contributions from international donors as well as commitments from national governments. An international incentive fund is one of the options that we will explore.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#176)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Lack of strategic direction, embittered competition, and poor communication between the two principal implementers of U.S. global health assistance –USAID and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – have long plagued U.S. global health programs. This is why, when authorizing the greatest commitment by any country to combat a single disease in history, Congress placed the responsibility for coordinating the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) within the Department of State. The PEPFAR program is now recognized as the most successful U.S. foreign assistance program since the Marshall Plan and has saved millions of lives, strengthened health systems and supply chains, and advanced key U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security goals.

Recognizing the success of the PEPFAR model – but also understanding that PEPFAR would eventually need to be transitioned – the Obama Administration in 2009 sought to launch a 6-year, $63 billion Global Health Initiative (GHI). Managed by the Coordinator of U.S. Government Activities to Combat HIV/AIDS and Special Representative for Global Health Diplomacy at the Department of State, the GHI proposed to take an evidence-based approach toward strengthening health systems and enhancing global health security. Though the GHI never found its footing, the compelling need to close gaps in global health security while also mitigating the need for disease-specific initiatives justifies taking another look.

a. Do you agree that the PEPFAR model, to include the coordinating role played by the Department of State, has been successful?
b. 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, is it time to look at transitioning PEPFAR into a broader global health security program?

Answer:

PEPFAR has been a highly effective program. As President Biden stated during the campaign, he is committed to strengthening global health policy and diplomacy at the State Department and across his administration. We are exploring options for doing so and look forward to working with Congress to support this priority.

PEPFAR has had a tremendous impact on the HIV/AIDS emergency over the past decade and a half. As the United States continues to combat HIV/AIDS, we must also be sure

to strengthen the public health and healthcare systems on which PEPFAR's impact relies, and explore how PEPFAR's strategy can facilitate and complement global health security investments.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#177)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The COVID-19 pandemic originated and accelerated in higher-income countries, where USAID does not maintain a regular presence and where diplomatic engagement proved critical to securing access for global health experts on the one hand, and the evacuation of American citizens on the other.

a. Who is responsible for coordinating and executing U.S. foreign policy in Washington, DC, to include diplomatic engagement to advance U.S. global health security interests overseas – the Department of State, USAID, or CDC?
b. Who is responsible for the execution of U.S. foreign policy at overseas posts, to include diplomatic engagement to advance U.S. global health security interests in countries of all income categories – the Department of State, USAID, or CDC?
c. Who is best placed to coordinate the execution of a comprehensive U.S. global health security strategy overseas, including by resolving conflicts between implementing agencies and organizations – the Department of State, USAID, or CDC?
d. Is the recreation of a global health directorate on the National Security Council sufficient to address the day-to-day diplomatic challenges of implementing, monitoring, and evaluating U.S. global health security assistance in the field?

Answer:

I will strengthen the Department of State's diplomatic engagement in support of the COVID-19 health and humanitarian response, as well as global health security more broadly. This work is cross-sectoral by nature, and the White House will continue to coordinate policy in this area across the many government agencies involved in advancing global health security. The Department of State will continue to play a major role, pursuant to President Biden's week one priority actions and Executive Order 13747. The Department of State will play a leading role in diplomatic engagement on health security, in close alignment with USAID, HHS, CDC, and other agencies.

The White House will coordinate the development of U.S. global health security policy. The Department of State will play a major role, working with USAID, CDC, and other parts of

the federal government, which have distinct and complementary roles and which must work in close alignment. The Biden-Harris Administration will seek to minimize conflicts between agencies by clearly delineating agency roles and responsibilities and by maintaining regular coordination through the National Security Council staff.

The re-establishment of the National Security Council Global Health Security and Biodefense Directorate is necessary to better coordinate U.S. global health security policy, which will assist with the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of U.S. assistance by respective U.S. agencies. Chiefs of Mission play a major role in day to day diplomatic outreach and engagement in partner countries, in conjunction with the expert personnel and programmatic agencies in the field that are responsible for programmatic implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#178)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is the role of the Office of Foreign Assistance (F) at the U.S. Department of State? Is F meant to create policy or to serve as a clearinghouse of foreign assistance data, metrics and standards?

Answer:

The Office of Foreign Assistance coordinates U.S. foreign assistance. It advances U.S. national security and development objectives by coordinating policy, planning, and performance management efforts.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#179)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Congress passed the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (FATAA) in 2016 to enhance Congressional and public oversight of U.S. foreign assistance. Among other requirements, the legislation requires the 22 Federal departments and agencies implementing U.S. foreign assistance programs to publish timely, detailed data about such programs on a publicly available, fully searchable, online platform. It also calls for the consolidation of existing, competing platforms—www.foreignassistance.gov and www.dec.usaid.gov, for example—into a single, comprehensive platform. Today, few Federal departments are complying with the timely publication requirements (with the Department of State serving as a leading offender) and a consolidated platform has yet to be established.

a. If confirmed, will you bring the Department into compliance with FATAA?
b. If confirmed, will you ensure sufficient resources are set aside to create a single, consolidated, publicly available digital platform for foreign assistance data?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure that relevant information related to U.S. foreign assistance programs are available and accessible to Congress and the public as called for under the FATAA.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#180)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is the single most generous provider of humanitarian assistance in the world, both financial and in-kind, thus saving hundreds of millions of lives and promoting the growth of healthier, more stable societies. Yet today, an estimated 690 million people are food insecure, of which 270 million are facing starvation. As needs outpace the ability of donors to respond, it is imperative that the Department and USAID be enabled to stretch U.S. humanitarian resources farther, including by modernizing U.S. international food aid.

Historically, the flagship U.S. food aid program – Food for Peace – required that 100 percent of the food provided under the Act be purchased in the United States, of which 50% must be shipped on U.S. flagged vessels. According to the GAO, the shipping requirement, in particular, has added significant time and cost to emergency food aid, even while failing to fulfil its statutory purpose. Three consecutive administrations have thus proposed changes– ranging from setting aside 20 percent of the budget for local and regional procurement to eliminating Food for Peace entirely. The Global Food Security Act (as re- authorized through FY2023) and the 2018 Farm Bill did include modest reforms, but more needs to be done.

a. Do you agree that agricultural cargo preference requirements have outlived their statutory purpose and thus add unnecessary time and expense to U.S. food aid?
b. Should U.S. cargo preference requirements continue to be applied to international food aid, or should humanitarian assistance in all forms be exempted while the Department of Defense continues, refines, or expands its own efforts to maintain sealift capacity?
c. If confirmed, will you carry forward the food aid reform efforts of your predecessors, including under the Obama Administration?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with relevant counterparts within the Biden-Harris administration to review the status of agricultural cargo preference requirements.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#181)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

More than 80 million people are currently displaced around the world. This number has doubled in just the past decade, as a result of growing global conflicts and disasters. Importantly, Congress passed the bipartisan Global Fragility Act in 2019, mandating the creation and implementation of a Global Fragility Strategy to address the root causes of fragility and prevent future humanitarian crises.

a. What is the role of foreign assistance in tackling the drivers of state fragility and humanitarian crises?
b. How would you work to ensure the U.S. government effectively implements the Global Fragility Act?

Answer:

U.S. foreign assistance can play a critical role in helping address the root causes of poverty and fragility and prevent future humanitarian crises, which ultimately benefits our foreign policy and national security. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure effective implementation of the Global Fragility Act.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#182)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under what circumstances should humanitarian assistance be exempted from sanctions restrictions? How will the State Department, including through the new Office of Sanctions Coordination, work with the Treasury Department to ensure our sanctions programs are designed to shape behavior without exacerbating humanitarian crises around the world?

Answer:

Consideration of exemptions for humanitarian assistance from sanctions may be necessary to respond to humanitarian crises or to address other urgent priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure the State Department works closely with the Treasury Department to ensure that sanctions programs effectively achieve their intended effect without exacerbating humanitarian crises.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#183)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should humanitarian assistance be branded? If not, why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and consult with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#184)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should all U.S. foreign assistance be branded? If not, why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and consult with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#185)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, will you uphold President Trump's Executive Order on branding U.S. foreign assistance and the USAID Branding Modernization Act (P.L. 116-334)? Would you delegate authority to brand assistance implemented by USAID to the Administrator, consistent with the P.L. 116-334? If not, why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and consult with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#186)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Siljander, Helms, and Kemp-Kasten Amendments, in addition to the Mexico City Policy, have been instrumental in defending life in U.S. foreign assistance. What are your views on these abortion-related restrictions in U.S. foreign assistance?

Answer:

Sexual and reproductive health care services are essential to women's health and well-being. President Biden intends to rescind the Mexico City policy, which undermines our efforts to advance gender equality globally by restricting our ability to support women's health and gender-based violence prevention and response programs.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#187)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Other statutory restrictions, such as Trafficking in Persons (TIP) restrictions, have proven effective in influencing other governments to change poor behavior. However, if not implemented carefully, these restrictions can have unintended consequences and backfire on U.S. foreign policy interests.

a. Do you commit to working with Congress to apply such restrictions on assistance in a deliberative and effective manner?
b. Do you commit to working with Congress to enact and execute any necessary waivers for these restrictions so that they do not harm those they are not intended to affect?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure that restrictions on assistance are applied in a deliberate and effective manner, including on the use of waivers.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#188)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In certain situations, the actions of foreign governments, international organizations, or other entities may necessitate the suspension or termination of U.S. foreign assistance absent an explicit directive in law. This may be done, for instance, to incentivize or punish.

a. Beyond regular statutory restrictions on assistance, under what circumstances would the withholding or termination of U.S. foreign assistance to a country, internationalorganization, or other entity be appropriate?
b. If confirmed, do you commit to consulting Congress prior to suspending or terminating U.S. foreign assistance for any reason other than the application of U.S. law?

Answer:

The potential withholding or termination of U.S. foreign assistance may be considered in circumstances where U.S. foreign policy objectives are at stake. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on potential decisions to suspend or terminate assistance.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#189)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Former USAID Administrator Mark Green spearheaded the agency's "Journey to Self-Reliance" initiative in an effort to provide strategic focus to U.S. foreign assistance, including by taking a data-based approached toward building partner country capacity to achieve and sustain development results. In contrast with China's development model, which creates dependence, Administrator Green argued that America should seek to foster self-reliance and responsibility among its friends.

a. While distinct from "diplomatic" assistance, do you agree that the purpose of development assistance is to end the need for its existence? Is USAID's mission to deliver assistance, or to help countries stand on their own two feet?
b. Do you intend to work with USAID to continue the "Journey to Self-Reliance" initiative, whether in name or in spirit?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator of USAID to review the strategy and initiatives for development assistance.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#190)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, the FY2020 State & Foreign Operations appropriations bill created the Countering Chinese Influence Fund (CCIF) to counter malign Chinese influence around the world and increase transparency and accountability associated with the Belt and Road Initiative.

a. Do you support the goals and objectives of the CCIF?
b. Are there particular regions or sectors that you believe the CCIF should prioritize?
c. Do you commit to directing an official at the Assistant Secretary level or above to oversee the obligation of these funds, to ensure that they are obligated strategically and in a manner that advances U.S. interests?

Answer:

China's use of coercive and corrupting tools of malign influence to undermine and interfere in democracies are a concern for the U.S. and our allies around the world. The Biden-Harris administration will take action to counter this malign Chinese influence, including by increasing transparency and accountability associated with the Belt and Road Initiative. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress to identify priority regions and sectors as well as to ensure appropriate leadership in the Department responsible for obligation ofthese funds.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#191)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The BUILD Act of 2018 significantly restructured U.S. assistance for development finance, transforming the Overseas Private Investment Corporation into the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and incorporating the development finance activities of USAID. The DFC's primary mission is to harness the power of the American private sector to foster inclusive, market-based economic growth in low- and middle-income countries.

a. What is the DFC's role in our strategic competition with China?
b. Are there particular countries, regions, or sectors that the DFC should focus on?
c. Should the DFC be authorized to establish offices and operate in high-income countries if doing so would "counter Chinese influence," beyond what is currently authorized by law? Or should the DFC remain focused on its core mission of promoting economic growth in low- and middle-income countries while the CCIF is tapped for this form of strategic assistance in higher-income areas?

Answer:

The Development Finance Corporation created by Congress is an important tool for improving our ability to facilitate private-sector activities in low and lower-middle income countries and to help counter Chinese influence. The Biden-Harris administration will use our economic diplomacy and the tools of the DFC, USAID, MCC and Treasury, to work with the U.S. private sector, governments to counter Chinese malign influence in Africa, the Western Hemisphere and across the developing world to increase trade and investment and promote U.S. business. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure effective utilization of the DFC.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#191)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

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UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#192)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Power Africa has helped alleviate energy poverty on the continent by connecting over 17 million homes and businesses to electricity. Yet, Africa is undergoing urbanization faster than anywhere else on the planet, and so needs much larger energy systems to support job creation, big cities, and industry. If confirmed, how will the United States promote abundant, affordable energy at scale across Africa?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to use all available tools to promote abundant, affordable energy across Africa.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#193)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The U.S. approach to promoting energy in emerging markets has been technology-inclusive. Power Africa has supported diverse types of energy investments, and the DFC recently lifted a prohibition on nuclear power. This flexible approach has enabled countries to find their own cost-effective path to an energy solution that supports their development goals. Additionally, U.S. flexibility has helped to level the playing field for American firms against Chinese and Russian competitors. Unfortunately, some European countries are now restricting overseas investments in natural gas on climate grounds. If confirmed, would you support Power Africa and DFC continuing to be able to support and invest in a flexible range of technologies, including natural gas?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on ensuring that Power Africa and the Development Finance Corporation are advancing our energy and climate goals.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#194)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Around the world, political dissidents, activists, journalists, and human rights advocates have been victims of repression, torture, detention, abuse, and arbitrary killing, for solely exercising their right to freedom of expression.

a. If confirmed, what would you do to bolster and reiterate the U.S. Government's commitment to protecting and advocating for those on the frontlines, including civil societyorganizations?
b. How would you direct the State Department to enhance global protections for freedom of expression and the press?
c. How would you prioritize a "whole-of-government" approach to human rights policy and its application in regional and functional diplomatic relationships?
d. There is serious concern about the state of press freedom around the world. If confirmed as Secretary of State, what actions will you take to curb suppression of press freedom and support independent journalists around the world?

Answer:

I share your concern about the "democratic recession" around the world, about attacks on civil society, political dissidents, and independent journalists. As you note, press freedom is under attack, and a free and independent media is essential to holding governments accountable to their citizens. I am eager to work with the team at the State Department, USAID, and with Congress to expand U.S. efforts in support of press freedom and independent media. More broadly, President Biden has made clear that human rights and democracy should be central to our foreign policy-- it's part of why he has committed to host a Summit for Democracy-- and I share his assessment and am committed, if confirmed, to ensuring that human rights and democracy are elevated within the State Department, and in interagency discussions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#195)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Everyone should be able to practice their faith however they choose, including in places like China, India, and Uzbekistan.

a. If confirmed, how will international religious freedom factor into your priorities as Secretary of State?
b. What do you believe is the role of the U.S. Government in advocating on behalf of religious minorities?

Answer:

I will make it a priority to ensure that the voice and diplomatic engagement of the U.S. government is robustly deployed in defense of religious freedom and on behalf of ethnic and religious minorities and others who experience violations of their universal human rights. I am committed to working with the White House to ensure the timely nomination of an Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom and will work with that person and the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to make sure that international religious freedom remains a priority.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#196)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) defines Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) as countries where the government engages in or tolerates "particularly severe" violations of religious freedom. The statute, as amended by the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016 (Frank Wolf Act), also defines the State Department's Special Watch List (SWL) for countries where the government engages in or tolerates "severe" violations of religious freedom.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a report in mid-2020 that outlined their recommendations for CPC and SWL designations. Of note, USCIRF recommended that Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—as well as five others—India, Nigeria, Russia, Syria, and Vietnam be designated as CPCs. In December, only Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, the DPRK, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan were re-designated.

a. Do you believe this list encompasses all of the violators of religious freedom globally? Do others deserve to be placed on the CPC list?
b. Do you pledge to not allow political concerns to interfere with the CPC designations?

Answer:

I am committed to faithfully implementing the IRFA and the Frank Wolf Act, and to using the standards set forth by Congress to guide designations under the law. I will carefully review the evidence provided by State Department experts, as well as the input of USCIRF. I look forward to continuing to engage with you, and with other members of the Committee, on how we can not only identify where violations of religious freedom are occurring, but also how we can work constructively to end them.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#197)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. How will you prioritize women in peacekeeping and in security efforts both at the UN and within US programming abroad?

Answer:

UNSCR 1325 is a lodestar that has guided conflict prevention and resolution efforts, not only at the UN but also in regional security organizations and on the ground in conflict and crisis zones around the world, over the last two decades. If confirmed, I am fully committed to expanding that work, in furtherance of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, and to ensuring that the State Department leads the way. After all, it is both the right and smart thing to do: efforts to prevent conflict, to end conflict, to recover and rebuild after conflict are more successful and more sustainable when women are not only included but empowered.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#198)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Conflict and crisis have significant implications for women and girls. In contemporary conflicts, as much as 90 percent of casualties are among civilians, most of whom are women and children. Women are the first to be affected by infrastructure breakdown, as they struggle to keep families together and care for the wounded. How do you believe the United States and the UN should approach and prioritize the protection of women and girls in conflict settings?

Answer:

Civilian protection, including the protection of women and girls in conflict zones, should be a priority of the United States and of our international partners. Civilian casualties are not only tragedies within conflict, they set back the cause of repairing and rebuilding when conflict is over. We will work with international partners, including relevant UN agencies, to put a focus on the protection of women and girls in conflict and crisis zones.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#199)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under President Obama and as continued under President Trump, the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force (formerly the Atrocity Prevention Board) is tasked with tracking potential behaviors that could amount to atrocities in foreign countries. The task force, while noble in cause, lacks adequate resources to accomplish the stated goal.

a. If confirmed, how will you appropriately fund, staff, and train personnel serving on this task force in the new administration?
b. Will you bolster training efforts to continue empowering Foreign Service Officers, Locally Employed Staff, and contractors to detect and report on the warning signs of atrocities?
c. Please describe efforts you intend to take to bolster the interagency approach to preventing atrocities through this task force.

Answer:

The original intent behind the creation of the Atrocity Prevention Board / Atrocity Early Warning Task Force was not only to identify early warnings but also to bring together the information that the U.S. government has on potential crises to build as complete a picture as possible, and to use that information as a basis for evaluating policy options to prevent atrocities. That objective remains an important one. If confirmed, I will work with the team at the State Department and Congress -- including by aligning policy guidance, staffing, and resources-- to meet the objective of the task force at each stage: identifying and detecting warning signs; assembling information from across the interagency; and focusing interagency policy leaders' attention on policy options to prevent atrocities before they occur. In line with the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018 and subject to resource availability, I will support expanded training efforts on atrocity prevention for State Department Foreign and Civil Service, Locally Employed Staff, and contractors.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#200)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Internet freedom around the globe is waning as authoritarian states continue to suppress dissent, silence critics, and oppress populations through online censorship and repeated or prolonged internet shutdowns. Current programmatic efforts in Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East aim to combat this issue.

a. How will you prioritize Internet Freedom within the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor bureau and across the Department?
b. Do you believe that internet shutdowns are a threat to human rights?

Answer:

With the support of Congress, over the last decade the State Department has built a range of programmatic activities that support Internet Freedom-- the ability of individuals to exercise their internationally recognized human rights online as they do offline. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights elaborates the freedom of expression and the right of all persons to "seek, impart, and receive information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Authoritarian regimes use Internet shutdowns among other tactics to prevent the exercise of this right. If I am confirmed, Internet Freedom will continue to be a priority for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and for bureaus across the Department.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#201)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your view of the relationship between the United States and the United Nations (UN)?

Answer:

President Biden recognizes that many of the biggest threats we face are transnational in nature and must be worked collectively, including through international organizations. Since the UN's founding 75 years ago, the United States has been critical to the United Nations success, and the United Nations, in turn, has been central to U.S. efforts to secure peace and security, prosperity, and human rights. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with Congress to ensure the U.S. relationship with the United Nations remains constructive and continues to serve America's national security interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#202)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

My constituents are concerned about the lack of "return on investment" at the UN. How will you work to enhance U.S. return on investment at the UN considering we are the top donor to the entire UN system?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states. This means doing all we can to ensure that the UN is using resources efficiently and effectively -- eliminating waste, demanding zero tolerance for any corruption, strengthening whistleblower protections and transparency and accountability, and ensuring other countries pay their fair share. It also includes taking steps to address the UN's credibility deficit, with regard to the unfair treatment and targeting of Israel, sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by UN military and civilian personnel, and the election of states known for human rights violations to UN leadership positions. We will continue to pursue such reforms to ensure the organization reaches its full potential. As the largest donor to the UN, we should aim to get the most we can out of our financial leverage. If confirmed, my team and I will do everything we can to make sure that other countries pay their fair share.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#203)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Does the UN play a role in determining U.S. participation in military conflicts? Do you believe that a UN resolution creates a legal obligation for U.S. military involvement in resolving a foreign conflict, including under UN doctrine relating to the responsibility to protect civilians? Does a UN resolution serve as a substitute for an authorization of the use of force from the U.S. Congress?

Answer:

The United Nations does not play a role in determining U.S. participation in military conflicts.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#204)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I introduced the Multilateral Aid Review Act to assess the value of U.S. taxpayer investments in multilateral entities, including the UN and its affiliated agencies. If confirmed, would you support a comprehensive review of U.S. investments in multilateral organizations?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this issue closely and working with Congress to ensure effective oversight of the UN and its affiliated agencies. I am committed to ensuring prudent management of U.S. taxpayer investments in multilateral entities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#205)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have been efforts to have the United States rejoin the World Tourism Organization. If confirmed, would you support the re-entry of the United States to the World Tourism Organization? What benefits would the United States enjoy for re-joining this organization?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure careful consideration and review before any efforts are made to rejoin the World Tourism Organization.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#206)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have been a number of proposals to increase the size of the UN Security Council, to include the expansion of the number of permanent members of the Council.

a. How do you believe U.S. interests would be affected by the expansion of the Council'ssize or by the addition of more permanent members?
b. Changes in the composition of the Security Council would require an amendment to the UN Charter, which in turn would require the advice and consent of the Senate. Do you commit to consulting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in advance of pursuing any proposals to change the composition of the Council?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the latest state of play regarding any ongoing conversations among UN member states on possible reform of the UN Security Council, and I look forward to consulting closely with Congress on this issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#207)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are your views on the need for management reform at the UN?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#208)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How will you work to address barriers to advance UN management reforms, especially those created by the different priorities among member states?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#209)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How will you measure success in implementing management reforms at the UN?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#210)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What policies need to be implemented to maintain fiscal responsibility and accountability within the UN system?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#211)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

While the UN has taken steps to improve its efficiency, operational effectiveness, and accountability, the continuing need for reform is obvious to most observers, including strong supporters of the institution. The UN Secretary-General has committed to an agenda of reform. The U.S. push for reform is one of the main drivers behind the progress to date.

a. In your opinion, what are the top three reforms that the UN could undertake in the coming two years that will have the greatest impact?
b. How will you explain to the Secretary-General and the member states that continued reform is a precondition for full U.S. support of the UN?
c. What tactics would you use if reform efforts falter or lack urgency?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states. This means doing all we can to ensure that the UN is using resources efficiently and effectively -- eliminating waste, demanding zero tolerance for any corruption, strengthening whistleblower protections and transparency and accountability, and ensuring other countries pay their fair share. It also includes taking steps to address the UN's credibility deficit, with regard to the unfair treatment and targeting of Israel, sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by UN military and civilian personnel, and the election of states known for human rights violations to UN leadership positions. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to pursue such reforms to ensure the organization reaches its full potential, and I look forward to working with Congress on these efforts.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#212)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is the largest donor to the World Food Programme, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and other UN agencies. Will you continue this pattern of voluntary donations to address some of the world's most pressing issues?

Answer:

The U.S. role as the world's largest humanitarian donor has always been an important marker of our leadership on the world stage, and a reflection of the strong bipartisan commitment to our generosity and to leading with our values. If confirmed, I am committed to the U.S. continuing to play this role and to working with Congress to ensure robust funding for the key international humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#213)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

213. The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has been unfairly targeted by the Court. The Trump Administration took a harder line on US involvement in the ICC after the Prosecutor opened an investigation into U.S. service members.

a. Does the Biden Administration support the United States becoming a party to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court?
b. Under what circumstances should the United States cooperate with the ICC?
c. Do you believe that the ICC should be investigating alleged actions of US service members and officials in Afghanistan? If yes, please explain.
d. Do you believe that the ICC has jurisdiction to investigate or bring to trial United States service members, officials, or other United States citizens? If yes, please explain.
e. Do you believe that the ICC should be investigating a case involving alleged Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories? If yes, please explain.
f. Do you believe that the ICC has jurisdiction to investigate or bring to trial Israeli service members, officials, or other Israeli citizens? If yes, please explain.
g. Do you believe the ICC's reputation has been diminished by recent attempts to prosecute United States and Israeli nationals? If no, please explain.
h. Do you believe that an ICC prosecution of United States services members and public servants would deny those U.S. citizens fundamental due process protections to which all Americans are guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, such as a right to trial by jury? If no, please explain.
i. Do you believe the United States has an obligation to protect U.S. citizens who have served or are currently serving in Afghanistan against criminal prosecution by the ICC? If yes, as Secretary of State, what specific actions would you take to ensure that US service members, officials, and citizens are not subject to ICC prosecutions? If no, please explain.
j. Beyond the ICC, what international accountability mechanisms do you support? Please provide examples of special courts or tribunals which have worked well as well as examples of special court or tribunals which did not work well.
k. What is your vision for the Office of Criminal Global Justice's role in the Department of State?

Answer:

The United States shares the goals of the ICC in promoting accountability for the worst crimes known to humanity. At the same time, the U.S. has always taken the position that the court's jurisdiction should be reserved for countries that consent to it, or that are referred by the

UN Security Council. We are following the court's work on Afghanistan closely and will vigorously defend U.S. personnel from legal jeopardy before the ICC. We are also following the court's work on the Israeli/Palestinian situation. U.S. lawyers have often worked with Israeli lawyers to share expertise on the court and I anticipate that this will continue. Much as we disagree with the ICC's actions relating to the Afghanistan and Israeli/Palestinian situations, we do not think imposing financial and visa sanctions on officers of the court was an appropriate or effective strategy. It sent the wrong signal about U.S. support for the rule of law and created pointless friction with our allies who support the court. It also has not worked. We understand that the ICC has recently undergone an independent review and that member states may be considering various reforms to help the court better achieve its core mission of punishing and deterring atrocity crimes. We think this is a worthwhile effort. We anticipate that the bulk of our energies with respect to the ICC will be spent on defending our personnel, but there may be exceptional cases where we consider cooperating with the court as we sometimes have in the past. We will have to weigh the interests at stake on a case by case basis.

Since World War II, the United States has played a leading role in promoting accountability for atrocities. The ICC is part of an array of efforts, including regional and domestic efforts, to provide accountability. The best prospects for accountability rest with the strengthening of domestic institutions and political will. If confirmed, I will ensure that the U.S. government continues to pursue international accountability through the full range of available and effective mechanisms.

The Office of Global Criminal Justice plays a critical role in supporting the U.S. government's efforts to ensure international accountability. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the office is appropriately staffed to play this vital role.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#214)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States reinstating its financial support for UNRWA? If so, what reforms would you recommend UNRWA undertake in order to re-gain support from the United States?

Answer:

President Biden plans to follow through on his pledge to restore U.S. economic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. The critical humanitarian assistance UNRWA provides has only become more important during the global pandemic. Restoring funding to UNRWA is not just the right thing to do; it is also in the interests of peace. Without UNRWA's services, Gaza would be in even greater danger of a humanitarian collapse that would have serious security implications for Israel. The current administration's attempt to extract Palestinian concessions by withholding UNRWA and other funding clearly failed. Maintaining this misguided decision would only inflict further pain on innocent Palestinians. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress regarding a resumption of funding to UNRWA and will ensure a close focus on management and other reform issues at the agency.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#215)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As of submittal of these questions, there are approximately 26 million refugees globally, including "5 million refugees under the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA)." To address this challenge in 2020, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) employed 17,324 staff across 135 countries, and UNWRA employed 27,841 staff.

a. Why does UNWRA require 10,000 more staff to advocate its regional mission than UNHCR to advance its global mission?
b. Do you believe UNWRA should be absorbed by UNHCR, given UNHCR's efficiency and infrastructure?
c. If confirmed, will you commit to working with the appropriate Congressional committees prior to any consultations for resumption of U.S. contributions to UNRWA?

Answer:

President Biden plans to follow through on his pledge to restore U.S. economic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. The critical humanitarian assistance UNRWA provides has only become more important during the global pandemic. Restoring funding to UNRWA is not just the right thing to do; it is also in the interests of peace. Without UNRWA's services, Gaza would be in even greater danger of a humanitarian collapse that would have serious security implications for Israel. The current administration's attempt to extract Palestinian concessions by withholding UNRWA and other funding clearly failed. Maintaining this misguided decision would only inflict further pain on innocent Palestinians. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress regarding a resumption of funding to UNRWA and will ensure a close focus on management and other reform issues at the agency.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#216)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is the position of the Biden Administration regarding the UN Human Rights Council?

a. Will the Biden Administration seek to become a member of the Council at its next opportunity?
b. What reforms will the Biden Administration seek at the UN Human Rights Council?
c. Will the Biden Administration commit to securing necessary reforms prior to rejoining the UN Human Rights Council?
d. Does the Biden Administration believe the Council devotes a disproportionate amount of attention to criticizing Israel while ignoring more pressing human rights crises?
e. Understanding that the Human Rights Council has been "broken," in large part, by allowing human rights abusers to obtain seats on the Council, do you believe that conditioning U.S. participation on reform is beneficial?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration believes that, when it works well, the Human Rights Council plays an important role in shining a spotlight on the world's worst human rights violators and can serve as a beacon for those fighting against injustice and tyranny. We also recognize that the Human Rights Council is flawed and in need of reform. We believe that the best way to improve the Council so it can achieve its potential is through robust and principled U.S. engagement.

President Biden has committed that the United States will seek to rejoin the Human Rights Council. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the best opportunity for the U.S. to next seek election to the Council.

The Human Rights Council is not without its flaws and needs reform -- including to address its anti-Israel bias. But when we have a seat at the table we can advocate on Israel's behalf, and we have seen changes like a reduction in the number of resolutions targeting Israel.

It is critical that the U.S. show up and engage with the Council directly. The membership of the UN Human Rights Council has also been criticized. We've seen that when the U.S. plays an active and constructive role on the Council, we have been able to engage with our allies and friends to keep off some of the countries with the worst human rights records and to encourage countries with better records to run for seats. U.S. engagement at the Council can be a force for positive change and for holding the world's worst human rights violators accountable. We can also work with our allies at the Council to more effectively counter the influence of persistent human rights violators like China, which can be much more influential on HRC issues when the U.S. is not actively engaged. The Council has been one of the few places in the UN to shine a spotlight on China over its actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. In recent years, we have also seen important HRC efforts on some of the world's worst violators, including Syria, the DPRK, Iran, and Venezuela. The U.S. should be actively at the table and leading the efforts to hold bad human rights actors to account.

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to seeking reforms of the Human Rights Council, particularly with respect to the Council's membership and its disproportionate focus on Israel. If confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. prioritizes needed reforms as part of our re-engagement with the HRC.

Persistent violators of human rights do not belong on the UN Human Rights Council. The best way for us to raise the quality of engagement with and membership on the Council is to engage in a principled fashion ourselves. The U.S. is most effective at the Human Rights Council and in other UN bodies when we are at the table, in the room, in good financial standing, and use the full weight of our diplomatic might to lead and to pursue appropriate and needed reforms.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#217)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have been credible allegations that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights shared the names of Chinese dissidents who were attending UN Human Rights Council sessions with the Chinese Government.

a. If confirmed, how will you investigate these allegations?
b. What reforms will you seek to ensure that this practice never happens again?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ask relevant Department officials for a detailed understanding of this issue and will ensure that U.S. government personnel prioritize this matter in engagements with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#218)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is the single largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

a. Do you believe that any country, including the United States, should pay more than 25% of the peacekeeping budget?
b. What is your position on repayment of current U.S. peacekeeping arrears?
c. Are there any specific steps you believe the UN should take to reduce the overall size of the UN peacekeeping budget? If so, what are they?
d. Are there any specific UN peacekeeping missions you would support reducing or terminating? If so, what missions do you believe should be reduced or terminated?

Answer:

As President Biden has committed, we will seek to address U.S. outstanding financial balances for the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets, including potential action to address arrears that have accrued over the past four years. The United States' influence at the UN is greatest when we pay our bills in full and on time -- including the influence we need to push back against China and others and to lead reform efforts, including reform efforts to ensure that UN peacekeeping funds are used as effectively as possible. Our failure to live up to these financial obligations - both on the UN regular budget and the peacekeeping budget - undermines U.S. credibility and leadership at the United Nations, is a major contributing factor to the UN's current liquidity crisis, and gives China and member states an easy talking point to promote themselves and undercut the U.S.

If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to take the steps necessary to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the

substantial level of arrears that have accumulated over the past four years and the 25% cap on peacekeeping funding.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#219)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The UN maintains several particular bodies and departments that focus on the Palestinians. These including the Division on Palestinian Rights (DPR), the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), and UN Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). Will you work to challenge the existence and funding of these departments?

Answer:

As a matter of principle, there are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside of direct negotiations between the parties and this includes counterproductive unilateral steps to gain membership in UN agencies. If confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. works to avoid such actions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#220)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, the Palestinians threatened action to circumvent ascension protocols and seek a change in their status at the UN.

a. Do you believe this action promotes the Middle East peace process and serves the needs of the Palestinian people?
b. In your view, what consequences should the Palestinians face if they continue to attempt to gain membership in UN agencies?

Answer:

As a matter of principle, there are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside of direct negotiations between the parties and this includes counterproductive unilateral steps to gain membership in UN agencies. If confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. works to avoid such actions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#221)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States lacks a veto over membership decisions in UN specialized agencies that the Palestinians could target for membership. When the Palestinians apply for membership, the United States is required to cut funding to that organization pursuant to two laws enacted by a Democratic-led Congress in the early 1990's. To this end, Title 22, Section 287e of the U.S. code states:

> "No funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or any other Act shall be available for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as member states." (Adopted as Public Law 101-246 in 1990.)
> "The United States shall not make any voluntary or assessed contribution: (1) to any affiliated organization of the United Nations which grants full membership as a state to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, or (2) to the United Nations, if the United Nations grants full membership as a state in the United Nations to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, during any period in which such membership is effective." (Adopted as Public Law 103-236 in 1994.)

The language in these provisions is clear and provides no discretion or waiver authority. If confirmed, will you support their enforcement?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will support the enforcement of these provisions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#222)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Over the past several years, the Palestinian Authority has received votes in various UN bodies to upgrade its status. Such attempts undermine the long-held belief that peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority can only come about as a result of direct negotiations.

a. What is your plan to stop initiatives like this from even coming before UN entities, or the General Assembly, for a vote?
b. How will you address future attempts by the Palestinian Authority to achieve statehood through the UN?

Answer:

As a matter of principle, there are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside of direct negotiations between the parties and this includes counterproductive unilateral steps to gain membership in UN agencies. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the U.S. works to avoid such actions, and I will support enforcement of relevant U.S. statutory provisions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#223)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States has a long maintained a policy of opposing many one-sided Security Council resolutions that more often than not, criticize Israel, but fail to address other issues such as Palestinian terrorism.

a. Do you support the use of an American veto to block one-sided anti-Israel resolutions in the Security Council?
b. What do you believe should be the standard employed in deciding whether to veto or not?
c. Do you believe that there is a disproportionate focus on Israel at the UN? How would you counter this at the UN?

Answer:

At the UN, we will continue to uphold President-elect Biden's strong commitment to Israel and its security. This includes opposing efforts to unfairly single out or delegitimize Israel through one-sided resolutions, reports, and other actions across the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other bodies. If confirmed, I also look forward to working with our Israeli diplomatic colleagues, to promote the election of Israel to UN leadership posts, inclusion in UN working groups, and support for qualified Israeli candidates for UN positions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#224)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I introduced the STRATEGIC Act to advance a comprehensive U.S. policy for competition with China. The legislation authorizes the Office of UN Integrity that the Trump Administration stood up within the Bureau of International Organizations.

a. If confirmed, would you support the sustainment and authorization of such an office?
b. Additionally the STRATEGIC Act establishes a Special Envoy for Integrity within the UN System. If confirmed, will you appoint a Special Envoy for UN Integrity to examine malign influence in UN elections and UN bodies? If not, why not?

Answer:

We have seen that when America walks away from the UN, others fill the void. When we forfeit our seat at the UN, others step in and occupy the space. We will use our re-engagement in the UN system to push back against the rising influence of China and others. Our approach toward China at the UN will derive from a clear and compelling affirmative U.S. policy agenda, based on American values and interests that we drive in UN forums and with our allies and partners. When China opposes that agenda, we will seek to outmaneuver China. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure the State Department is organized effectively to do so.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#225)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

China has focused intensely on securing leadership roles in various UN agencies, particularly those overseeing technical standards that will shape the future. In many cases, these leaders have overtly advanced Chinese Communist Party goals, instead of acting independently to advance the global good. It is clear the United States has had mixed success with elections for heads of International Organizations in the past, and is taking more robust and coordinated steps to advocate for qualified and independent candidates in UN bodies?

Answer:

China engages robustly across the entire UN system to drive its anti-human rights and development agenda. The U.S. has been absent from those discussions for the past four years, and it is time for us to re-engage actively. We cannot compete unless we return as a strong diplomatic player and make sure we're engaged and in good standing across the United Nations. If confirmed, I will prioritize U.S. efforts to advocate for qualified and independent candidates in UN bodies.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#226)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, will you prioritize robust strategies to secure the election qualified and independent candidates to lead UN/IO bodies, especially highly specialized agencies?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration believes in the independence and integrity of UN/IO bodies, including highly specialized agencies, and agrees with the importance of electing qualified and independent candidates to lead such bodies. If confirmed, I will prioritize robust strategies to secure the election of such candidates.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#227)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the Peace Corps evacuated roughly 7,000 American citizens from posts abroad. Mission China was scheduled to close in 2021, but due to the uncertain nature of the virus, was closed early.

a. Do you believe that the Peace Corps should re-enter China?
b. Do you believe China meets the criteria for a country to establish or maintain such a mission?
c. The Peace Corps began deploying small cohorts of volunteers to countries that had begun to open in early 2021. How will you work with the Director of the Peace Corps to ensure a safe re-entry for American Citizens as they return to service?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department thoughtfully reviews this question with Peace Corps leadership, ensuring that our top priority remains the health and safety of U.S. volunteers.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Peace Corps maintains rigorous and careful criteria for opening and maintaining country missions.

Our embassies will work closely with Peace Corps country programs to review local public conditions, assess potential risks to volunteers, and enact appropriate measures to minimize COVID-19 risk. We will take an evidence-based approach to determining when and how volunteers can return to service.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#228)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration has reduced the ceiling on the number of refugees to be granted entry into the United States each fiscal year (FY), setting it at 45,000 for FY2018; 30,000 for FY2019; and 18,000 for FY2020 respectively. These ceilings are much lower than in previous years. Actual refugee admissions in FY2020, which were negatively impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, totaled 11,814. On October 28, 2020, President Trump issued a Presidential Determination (PD) setting the refugee ceiling for FY2021 at 15,000.

a. Does the Biden Administration plan to raise the refugee ceiling? If so, do you plan to consult with Congress before doing so? What will you recommend to President Biden with regard to any new refugee ceiling?
b. If you do intend to recommend an increase to the refugee ceiling, how do you plan to allow entry without overburdening a slimmed-down system?
c. President Trump re-categorized potential claims for refugee seekers in the United States. Will the Biden Administration adhere to or alter these categories?
d. Do you believe that refugees who have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion should remain a priority for U.S. admission?
e. In a July 2020 Executive Order, President Trump promised an increase in admissions for refugees from Hong Kong to the United States. To our knowledge, there have been no refugee applications from Hong Kong. How do you evaluate this policy given the political climate in Hong Kong?

Answer:

The President has committed to raise the annual refugee admissions target to 125,000 and to increase it over time. If confirmed, I will recommend that we set a new target that is commensurate with the global humanitarian need, our nation's obligation to the world's most vulnerable, and America's long bipartisan tradition of welcoming refugees. The Biden Administration will consult with Congress before issuing a new Presidential Determination.

The essential elements of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program remain intact, even as arrivals have plummeted, and they remain critical to the success of the program. Partnerships with state and local officials, and welcoming communities across the country, have been and

will continue to be the basis for a strong and successful program. I understand that the State Department and other federal agencies involved in this program, together with private sector partners, have the capacity to significantly scale up resettlement in the coming months and years. As we scale up, we will always prioritize the security and integrity of the program.

The Biden Administration intends to restore the long-standing, bipartisan approach of ensuring that refugees from all regions of the world have access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, based on vulnerability and humanitarian need.

Refugees who have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion have long been a priority for U.S. resettlement in keeping with our nation's history and support for religious freedom. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Congress through initiatives such as the Lautenberg program to ensure this remains a priority for our country.

The Biden Administration is committed to supporting the people of Hong Kong who are being persecuted because of their political beliefs. For those who seek protection and refuge, we are committed to providing a meaningful pathway to safety, be it through resettlement or any other legal mechanism.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#229)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Protecting U.S. national security in relation to the issuance of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) remains a major concern, including both Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs. All applicants for entry into the United States are subject to security checks conducted by the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security, a process that also involves coordination with other agencies. Former officials have stated that the vetting process for SIVs is particularly rigorous and must go through the interagency process.

a. How will you streamline the system for SIVs while protecting U.S. national security?
b. Do you believe that current protocols effectively accomplish the goal of admitting Iraqis and Afghans who assisted the U.S. government overseas, provided that they do not pose security risks?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the security vetting agencies to examine how the vetting process can be strengthened and made more efficient, while continuing to prioritize U.S. national security.

Congress established the SIV programs to provide humanitarian protection to nationals of Iraq and Afghanistan fleeing violence and other forms of persecution directed at them because they provided faithful service to the United States, and delays in processing applicants under the SIV Programs must be addressed. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to examine how these programs can be carried out in a more timely manner to ensure that those at risk can fully benefit from the protection these programs provide.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#230)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Bringing home detained Americans was a top U.S. foreign policy priority for the Trump Administration that yielded many successes, including Michael White, and Joshua Holt, who were among the more than 50 people released from 22 countries during its tenure. Unfortunately, there are others who have not returned home, including Robert Levinson, and we will continue to seek to hold those accountable for his disappearance.

a. How will you empower the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs to leverage relationships to continue to bring Americans home?
b. What concrete steps will you take to ensure the release, immediately, of all ofthese Americans who have been away from their families for far too long?
c. What concrete steps will you take to bring home Trevor Reed and Paul Whelan who are being illegally detained in Russia?
d. What concrete steps will you take to bring home U.S. citizen Kai Li who is being illegally detained in China?
e. What concrete steps will you take to bring home Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, and Morad Tahbaz who are being illegally detained in Iran?
f. What concrete steps will you take to bring home the Citgo6 who are being illegally held in Venezuela?

Answer:

If confirmed, the safety and welfare of American citizens overseas will be among my highest priorities. One of the first briefings I requested as Secretary-designate was with Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens to learn about the current status of American citizens held hostage or wrongfully detained overseas. The new administration has asked Special Envoy Carstens to remain in place during the transition to ensure there is no disruption in our efforts to secure the release of these individuals or to provide support to their families and loved ones. If confirmed, I will ensure the Special Envoy has all necessary resources and has direct access to the Secretary and other Department leadership to ensure that no effort is spared to secure the release of all Americans held hostage or wrongfully detained overseas.

If confirmed, I will immediately ask the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs for priority actions I can take personally and the Department can take as a whole to support his efforts. This includes raising cases directly in my early engagements with foreign counterparts, coordinating with leadership across relevant departments and agencies to ensure full alignment on efforts to secure releases, and meeting with family members where appropriate.

I will raise the cases of Mr. Reed and Paul Whelan in my early engagements with counterparts in the Russian government and urge them to immediately release both individuals and allow them to return home to their families. I will also ask for recommendations from the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs and interagency counterparts on additional actions we can take to compel the Russian government to end these illegal detentions. I will also consult with Congress and engage with their families where appropriate.

I will raise the case of Mr. Lee in my early engagements with counterparts in the Chinese government and urge them to immediately end his illegal detention and allow them to return home to his family. I will also ask for recommendations from the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs and interagency counterparts on additional actions we can take to compel the Chinese government to end these illegal detentions. I will also consult with Congress and engage with his family where appropriate.

If confirmed, I will immediately ask the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs for the latest developments regarding the cases of Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, and Mr. Tahbaz. I will ask for his recommendation on the most effective strategy to secure their release, including whether direct engagement with Iran would be productive. I will consult with the appropriate officials in the Swiss government who have provided support to efforts to facilitate the release of Americans detained in Iran.

The previous administration repeatedly called for the unconditional release of the CITGO-6 and their return to the United States, and if confirmed, I will reiterate those calls. The six individuals and their families have suffered long enough. I am aware that Governor Richardson has engaged in the case. We will fully review all efforts that have been made to free the CITGO 6 and press for their immediate release.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#231)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Turkish government is currently targeting three U.S. Consulate employees with a variety of baseless charges. How will you work to ensure that these charges are dropped against these U.S. government employees?

Answer:

Turkey is a challenging ally. President Biden has promised to call out Turkish behavior that is inconsistent with international law or its commitments as a NATO ally. Our administration will also return human rights and rule of law to the bilateral agenda. At the same time, we have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and ensuring regional stability. We will seek cooperation with Turkey on common priorities and engage in dialogue to address disagreements. More broadly, it is important to keep Turkey facing west rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia and other adversaries. We can uphold our values and protect our interests while also keeping Turkey aligned with the transatlantic alliance on critical issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#232)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Will the Biden Administration continue public presidential meetings with, and support for, the Dalai Lama as conducted by the Trump Administration? Will you commit that the Department of State will meet with the Dalai Lama's representatives, as the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor did in 2020?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#233)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, due to a vacancy, the Special Coordinator for Tibet was filled by the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. In past practice, the Special Coordinator was filled by the Under-Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights. If confirmed, do you pledge to fill the Special Coordinator position at the level of Under-Secretary? Do you pledge to fill the position in a timely manner once a confirmed Under Secretary is in place?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure that we appoint a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in a timely manner and will empower that individual.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#234)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, would you re-affirm the U.S. policy to support Taiwan's World Health Assembly observer status? Could you describe steps that you would take to advance this objective?

Answer:

If confirmed I will continue U.S. policy to support Taiwan membership in international organizations where statehood is not a requirement and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation, as appropriate, in organizations where its membership is not possible. We will work closely with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Asia-Pacific region – and that includes deepening our ties with Taiwan and support for Taiwan memberships in these organizations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#235)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What specific steps do you intend to take to secure such meaningful participation for Taiwan in such international organizations as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)?

Answer:

If confirmed I will continue U.S. policy to support Taiwan membership in international organizations where statehood is not a requirement and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation, as appropriate, in organizations where its membership is not possible. We will work closely with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Asia-Pacific region – and that includes deepening our ties with Taiwan and support for Taiwan memberships in these organizations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#236)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you consider the human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against the Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic minorities, including forced sterilization, to constitute a genocide? If not, please explain.

Answer:

Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have suffered unspeakable oppression at the hands of China's authoritarian government. President Biden has called this oppression genocide.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#237)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how do you plan to confront the Chinese government on the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang?

Answer:

China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences. We will speak out consistently and jointly with allies and partners, impose costs and sanctions on those responsible, and help those persecuted find safe haven in the United States and other countries. We have been heartened by bipartisan congressional action on Xinjiang and commit to implement the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act. We look forward to working with Congress on this crucial issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#238)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Due to the massive amounts of human rights abuses being committed by the CCP, do you believe they should be allowed to host the Olympics in 2022?

Answer:

China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences. On the specific question of China's hosting of the Winter Olympics in 2022, we will closely review the issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#239)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Legislation currently under consideration proposes a human rights briefing for the Olympic athletes on Team America. The briefing would help inform athletes about major human rights abuses committed by the government hosting the Olympics, and alert them to narratives that the government pushes to deflect or deny such abuses. Do you support such a proposal? Would you devote Department of State resources and personnel toward working with the International Olympic Committee and other relevant stakeholders to ensure such briefings are provided to as many American athletes as possible prior to the 2022 Olympics?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would support the Department reaching out to the U.S. Olympic Committee to offer briefings to U.S. competitors.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#240)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The CCP has cracked down on the most basic rights of the people of Hong Kong. How will you address the human rights abuses occurring in Hong Kong?

Answer:

China's continuing crackdown on Hong Kong – not only the imposition of the National Security Law, but also the arrests and imprisonment of pro-democracy activists — is an assault on freedom and democracy. We must stand united with our allies and partners against China's assault on Hong Kong's freedoms. We have been heartened by bipartisan congressional action on Hong Kong and commit to implement the Hong Kong Autonomy Act. We look forward to working with Congress on this crucial issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#241)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Saudi Arabia has a long record of arbitrarily detaining its own citizens and U.S. dual nationals, including prominent women's rights activists.

a. If confirmed, how will you secure the unconditional and immediate release of these women, including Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Nassima al-Sada, Nouf Abdulaziz and Maya'a al-Zahrani?

b. What strategies will you use in the Saudi-U.S. bilateral relationship to bolster human rights in country?

c. What steps will you take to ensure all detainees are given fair trials and proper detention conditions?

Answer:

As President Biden said in October, "I will defend the right of activists, political dissidents, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence." Our administration intends to elevate human rights issues across our foreign policy, including specifically in our relationship with Saudi Arabia. I will raise the cases of political prisoners directly with leaders in Saudi Arabia. The Biden-Harris administration will make clear from the outset that the issue of political prisoners - including brave Saudi women like those you mentioned - will be a priority in U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia; and that Saudi Arabia will face U.S. pressure to avoid additional detentions as well as resolve current cases. If confirmed, I will also ensure that Embassy Riyadh is giving these cases the attention they deserve.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#242)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Egyptian government has a less-than-stellar record on human rights, including recent arbitrary detentions of human rights activists, impunity for security services, deplorable detention conditions, suppression of fundamental freedoms, and more. It is important that the United States seek to bolster human rights and civil society in Egypt. What tools will you use to address these human rights abuses and end impunity for those committing them?

Answer:

President Biden is deeply committed to human rights and has directed his Administration to elevate human rights and rule of law concerns in U.S. foreign policy. If confirmed, I will elevate human rights in our bilateral relationship with Egypt and in doing so consider the variety of tools available to the Biden-Harris Administration to signal that these issues are a priority.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#243)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, the government of Bangladesh forcibly moved Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazaar to Bhasan Char, an island in the Bay of Bengal. This was undertaken without advance consultation with donor and international organizations, who were thus left unprepared to support critical assistance and protection measures. If confirmed, do you commit to discussing this action with Bangladeshi government officials? Do you commit to pressing the Bangladeshi officials to ensure no further relocations are undertaken before the UN conducts a thorough, independent, and technical assessment to determine the safety, feasibility, and desirability of relocating refugees to Bhasan Char?

Answer:

First, if confirmed I look forward to leading a review of atrocities committed, and work toward peace, security, and equal rights for the Rohingya as citizens of Burma. For years, the international organizations and NGOs working on the ground in Cox's Bazaar have been engaged in relevant protection and assistance activities for tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing violence in Burma/Myanmar. If confirmed, I and other relevant State Department officials will engage with the government of Bangladesh, leaders of relevant international and non-governmental organizations, and other partners in the international community to support a coordinated, appropriate approach to hosting Rohingya refugees, recognizing the enormous burden on the government of Bangladesh.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#244)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will you encourage foreign governments to act in accordance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which requires the prompt return of abducted children to their country of habitual residence?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will raise with foreign governments the importance of preventing, detecting and addressing cases of international child abduction, including the need to comply with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#245)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Will you commit to raising the issue of international parental child abduction in high-level meetings with foreign governments, including with Japan, Costa Rica, India, etc.?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#246)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How will you build an effective interagency process with other federal agencies—including the Department of Justice and Homeland Security—on ways to prevent and resolve cases of international child abduction?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the leadership of all relevant federal agencies to develop an effective process for preventing and resolving cases of international child abduction.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#247)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The number of children who are being adopted from overseas has declined in recent years.

a. If confirmed, how will you ensure that international child adoption processes are run smoothly, transparently, and in accordance with legal commitments?

b. Will you commit to raising issues with international child adoption in high level meetings with your foreign counterparts?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will encourage foreign governments to take steps to ensure that international child adoption processes are run appropriately and with robust safeguards, so that as many children around the world as possible can be raised in safe and loving homes, and I commit to raising adoption issues in high level meetings.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#248)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The recommendation of the State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking and Slavery (JTIP) regarding tier rankings in its annual Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Report are frequently overridden by regional bureaus or embassies with priorities other than the eradication of trafficking. Anti-trafficking experts have repeatedly raised concerns about "grade inflation" within the tier ranking process. If confirmed, will you work to reduce the influence of political concerns on the tier ranking system?

Answer:

The U.S. has always been a global leader in the fight against human trafficking and the TIP report is one of the most important diplomatic tools and information sources on this issue. Therefore, if confirmed, I will work with J/TIP and the regional bureaus to fairly apply the minimal standards and will work to reduce the influence of political concerns on the tier ranking system.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#249)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Countries that receive a Tier 3 rating in the TIP Report are subject to non-humanitarian, non-trade related foreign aid restrictions. The President has the option of exercising a national security waiver for countries who receive Tier 3 status. Since 2004, successive presidents have used the waiver, either partial or full, for a host of countries.

a. How effective do you believe these aid restrictions are in influencing countries to improve their human trafficking policies?

b. What is the impact of granting national security waivers on the effectiveness of the aid restrictions and the fight against human trafficking?

Answer:

We will look at the Tier 3 sanctions based on the facts on the ground in the particular country and what would move changes along the minimum standards most effectively. The Biden administration sees this as one of many important tools that might be brought to bear when appropriate.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#250a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (PL 114-17) ("INARA") requires the President to provide to Congress the text and related materials of any agreement with Iran relating to the nuclear program of Iran within five days of reaching the agreement. Additionally, INARA stipulates that the administration certify that such an agreement is not "inimical to or constitute an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security."

a. Would the requirements of INARA cited above apply to any future nuclear deal with Iran?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will strictly follow the requirements of INARA with regard to any new agreement entered into with Iran that falls under the provisions of the Act.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#250b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

b. Would the requirements of INARA cited above apply to any process of rejoining or reaffirming U.S. participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to work closely with Congress, and this includes briefing on any plans regarding the administration's future course of action. The JCPOA was submitted under INARA in 2015 and underwent close congressional and public scrutiny. The administration will look at whether INARA would require that the deal be submitted again, but in any case, if confirmed, I am committed to consulting with Congress on the path forward. Should the U.S. resume JCPOA participation, it will of course result in a resumption of the extensive reporting required under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA), which ended after the United States ceased participating in the deal.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#250c and #250d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

c. What is your definition of "an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security"?

d. Would a resurgent Iranian ballistic missile program constitute "an unreasonable risk to common defense and security"?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to fully consulting with Congress on any nuclear agreement with Iran as called for under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. This includes complying with any certification or reporting requirements related to common defense and security.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#250e)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

e. Do you believe that the United States is a "JCPOA participant" as described in UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015)?

Answer:

The issue of whether the United States is a "JCPOA participant" came up in the context of the Trump administration's efforts to invoke "snapback" at the United Nations Security Council – in other words, to reimpose all UN sanctions that were lifted pursuant to the nuclear deal. The threat of snapback of UN sanctions is a significant concern for Iran and provides leverage to ensure they comply with the JCPOA. The Trump Administration invoked it in a way that was never contemplated by the deal, namely after unilaterally withdrawing from it. The fact that virtually none of our allies or partners believes that snapback was achieved underscores the need to act in accordance with the purpose of the Security Council resolution and to take into account the views of our allies.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#251)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In recent years, China has become Iran's preeminent oil and trading partner, providing Iran with crucial technological support to help develop its energy resources and other forms of infrastructure. In June 2020, China and Iran allegedly entered into a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', which includes a maximum investment of $400 billion to improve Iran's oil, gas, and transportation infrastructure.

a. What impact does Chinese economic investment have on the efficacy of the international sanction regimes against Iran? What gains does China receive from such investment?

b. How would the Chinese government, or Chinese-based companies, benefit from the lifting of U.S. sanctions against Iran?

c. How does the United States drive a wedge between or shape CCP-Iranian relations?

d. Beyond economic considerations, China and Iran have also furthered their strategic and defense cooperation. China, and Chinese-based entities, are known to have supplied Iran's missile, nuclear, and conventional weapons programs. How does Chinese support to the development of Iran's nuclear program impact U.S. interests and objectives with respect to Iran?

e. The People's Liberation Army's presence in Djibouti, coupled with Chinese investments across the Red Sea region, have prompted growing concern about malign Chinese influence in the Middle East and North African region. How do you plan to contend with the growth of Chinese commercial and strategic expansion, including its coercive economic statecraft?

f. Is there a strategy for engagement when it comes to Chinese cooperation with U.S. partners and allies in the region? What messages do you plan to send them? What tools do you see as being at your disposal to thwart nefarious Chinese ambitions in the region, and in what context would you be willing to deploy them?

Answer:

The President is committed to ensuring as broad a multilateral coalition as possible to address Iran's nuclear program and destabilizing activities. That will mean seeking to work with China, which has close ties to Iran, to ensure they are on board and, at a minimum, will not

create impediments to our diplomatic objectives. Competition defines our relationship with China, but in the past it has been cooperative in efforts to constrain Iran's nuclear program as it should have no interest in seeing Iran develop a nuclear weapon and in the profoundly destabilizing impact that would have in a region upon which China depends for its oil imports. On the economic front, the last few years have seen both a decrease in trade between China and Iran due to U.S. sanctions and China's fear of exposing itself to our sanctions, and the announcement of the China-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On paper, the agreement is substantial, although it is hard to know whether the items listed will be followed through. Working with our allies and partners, using sanctions and other means at our disposal, the administration will seek to pressure China and other countries not to take steps vis-a-vis Iran that threaten our interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#252)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please provide your view of the Abraham Accords and their impacts for regional security, economic cooperation, and prosperity in the region.

Answer:

President Biden welcomed the Abraham Accords as an important contribution to peace in a divided region. The Biden-Harris Administration will seek to build on these agreements to further strengthen cooperation between Israel and its neighbors. And we will work with other Arab and Muslim countries to encourage them to normalize relations with Israel. We look forward to learning more about what commitments the Trump administration may have undertaken in finalizing these agreements, which we will give the fullest consideration.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#253)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how do you and the Biden administration plan to expand on the Abraham Accords to broker additional normalization agreements and ensure that existing agreements reap tangible economic and security benefits?

Answer:

The Abraham Accords are an important contribution to peace and security in the Middle East. The Biden-Harris Administration will seek to build on the agreements to expand the circle of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. We will also closely monitor the status of the normalization agreements reached over the last few months, encouraging the Arab states to uphold their commitments to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#254)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Some argue that the Trump administration's exit from the nuclear deal and maximum pressure against Iran coupled with its clear pro-Israel policies set the conditions for normalization under the Abraham Accords. Please provide your perspectives on this argument.

Answer:

As I said before the Committee, I applaud the Trump administration's role in the normalization agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These agreements reflect recognition by Israel and Arab countries that they hold many interests in common and can most effectively address them through cooperation. However, it is important to acknowledge that the Abraham Accords are the product of years of quiet diplomacy between Israel and the Arab world that was supported by U.S. administrations from both parties. In some cases, these normalization agreements formalized a state of affairs that had existed informally for some time.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#255)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2016 John Kerry argued that there would be no "separate peace" between Israel and Arabs without first solving the issue of Palestinian statehood.

a. What are your views on Palestinian statehood and its ties to additional normalization agreements?

b. Doesn't re-inserting Palestinian statehood back into the peace process hinder prospects of further normalizations with Israel?

c. What is your assessment of Palestinian leadership and its ability to reach consensus between Gaza and the West Bank on issues of statehood and support for terrorism?

d. In your view, how do Israeli-Arab normalization agreements affect the prospects for Israel-Palestinian peace negotiations?

e. What are your views on the Trump Administration's plan for Middle East peace and requirements that the Palestinian Authority must cease terrorist activity and cease martyr/prison payments in order to achieve statehood? Can you commit to rejecting any offer of Palestinian statehood until concerns about the PA's extremist behavior are addressed?

Answer:

President Biden continues to believe that the two-state solution is the best way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and Democratic state, while upholding the Palestinians' right to a viable, sovereign state of their own. The Abraham Accords are an important contribution to peace and security in the Middle East and t is our hope that these normalization agreements will ultimately lead to progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The normalization agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors reflect recognition that they hold many interests in common and can most effectively address them through cooperation. We are optimistic that this trend will continue and the circle of peace between Israel and the Arab world

will further widen. The Biden-Harris Administration will restore credible U.S. engagement with the Palestinians in support of a two-state solution. We will oppose any unilateral actions that make a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more difficult, whether incitement, settlement construction, or annexation of the West Bank. The President publicly supported passage of the Taylor Force Act, and he has never hesitated to condemn terrorism or incitement by Palestinian actors. You can expect that to continue during his administration. The Biden-Harris Administration will also restore assistance to the Palestinian people, not as a favor but because it is in U.S. interests. This funding serves important purposes, including supporting Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, providing critical humanitarian relief, and fostering economic development. The suspension of aid to the Palestinians has neither produced political progress nor secured concessions from the Palestinian leadership. It has only harmed innocent Palestinian people, while undermining the credibility of the U.S. to bring both sides to the table to reach a negotiated solution. We appreciate congressional concerns regarding U.S. aid to the Palestinians and I can assure you that we will provide all aid consistent with relevant U.S. laws.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#256)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please provide your views on the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and United States recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. What is your view on the reversibility of these U.S. policies?

Answer:

As I said before the committee, the Biden-Harris Administration will not reverse President Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. Nor will reverse U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. As long as Bashar al-Assad is in control of Syria, it would be irresponsible to urge Israel to part with the Golan Heights.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#257)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please provide your views on the relative benefits and risks of ESF and INCLE expenditures targeted towards the Palestinian people and security forces.

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to restore assistance to the Palestinian people, not as a favor but because it is in U.S. interests. This funding serves important purposes, including supporting Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, providing critical humanitarian relief, and fostering economic development. In so doing, the Biden-Harris Administration will fully comply with U.S. law, including the Taylor Force Act. We appreciate Congressional interest in assistance to the Palestinians and look forward to consulting with you.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#258)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

At great cost, the United States has worked to support a sovereign independent Iraq, reframe the US-Iraq bilateral relationship, and foster regional stability.

a. How do you plan to continue to further U.S. interests in Iraq?

b. What are your priority lines of effort linked to U.S. national security interests?

c. What role will institutional reform and anti-corruption efforts play in this strategy?

d. What role will countering Iranian influence play in this strategy?

e. How do you plan to address the presence of Iranian-backed militias?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration supports a strategic partnership with a stable, democratic Iraq. The Administration will be a steady, reliable partner that supports Iraq's anti-corruption and economic reform efforts, helps it improve regional relationships, provides humanitarian assistance, backs efforts to control militias and counter Iran's malicious activities, and advises and assists Iraqi counterterrorism forces. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee on ways to advance these priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#259)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Critics point to President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 as one of the biggest errors of his presidency. The Obama Administration departed without securing a Status of Forces Agreement, allowed the Iraqi Security Forces to atrophy, did not adequately address the abuses of the Maliki government, and failed to address Sunni disenfranchisement that ultimately set conditions for the Islamic State's unchecked movement across the Iraqi border in 2014.

a. Please provide your perspectives on the root causes of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq as they related to U.S. policies, views on current troop levels as they relate to State Department objectives, and recommendations on key State Department initiatives for preventing an Islamic State resurgence.

b. How appropriate are current bilateral diplomatic agreements (exchange of notes) for a sustained diplomatic and security cooperation mission?

Answer:

The most important factor that led to the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq was the effort by the Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Maliki to marginalize Iraq's Sunni Arab population. Going forward, the Biden Administration supports maintaining a small number of troops to advise and assist Iraqi counter-terrorism forces to deal with the continuing threat from ISIS. If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department is working to support the Administration's strategic objective of a stable and democratic Iraq.

If confirmed, I will review current agreements with Iraq to ensure that they provide a basis for continued diplomatic and security cooperation in support of the Biden-Harris Administration's strategic objective of a stable and democratic Iraq.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#260)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Iraq's security apparatus remains dependent on DoD-administered Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) and congressionally-appropriated foreign military financing (FMF). Additionally, nearly 50% of Iraq's FMF expenditures are consumed with maintaining existing contracts. Please provide your thoughts on transitioning Iraq from CTEF to more traditional forms of Title 22 security cooperation, and 'right sizing' the Iraqi Security Forces in a manner that the government of Iraq can sustain given current budget shortfalls.

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ask the State Department to consult with relevant offices across the interagency and with Congress to ensure that U.S. support for Iraqi security forces is effectively managed and enables our Iraqi partners to continue taking the lead in securing the country.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#261)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The State Department has significantly reduced manning at key posts in Afghanistan and Iraq, often simultaneously with Department of Defense troop reductions. Arguably, as the DoD winds down its presence in these locations towards the end of major combat operations, diplomacy is paramount to ensure a durable peace. Can you commit to consultations with Congress before any decisions are made to reduce Embassy Staffing, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department consults with Congress regarding any significant reductions in staffing levels in Iraq and Afghanistan.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#262)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please outline United States national security interests and objectives in Syria.

Answer:

U.S. national security objectives in Syria include preventing the resurgence of ISIS so that the terrorist group cannot directly threaten the United States and its interests; maintaining pressure on Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups; preventing a renewal of fighting that produces large-scale refugee flows that further destabilize U.S. partners and allies; promoting the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid to Syrian civilians in need; securing reforms in Damascus that improve the welfare of Syrian civilians; and preventing the outbreak of broader regional conflict.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In July you tweeted, "When Joe Biden is president, we will restore U.S. leadership on humanitarian issues [in Syria]." However, lack of United States engagement and enforcement of chemical weapons 'redlines' during the Obama administration opened the door to increased Russian involvement and allowed the civil war and abuses against the Syrian people to continue unabated. Current progress towards a political reconciliation under UNSCR 2254 have similarly stalled.

Please provide your views on the United States' role in Syria and accelerating progress on UNSCR 2254.

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration will support the work of the UN Special Envoy for Syria with high level diplomacy, coordinate with our allies and partners, and advocate through the United Nations Security Council. If confirmed, I will support the work of the constitutional committee that is called for by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 and renew U.S. efforts to promote a political settlement to end Syria's terrible civil war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

U.S. Syria policy is broadly governed by UNSCR 2254 and associated sanctions regimes. Does Bashar al Assad's expanded military control alter the prospects of a political settlement under UNSCR 2254? Do we need a new construct for Syria policy?

Answer:

A political settlement must address the underlying causes that led to nearly a decade of civil war. The Biden-Harris Administration will use the tools at its disposal, including economic pressure, to push for meaningful reform and accountability, and will continue to support the UN's role in negotiating a political settlement.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is the linkage between U.S. troop levels in Syria, countering the Islamic State, blunting Iranian designs, influencing Turkish and Russian Syria calculus, and associated impacts on political UNSCR 2254 discussions?

Answer:

Preventing an ISIS resurgence in Iraq and Syria, as well as addressing the threats posed by its affiliates and networks beyond the Middle East, demands revitalized U.S. engagement, along with our partners and allies in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Accordingly, President Biden has expressed support for maintaining U.S. forces in northeast Syria to support local partners and prevent the group's resurgence. The Biden-Harris Administration will be open to dialogue with Russia on Syria as long as it contributes to protecting civilians and to credibly moving the conflict toward a political solution. We will also continue to deconflict military operations with Russia, so that pressure is sustained on ISIS remnants in Syria. Turkey's concerns with respect to U.S. Syrian Kurdish partners in the fight against ISIS have not changed. We will consult with Ankara and seek areas for cooperation on Syria.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What relative effect would a U.S. troop withdrawal have on U.S. influence over future negotiations?

Answer:

There is no military solution to end the war in Syria in a sustainable manner. The only path forward is a negotiated political settlement.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#264)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act is intended to prevent rehabilitation of the Assad regime, seek accountability for the regime's atrocities, and advance a political solution to the conflict. Please provide your views on the role of this legislation in furthering U.S. objectives in Syria.

Answer:

Members of Congress spoke clearly on this issue when they voted for the Caesar Civilian Protection Act in the last Congress imposing military, political, and accountability benchmarks for the Assad regime before it can receive sanctions relief. The United States remains an important voice on Assad's future in a variety of diplomatic groups focused on Syria, and at the United Nations Security Council. We will consult with our partners, and with Congress, to shape and set expectations for behavior changes by the regime in Damascus.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#265)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Turkey's objectives in northeast Syria run counter to U.S. interests while we tacitly support their activities in the northwest.

a. How do we reconcile and balance Syria and Turkey policy?

b. Can you balance Syria-Turkey policy without finding a Kurdish solution?

Answer:

The United States and Turkey share an interest in sustainably ending the Syria civil war. The Biden-Harris Administration will consult Ankara on Syria policy, and seek areas for cooperation.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria remain a capable and committed military partner in the fight against ISIS. They cannot continue the defeat-ISIS mission, or guard the remaining tens of thousands of ISIS detainees and families, without U.S. support. Turkey's concerns with respect to U.S. Syrian Kurdish partners in the fight against ISIS have not changed. We will consult with Ankara and seek areas for cooperation on Syria.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#266)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Current United States policy relies on Europe and other actors to lead on Libya stabilization. Is there an argument for a more muscular U.S. role?

Answer:

The situation in Libya remains uncertain, but it may be possible to build on a recently agreed cease-fire to advance stability in the country. Elections are planned for December 2021, and the UN-led Political Dialogue Forum is a rare opportunity to advance progress towards a solution. The Biden-Harris Administration will support the UN Special Envoy to advance this process. The U.S. can play an important role in building international support behind the steps the Libyans must agree on themselves.

In addition to the political track, the Biden-Harris Administration will continue to work to prevent ISIS from developing a stronger foothold in Libya. Terrorists and other armed groups continue to exploit the security vacuum in Libya, which underscores the importance of lowering tensions and making progress on governance.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#267)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

A recent UN expert report on Libya accused the warring parties and their international backers — the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt on one side and Turkey and Qatar on the other — of violating the arms embargo with total impunity.

a. How do you plan to address reported violations of the UN arms embargo?

b. How do you impose costs on arms embargo violators without harming U.S. objectives in other areas?

Answer:

It is time for external actors to disentangle themselves from Libya and to give the Libyan people the space to make their own decisions. The current cease-fire agreement calls for respecting the UN arms embargo and for the removal of foreign forces in Libya. The Biden-Harris Administration will be looking at how the U.S. can best leverage our influence with external actors that have influence in Libya. This includes Turkey, which has supported the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli, and Egypt, Russia, and the UAE, which have been supporting factions in the eastern part of the country.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#268)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

While current policy has been to publicize Russian adventurism in Libya, how does the United States impose costs for Russia's use of private military contractors, i.e., Wagner, in Libya?

Answer:

Russian President Putin has increased his use of private military companies like the Wagner Group in an attempt to increase Russian influence on the cheap and distance the Kremlin from unsavory and risky actions the group takes, giving Putin plausible deniability about his actions beyond Russia's borders. The United States should explore a range of options for curtailing the influence of Russian private military contractors, ranging from sanctions to increasing the awareness of local populations about who these groups are and the negative consequences of their activities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#269)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the risks of a greater Russian role in Libya to U.S. interests in North Africa, including U.S. counterterrorism efforts?

Answer:

Russian support for spoilers in Libya undermines the UN-supported political process, while perpetuating the conflict and the suffering of Libyan civilians. ISIS will continue to exploit instability and security vacuums to remain active in Libya.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#270)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:
What are the threats of Russia successfully gaining a foothold in Libya, which borders NATO's southern flank?

Answer:

Through its nefarious activities in Libya, Russia seeks to challenge U.S. and European leadership in North Africa, entrench Russian economic interests, and secure military positions that challenge the United States and NATO.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#271)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Egypt is located at a strategic crossroads between the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa, remains an important U.S. partner in the region, and is important to Israel's security. However, in light of Egypt's growing cooperation with Russia and reports of potential Su-35 sales, is Egypt pivoting irrevocably towards Russia?

Answer:

We take Russia's growing influence in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East very seriously. It is regrettable that Egypt, a strategic partner of the United States, would cooperate with an American strategic competitor. We will expect more from Egypt, which continues to receive substantial U.S. diplomatic and financial support. We fully understand congressional interest in this issue and look forward to consulting closely with you on our approach.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#272)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How have the Obama Administration's decisions to place various holds on military aid to Egypt affected Egypt's relationship with Russia and the United States? More broadly, is FMS or FMF an effective lever to modify conduct?

Answer:

While Egypt's engagement with Russia is concerning, we do not believe that Cairo is seeking to replace the United States with Russia. There is no substitute for U.S. diplomatic support on the world stage or access to international capital markets. Egypt also continues to prefer U.S. military equipment. The Biden-Harris Administration would like to develop a cooperative relationship with Egypt, but such a relationship depends on a greater Egyptian willingness to address U.S. concerns.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#273)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Bearing in mind that a stronger Egypt-Russia relationship poses risks to U.S. interests and human rights concerns in Egypt, how would you and the Biden Administration frame or modify U.S. policy towards Egypt?

Answer:

The United States has an interest in the stability of Egypt and the welfare of the Egyptian people. Where we share interests, such as in promoting Arab-Israeli cooperation and countering extremism, we will seek to partner constructively with Egypt. However, we have deep concerns about the level of repression in Egypt. Repression and human rights abuses are not only contrary to American values, but also undercut Egypt's own dynamism and stability as our partner. We will consistently raise these issues, both publicly and privately, and will work with Congress to champion human rights.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#274)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Would you characterize a potential Egyptian purchase of Su-35s from Russia as a significant transaction as described under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act?

Answer:

We are tracking the Egyptian purchase of Su-35s from Russia, which is just one manifestation of growing Egyptian-Russian cooperation. We will give full consideration to our options in addressing this problem, including, if appropriate, CAATSA sanctions. We fully understand congressional interest in this issue and look forward to consulting closely with you on our approach.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#275)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Have the Abraham Accords set conditions for a renewed Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) or a derivative? What multilateral structures would a Biden Administration suggest to maintain stability in the Middle East while simultaneously reducing U.S. commitment?

Answer:

The Abraham Accords are a historic and welcome development in a polarized region. We will work to build on them and continue efforts to turn erstwhile enemies into partners. The Middle East remains perhaps the world's most under-institutionalized region. Bringing its nations into more constructive dialogue to reduce the risk of conflict and create and enforce regional norms for interstate conduct is an important and worthwhile goal. So too is ensuring that U.S. partners in the region can deepen their cooperation against common challenges such as the threat from Iran. As for the specific modalities of a Middle East regional construct and what U.S. commitments might accompany it, that is an issue we will have to study further in office. We will look closely and open-mindedly at the work of our predecessors and gauge what approach will best advance U.S. interests - and we would welcome your thoughts on this issue as well.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#276)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Would these multilateral structures force the United States to rely on imperfect partners with imperfect human rights records? How does the United States strike the appropriate balance between U.S. presence and reliance on imperfect partners to maintain security and accomplish U.S. national security interests?

Answer:

We cannot yet say what form multilateral regional cooperation might ultimately take, which is an issue that will require further study. But on the broader dilemma you raise, President Biden has made clear that he intends to elevate the role of human rights in U.S. Middle East policy and assert U.S. leverage to seek more responsible conduct. We will partner with a wide range of states around the world to protect the American people and advance their interests, fight terrorism, end conflicts, promote trade, and deepen people-to-people ties. But we will never lose sight of U.S. national interests and values and will push back forcefully against abuses of human rights by partners and adversaries alike.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#277a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

During a November 2019 primary debate, President-elect Biden said he would limit arms sales to Saudi Arabia and make them the "…pariah that they are." Isolating Saudi Arabia would likely have negative consequences for US-Saudi counterterrorism cooperation, would diminish U.S. efforts to improve Saudi Arabia's human rights record, and would eliminate Saudi Arabia's potentially helpful role in a broader Middle Eastern multilateral security construct.

How do you interpret President-elect Biden's 'pariah' comments and how would you frame the U.S.-Saudi relationship in a Biden Administration?

Answer:

President Biden has called for an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen and for a broader reassessment of U.S. policy toward Saudi Arabia. He recognizes the value of continued cooperation to deter Iran and counter terrorism but believes that "America should insist on responsible Saudi actions and impose consequences for reckless ones." Accordingly, the United States will cooperate with Saudi Arabia where our priorities align and will not shy away from defending U.S. interests and values where they do not. President Biden has also said he would want to hear how Saudi Arabia intends to change its approach to work with the incoming U.S. administration.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#277b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the implications for U.S.-Saudi CT cooperation and regional stability?

Answer:

Counterterrorism partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia benefits both countries, and our hope is that it will continue even if we have differences over regional policy, as it has in the past. We believe that ending the Yemen war and reducing tensions with Iran will deliver benefits not just to U.S. interests, but to many states in the region. The United States will work with Saudi Arabia and other countries to manage the threat posed by Houthi capabilities; to defend its territory; and to end a costly, damaging war in Yemen. The United States provides very limited support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC) in Yemen primarily focused on countering the threats from Houthi ballistic missiles and drones. A Biden Administration has telegraphed that it would end U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#278)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States provides very limited support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC) in Yemen primarily focused on countering the threats from Houthi ballistic missiles and drones. A Biden Administration has telegraphed that it would end U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

a. How would limiting support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen impact regional security?

b. How would a reduction in U.S. support impact U.S. efforts to curb SLC civilian casualty rates?

c. How do you anticipate such a move would affect UN-led peace efforts in Yemen and U.S. ability to influence the prospects for a lasting, and inclusive settlement in Yemen?

Answer:

We believe that the Yemen war itself has had an adverse effect on regional security: creating opportunities for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, ISIS, and Iran to entrench themselves while Yemenis have suffered. Ending U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition, as President Biden has promised to do, is a necessary correction to U.S. policy; but also must be part of a larger effort to end the Yemen war itself, which has been costly and damaging to Saudi Arabia as well as to the Yemeni people. We recognize the efforts the U.S. military has made to help Saudi Arabia reduce civilian casualties and will consider how best to advance this goal as U.S. support changes, while pursuing the ultimate goal of reducing civilian casualties by ending the fighting through a negotiated solution. As for the UN process, we look forward to redoubling U.S. efforts to support UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in his work. It is too early to say how this necessary policy change, consistent with the expressed will of Congress, will affect UN peace efforts. Our hope is that an end to U.S. support, coupled with a renewed commitment to

U.S. diplomacy and expanded humanitarian access, can help create conditions for the parties to reach a compromise that has so far eluded them.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#279a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

UAE has served as an important U.S. partner in the Middle East and Afghanistan. UAE-led efforts to normalize diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, and has a deep economic relationship with the United States.

a. What is the UAE's role in the broader Middle East vis-a-vis U.S. national interests?

Answer:

The United Arab Emirates is among the United States' closest economic, diplomatic, and security partners in the Middle East. It also has built some of the most effective institutions and companies in the region. It has shown, in its historic outreach to Israel and even with its recent diplomacy to lower tensions with Iran, that it can contribute meaningfully to a more peaceful Middle East. In other settings, the United Arab Emirates' rivalry with Qatar divided U.S. partners in the region and exacerbated local conflicts in Libya and elsewhere. Its past participation in the Yemen war and human rights record also raise concerns and will require continued U.S. engagement. The United States will look to the United Arab Emirates to continue its close and multifaceted partnership with the United States; build on its historic engagement with Israel; engage constructively to address the range of concerns our countries face from Iran; work to end regional conflicts and stabilize their aftermath; address human rights concerns; and continue its welcome progress toward easing its rift with Qatar.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#279b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What role might it play in a Middle Eastern multilateral construct?

Answer:

We welcome a deepening of regional cooperation, especially where it reduces the risk of conflict and helps our partners enhance their security. As for the specifics of a Middle East regional construct, as mentioned above, this is an idea we will have to study further.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#279c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How does the United States moderate UAE's often expeditionary Muslim Brotherhood-oriented foreign policy and encourage it to take a more productive role?

Answer:

The United States will work to encourage our partners on both sides of the GCC rift to recognize their common interest in cooperation. We will encourage both sides to build on recent progress in easing the rift itself and more constructively managing continued differences. From defense cooperation to bilateral trade to stability in places like Libya and Somalia, we see significant benefits that can be achieved via closer cooperation. Where we see damaging zero-sum competition, we will press the United Arab Emirates, as well as Qatar and other regional states, to take a different approach.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#280)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Despite being a key U.S. partner in the region, and central to normalization efforts with Israel, UAE also has a history of deepening cooperation with Russia and China that runs counter to U.S. interests. How does the department plan to address the UAE's partnership with Russia and China?

Answer:

Several U.S. partners in the Middle East have deepened cooperation with Russia and China in recent years. Some cooperation is benign or even beneficial; but other cooperation runs up against U.S. interests including the security of sensitive weapons systems and information technology. The United States will address these issues forthrightly with the United Arab Emirates and other partners to convey and underscore U.S. concerns.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#281)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As a part of arms sales to UAE following the Abraham Accords, the UAE agreed to several conditions that were pending state-to-state codification. Please provide an update on the conditions of sale.

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the details of this weapons sale and the conditions you describe. I am committed to returning to regular order with respect to the arms sales consultative process with Congress. I look forward to consulting with the Committee on this matter.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#282)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your assessment, how closely are the Emiratis coordinating with the Russian state, as well as its subsidiaries like Wagner, in Libya? What forms does this coordination take? Are there instances in which it has escalated into concrete and tangible support, whether that be to the Russian state or Russian-aligned operators?

Answer:

We are aware of reports, including from the Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General, that the United Arab Emirates may be supporting the Wagner group in Libya. If confirmed, I will have my team report back to you in the appropriate setting on this issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#283)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There is growing concern over the prospect of the UAE normalizing ties with Bashar al-Assad.

a. Do you share this concern?

b. Are there tools the United States can employ to prevent the UAE from normalizing relations with the Assad regime, including with respect to potential UAE provision of reconstruction funds to Syria?

Answer:

I am concerned by any actions by any government that would normalize ties with an unreformed regime in Damascus. The United States retains a variety of executive and statutory tools to deter governments and private sector entities from normalizing ties, engaging in business, or providing reconstruction aid to an unreformed regime in Damascus.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#284)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The GCC rift has posed a serious obstacle to regional security and stability and splintered a unified front against Iranian aggression. The recent agreement at Al-Ula, however, may signal a thawing of relations and a potential end to the Gulf Rift.

a. Given the Al-Ula agreement, what are the prospects that the dispute can be resolved in an enduring manner, and what would be the best approach for doing so?

b. Would your State Department plan to support and advance Kuwaiti led mediation efforts? If so, how?

c. What lesser confidence building measures would you consider to build on the Al-Ula agreement and ensure a lasting end to the Gulf dispute?

Answer:

The GCC rift divided U.S. partners and made our work in the region more difficult. We are encouraged to see that the two sides made headway at al-Ulla. While not all differences were resolved, this meeting brought meaningful progress and a commitment to continued work to lower tensions. We will strongly encourage both sides to sustain the momentum toward rapprochement and constructively address those differences that remain. We welcome Kuwait's good offices in reducing tensions. We will look into both specific confidence building steps and potential support for Kuwaiti mediation going forward in advancing what we deem to be an important U.S. interest in further easing the GCC rift.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#285)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your assessment, is there more the United States can do diplomatically to end the war in Yemen? If so what?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, its war has emboldened Sunni jihadists, caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#286)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In October 2020, then-candidate Biden suggested that, "under a Biden-Harris Administration, we will reassess our relationship with the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia], end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen." How do you anticipate ending U.S. support to the Saudi-led coalition will affect U.S. efforts to reach a comprehensive and inclusive settlement in Yemen?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, its war has emboldened Sunni jihadists, caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#287)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the U.S. interests in ending the conflict in Yemen? Can you ensure U.S. equities will be taken into account in a final settlement if the United States reduces, restricts, or cuts off support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC)?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, its war has emboldened Sunni jihadists, caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#288)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe UNSCR 2216 properly reflects the current context in Yemen? Will the new Administration seek to modify this UNSCR?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, its war has emboldened Sunni jihadists, caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#289)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What role do you see the Houthis playing in perpetuating conflict? Do you have concern about Houthi military and human rights abuses? How do you plan to address said abuses?

Answer:

The Houthis are violent actors, whose leadership should be held accountable for their actions. They violently seized control of Yemen's capital, attack nonmilitary targets inside Saudi Arabia, abuse the human rights of Yemenis under their control, thwart the provision of humanitarian aid, accept illicit support from Iran, and have held Americans against their will, with one even dying while unjustly held. The Biden administration will not hesitate to apply pressure to push the Houthis to curb their abuses and negotiate to end the war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#290)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

To what extent do the Houthis pose a legitimate security threat to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? How does your administration plan to address this threat to the Kingdom, as well all U.S. citizens residing therein?

Answer:

The Houthis do indeed pose a legitimate threat to the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and thereby to U.S. citizens residing there. We intend to hold its leadership accountable for its conduct; work with Saudi Arabia to bolster its defenses against various dangerous Houthi capabilities; help ensure the Houthis cannot gain access to further advanced capabilities; and work to end the Yemen war, including an end to Houthi attacks on Saudi territory.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#291)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your position on the designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)? How will this designation impact diplomatic efforts to end the war as well as U.S. efforts to address the humanitarian crisis?

Answer:

We share bipartisan congressional concerns about the last-minute decision to designate the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity. While we understand that the Houthis are far from benign actors, we take seriously the warnings from the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations that these designations could lead to a wide scale famine. Accordingly, we intend to ask the appropriate agencies to address this issue as soon as we are in office. At the same time, we will not hesitate to apply pressure to push the Houthis to curb their abuses against the Yemeni people and to negotiate an end to the war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#292)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Will you seek to revoke the designation of the Houthis as a FTO? If so, how quickly do you expect this process to play out and what steps would you take to ensure U.S. national security interests are taken into account?

Answer:

We will ask the appropriate agencies and offices to review this decision on an expedited basis. We will work to provide the widest appropriate assurances to commercial and humanitarian actors in the meantime. And, recognizing that the Houthi movement has much to answer for, we will hold its leadership accountable. As we do, we will continue efforts to help Saudi Arabia defend its territory from Houthi attacks and work to end Yemen's civil war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#293)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The recent designation of the Houthis as a FTO could have significant humanitarian consequences for the civilian population in Yemen. This is in part because the U.S. Government lacks the ability under U.S. law to issue a license that gives safe harbor from criminal exposure to commercial or humanitarian entities providing humanitarian supplies to civilians. Do you think the U.S. Government should have the ability to issue such a license?

Answer:

I understand and share the concerns you are raising about ensuring humanitarian access in Yemen and believe that U.S. sanctions programs should always have appropriate licenses and exceptions to enable humanitarian access consistent with the law. If confirmed, I will work to make sure that we are using all legally available tools to reduce impediments to humanitarian access.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#294)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How do you plan to mitigate the impacts of the FTO designation, given the limitations of U.S. law? Can you commit to working with the NGO community, private sector businesses, and international financial institutions to provide guidance regarding what criminal or civil exposure they would or would not face?

Answer:

While the broad designation of the Houthi movement is under review, we will commit to working -- in consultation with the Department of Treasury - with the NGO community, private sector, and international financial institutions to use all available tools under the law to ensure that the designation does not impair humanitarian access.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#295)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How will the Department of State coordinate with the Departments of Justice and Treasury before any future FTO designations are made? What about USAID?

Answer:

We intend to engage in extensive consultation with different stakeholder departments and agencies, including USAID, before future FTO designations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#296)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What means can the United States employ to get the Houthis to engage in peace talks in good faith and reduce interference in aid operations?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration intends not only to cut off U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, but reengage in diplomacy to end the war itself. That includes renewed support for UN Special Envoy Martin Griffith's efforts to bring the parties together and redoubled efforts to ensure Saudi Arabia can defend its territory from Houthi attacks. As we encourage Saudi Arabia to seek an end to the conflict, we will not hesitate to apply pressure where possible on the Houthis to reduce interference in aid operations, to engage constructively in peace talks, or to cease destabilizing actions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#297)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

It has been widely reported that the United Arab Emirates, despite withdrawing a majority of its military support for the Saudi-led coalition, continues to provide important diplomatic support to the pro-separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC).

a. Can you commit to pressuring the UAE to ceasing this support, and using its influence to press the STC to work towards implementing the Riyadh agreement? Are the other ways the US can work successfully to resolve the divisions in the anti-Houthi coalition?

b. Can you commit to pressuring other countries to increase financial pledges to the UN's Humanitarian response plan for Yemen?

c. What role has Yemen's economic decline played in exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen? Should the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and others support the liquidity of Yemen's Aden-based Central Bank? Should the State Department make addressing Yemen's economic deterioration a priority in its efforts to end the conflict?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration recognizes that, in addition to ceasing U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, we must redouble our efforts to end the war itself. That will require a negotiated solution that brings together the various stakeholders on the ground. The United States will work with the UAE and other external actors to resolve divisions on the ground and encourage the implementation of the Riyadh agreement - as a springboard for diplomacy to reach a negotiated solution that ends the war itself. On the humanitarian front, we are aware that there is a massive shortfall in international aid that we will work diplomatically to bridge, even as we work to ensure and increase humanitarian access to Yemenis in need. Yemen's war, famine, and economic crisis are interlinked - and in resolving the first two, we will study how best to help ensure Yemen's economic viability as well.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#298)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Despite the August 4, 2020, explosions in Beirut and unrest that followed, Lebanon's political elites have continued to cling to power. Current policy has been to withhold broader financial assistance absent reforms targeting corruption and transparency. Please describe a Biden Administration's policy objectives in Lebanon and how they differ from previous approaches.

Answer:

The United States has four main objectives in Lebanon: (1) prevent ISIS and other terrorist groups who threaten us from gaining a direct foothold in the country, (2) prevent the outbreak of widespread violence, (3) promote the political and economic welfare of Lebanese civilians, including refugees and their host communities, and (4) counter Iran. Over the long-term the only sustainable approach to supporting a stable Lebanon is through support for credible, transparent, and independent political institutions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#299)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What conditions would Lebanon need to meet in order to qualify for U.S. financial support? Will a Biden administration continue sanctions against corrupt and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) linked officials to advance reforms?

Answer:

Lebanon is in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the port explosion. It is important that the United States and other donors heed the call of Lebanese civil society actors and non-government organizations, and channel funding through groups and international organizations with clean records. Non-humanitarian financial support should be provided only after meaningful steps toward reform demanded by the Lebanese people. If confirmed, I will assess sanctions imposed on Lebanese officials and individuals as part of a whole-of-government approach to Lebanon.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#300)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Can you commit to working to ensure the $11 billion in CEDRE, IMF, and World Bank funding earmarked for Lebanon remains contingent on key reforms, including reforms to the electricity/natural gas sector, increased transparency, and an audit of the central bank?

Answer:

French President Emmanuel Macron's roadmap for Lebanon outlines a promising path forward that ties reconstruction aid and international financial support to a program of institutional reform. The Biden-Harris Administration will work with like-minded allies and partners who share the view that meaningful reform, consistent with the demands of the Lebanese people, is necessary to unlock international donor support for Lebanon.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#301)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Many in Congress see the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as a vital counterweight to the influence of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and Lebanon's legitimate security guarantor. What role do you see for the LAF in Lebanon?

Answer:

There are concerning reports about use of excessive force by the LAF in response to widespread protests last year that, if confirmed to be true, could require a reassessment of U.S. security assistance and cooperation.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#302)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to providing continued FMF assistance to the LAF, barring information that indicates otherwise?

Answer:

There are concerning reports about use of excessive force by the LAF in response to widespread protests last year that, if confirmed to be true, could require a reassessment of U.S. security assistance and cooperation.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#303)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Will you commit to consulting with Congress before modifications to LAF assistance?

Answer:

If confirmed, I commit to consulting with Congress on the security assistance program to the LAF.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#304)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Despite efforts to the pivot to the Pacific, competition with China must also occur outside the Indo-Pacific region and on a global scale. China's Belt and Road initiatives are prospering in Africa, South Asia, and are making lasting inroads in the Middle East.

a. Given a likely diminished U.S. commitment to the Middle East under a Biden administration, how do you plan to contend with the growth of Chinese strategic expansion?

b. How does the United States remain the partner of choice in the Middle East given CCP encroachment and lack of Chinese focus on human rights issues?

Answer:

China seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and drive wedges between the U.S. and our long-time partners. Chinese economic activity and technology transfers—coupled with a corresponding but as yet smaller expansion of its military footprint and collection capabilities—is growing Chinese influence across the region. These actions put U.S. influence — military, diplomatic, and economic — at risk. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Defense, other key national security agencies, and Congress to determine a balanced set of tools to address China's involvement in the Middle East.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#305)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States has growing concerns with China's economic relationship with Israel. Given the relative weakness on Israel's committee on foreign investment and issues highlighted by the CCP's involvement in Haifa port, how do you effectively decouple the CCP from Israel?

Answer:

China seeks to expand its influence with Israel and drive a wedge between us and our close partner. Chinese economic activity is growing its influence in ways that put U.S. influence — military, diplomatic, and economic — at risk. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Defense, other key national security agencies, and Congress to determine a balanced set of tools to address China's involvement in Israel.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#306)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Experts contend that the Islamic State is at a strategic inflection point. While the physical caliphate in Iraq and Syria has been dismantled, the terror group continues efforts to reconstitute and remains a threat to the United States and its partners. The Department of Defense recently disbanded the Defeat ISIS Task Force and dismissed the Task Force Director. Similarly, State Department eliminated the Special Envoy to Counter ISIS (SECI) as an independent entity and placed the office under the CT Bureau. What are your views on the threat posed by ISIS? What are your views of the SECI organizational changes at the State Department and associated impacts on counter ISIS activities?

Answer:

ISIS remains a serious threat. The group is exploiting instability in Iraq and Syria, demonstrates intent to execute attacks abroad, and continues to inspire terrorist attacks from sub-Saharan Africa to the Asia-Pacific theater. Preventing an ISIS resurgence in Iraq and Syria, as well as its affiliates and networks beyond the Middle East, demands revitalized U.S. engagement, along with our partners and allies in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. If confirmed, I will assess the recent organizational changes to the Special Envoy to Counter ISIS office and their impact on our ability to achieve counter-ISIS objectives.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#307)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and their families remain in Syrian Democratic Forces prisons or makeshift camps in Syria. Repatriation efforts to return these fighters and families to their countries of origin have been wildly unsuccessful. These fighters and their families represent a strategic vulnerability to the region.

a. How will you address repatriation, de-radicalization, and demobilization efforts?

b. What civilian security, democracy, and human rights programs would you highlight or pursue to address the seeds ofconflict that led to the Islamic State's rise and allure and have not been effectively addressed?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration will work on enduring solutions for ISIS detainees and their families at facilities such as the Al-Hol camp, currently under guard by the Syrian Defense Forces. While U.S. military action has been critical to successes against ISIS, we recognize that the lasting defeat of the group will require attention to the underlying grievances that created fertile ground for its rise. If confirmed, I will ensure that the State Department is considering all programs relevant to this challenge.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#308)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As Secretary of State, you would have purview over the Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation (SRAR). On February 29 of 2019, SRAR brokered an agreement with the Taliban to reduce U.S. forces in exchange for Taliban counterterrorism commitments, agreements to reduce violence, and enter into an intra-Afghan dialogue. In November, the Trump Administration reduced troop levels to approximately 2,500.

a. What is your understanding of the Taliban's compliance with their commitments?

b. Does the Taliban's record of compliance warrant further troop withdrawals below 2,500?

c. Ongoing intra-Afghan negotiations will likely determine whether Afghanistan remains an Islamic republic or is turned into an Islamic emirate. What are the risks to U.S. interests linked to the outcomes of the intra-Afghan negotiations?

d. Troop withdrawals have reduced the Afghan government's leverage in negotiations with the Taliban. How can the State Department and Biden Administration provide additional leverage to the Afghan government in its ongoing negotiations?

e. What are your views on the UN delisting the Taliban?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will bring the war in Afghanistan to a responsible end. In doing so, we must ensure that terrorist groups -- al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province -- are not allowed to threaten our homeland again. We will support the on-going peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban with a high-level, robust diplomatic effort. We will carefully and thoroughly assess the U.S.-Taliban agreement, including the nature of the commitments that the Taliban made to cut ties with terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, to reduce violence in Afghanistan, and to participate in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government. We will assess U.S. commitments, including with regard to delisting at the United

Nations. We will carefully review the current and future U.S. military footprint in Afghanistan. In the near-term, we will ensure that our forces have the ability to continue their core missions effectively and safely.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#309)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

United States diplomatic presence and ability to move freely throughout Afghanistan is linked to Department of Defense presence and assets.

a. Given further troop reductions, how does the State Department maintain critical oversight of the millions of taxpayer funded assistance dollars that remain in the Afghanistan pipeline?

b. What conditions would a Biden Administration place on future assistance to Afghanistan?

Answer:

We will carefully review our assistance to Afghanistan. It will be important to ensure that we can continue to support our Afghan partners accountably, in an environment in which we have fewer soldiers and civilian staff to monitor our assistance and programming.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#310)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In addition to vital counterterrorism interests, U.S. efforts in Afghanistan have dramatically improved conditions for women, minority and youth. How would your State Department safeguard the gains made for Afghan women, minority and youth?

Answer:

Women, girls, and minority groups in Afghanistan have made extraordinary gains over the past 20 years, and protecting those gains will be a high priority in the Biden-Harris administration. For a peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban to be durable and just, it must account for the rights of women, girls, and minority groups.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#311)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What roles do Pakistan, China, and Russia play in Afghanistan and how will the State Department engage with these and regional actors to foster peace and stability?

Answer:

The countries in Afghanistan's neighborhood, including Pakistan, China, Russia, India, and Iran have important roles to play in supporting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We all have far more to gain in a peaceful and stable outcome in Afghanistan than in continued war.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#312)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration has reported that China has embarked on the single greatest expansion of a nuclear arsenal since the dawn of the Cold War. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with relevant national security departments and agencies to assess the status of China's nuclear arsenal and will consult with Congress on this important issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#313)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

More than half of our NATO allies have expressed concern over the growth of China's nuclear arsenal, and its unwillingness to join arms control talks. Do you share the concerns of these allies?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will consult with our colleagues in NATO about their concerns over the growth of China's nuclear arsenal.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#314)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Is China in compliance with its Article VI obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with relevant departments and agencies to assess the status of China's compliance with its Article VI obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and will consult with Congress on this important issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#315)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States and Russia have for many years implemented risk reduction measures regarding their nuclear arsenals, but the China has not joined such arrangements. Were it to move to a launch on warning posture, would that increase the need for risk reduction with China? How might we best engage China regarding risk reduction?

Answer:

Risk reduction measures are an important part of nuclear arms control. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across national security departments and agencies and consult with our allies and Congress on how to effectively engage China regarding risk reduction.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#316)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your assessment, do the actions of Vladimir Putin and the available intelligence about him support an assessment that he agrees with the Reagan-Gorbachev statement that, "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought?" Does Russian doctrine, force posture and operational planning indicate that Russia under Putin believes that a nuclear war cannot be won?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with relevant national security departments and agencies to assess of Russian posture, doctrine, and intentions regarding the use of nuclear weapons.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#317)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to having your incoming nuclear negotiator tour current U.S. nuclear enterprise facilities, to ensure they are fully aware of all issues regarding current U.S. nuclear weapons production that may be affected by arms control agreements?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work to ensure State Department negotiators on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control agreements are fully aware of U.S. nuclear weapons production and capabilities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#318)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please assess the risk of an arms race between Russia and China as China moves to at least double its nuclear arsenal.

Answer:

An arms race between Russia and China would pose significant concerns for regional and global stability. If confirmed, I will work with allies, partners, and international organizations to reduce the risk of an arms race.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#319a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Resolution of Ratification to the New START Treaty obligated the Obama Administration to pursue follow-on negotiations with Russia regarding its tactical nuclear weapons.

How can the United States best constrain Russia's tactical nuclear weapons, which fall outside of New START?

Answer:

President Biden intends to pursue an extension of the New START Treaty, an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia, and use that as a foundation for new arms control and strategic stability arrangements that serve U.S. interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#319b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

New START does not include China, which is in the midst of a dramatic upgrade and expansion of its nuclear arsenal, which the Intelligence Community assesses will at least double by 2030. How can the United States best constrain China's growing and capable arsenal?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will coordinate with relevant national security departments and agencies and consult with Congress on the best strategy for addressing the growth of China's nuclear arsenal.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#319c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What can be done to ensure that Russia's so-called "exotic" strategic delivery systems, three of which Russia says are outside New START, are constrained by arms control obligations?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will be focused first on extending the transparency and predictability of New START, an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia, and use that as a foundation for new arms control and strategic stability arrangements that serve U.S. interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#319d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the requirement, as called for in the New START Resolution of Ratification, to, "modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems: a heavy bomber and air-launched cruise missile, an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), and a ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM)?

Answer:

The triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems has served an important role in U.S. defense and national security strategy. The Biden-Harris administration will review, where appropriate, the nuclear modernization program.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#319e)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Russian Foreign Ministry released a statement in October agreeing to extend New START for one year and to freeze warheads, before retreating from that position as the U.S. elections approach. This marked the first ever occasion that Russia has voiced any agreement to limiting all warheads, and marked a major walk-back from Russia's previous refusal to consider anything short of a five year extension. Do you commit to pursuing the one year/warhead freeze option for New START extension, and to build off of those negotiating efforts to codify an agreement that accounts for all warheads, and sets conditions for multilateral engagement in the future?

Answer:

The Trump administration engaged in extensive negotiations with the Russians on an extension of New START for years but was unable to secure an agreement. A Russian pledge not to increase its nuclear warhead totals is a helpful statement but does not constitute an agreement. It is not a substitute for the benefits to U.S. national security that we get from the New START's robust declaration and on-site inspection mechanisms.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#320)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Obama Administration debated changing U.S. declaratory nuclear policy, but decided to retain the long-standing policy of ambiguity.

a. Why did the Obama Administration decide not to change U.S. declaratory policy?

b. Has the international security environment improved since 2016? What significant improvements have occurred that would warrant a change in U.S. declaratory policy?

c. Russia and China have modernized and expanded their nuclear arsenals, and embarked on military aggression against their neighbors. Given the increasing threats from Russia and China, how is a change to a no first use or sole purpose doctrine justifiable?

d. Do U.S. allies support the U.S. adoption of a no first use or sole purpose nuclear declaratory policy?

e. Do you commit to consulting closely with the Congress and with U.S. allies before any change in U.S. declaratory policy?

f. What impact would a sole purpose nuclear declaratory policy have on the ability of the United States to offer extended deterrence in support of allies?

Answer:

President-Elect Biden is committed to maintaining a strong, credible deterrent to defend the United States and our allies, while also taking steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. He has said that the United States should review its current policy that reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first. He also said that he believes that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring -- and if necessary, retaliating against -- a nuclear attack, and he is committed to consulting with our military and allies to put that belief into practice. We will consult with Congress and our allies on any policies or actions in this area.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#321)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

One of the key justifications for the full nuclear modernization program of record, as first put forward by the Obama Administration, is to provide extended deterrence to U.S. allies and achieve associated U.S. objectives regarding assurance allies and promoting nonproliferation.

a. Do you see a risk of damaging extended deterrence if the United States not modernize its nuclear enterprise?

b. Do you commit to consulting with Congress and with allies regarding any such risks?

Answer:

Extended deterrence plays an important role in advancing U.S. national security objectives, including providing assurance to allies and promoting nonproliferation. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress and allies on this important issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#322)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The NATO Secretary General released a statement earlier this year noting that, "Our solidarity is our strength and the ultimate expression of that solidarity remains our nuclear deterrent." How damaging would it be to the solidarity of the NATO alliance for a member to demand the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons? Would it call that member's NATO membership into question?

Answer:

One of NATO's greatest strengths is the solidarity of its members. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening NATO unity, solidarity, and resolve.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#323a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, NATO strongly supported the finding of the United States that Russia was in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty, and said that it was up to Russia to preserve the INF Treaty.

Do you agree with NATO's assessment that Russia violated the INF Treaty, and was responsible for its termination?

Answer:

Without a doubt there were unacceptable problems in Russia's compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and Open Skies Treaties. Going forward, we will be focused first on extending the transparency and predictability of New START, and then looking to use that extension as a foundation for new arms control arrangements that serve U.S. interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#323b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I do not believe that it is possible to return to the INF Treaty without a new ratification by the Senate. Do you agree? Please explain. If you do not, do you commit to consulting with Congress before attempting to return to the treaty?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and relevant agencies and departments on ways to create new arms control agreements that serve U.S. interests.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#323c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Given the massive growth in numbers and capability of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces, I do not believe that any future treaty covering intermediate-range missiles is in the interests of the United States if it does not include China. Do you agree?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on the best strategy for addressing the growth of China's nuclear arsenal.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#324)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I do not believe that it is possible to return to the Open Skies Treaty without a new ratification by the Senate. Do you agree? Please explain. If not, do you commit to consulting with Congress before attempting to return to the treaty?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would intend to consult with Congress about arms control efforts generally, and efforts related to the Open Skies Treaty in particular.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#324)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under the CWC, any member state can request a challenge inspection without delay to resolve questions regarding non-compliance. Do you commit to requesting a challenge inspection of Russia regarding the poisoning of Alexei Navalny?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris Administration will ensure the completion of an investigation into Russia's use of chemical weapons in the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny, as set out by the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991. The attempted assassination of Mr. Navalny warrants a considered response, including, but not limited to, relevant action within international organizations. Action through the OPCW should be on the menu of options.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#326)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international non-proliferation and arms control agreements and regimes. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on any potential action related to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Fissile Cut-Off Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#327)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international non-proliferation and arms control agreements and regimes. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on any potential action related to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Fissile Cut-Off Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#328)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international non-proliferation and arms control agreements and regimes. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on any potential action related to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Fissile Cut-Off Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#329)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Arms Trade Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international non-proliferation and arms control agreements and regimes. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on any potential action related to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Fissile Cut-Off Treaty and the Arms Trade Treaty.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#330)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Rafael Grossi, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), recently stated that reviving the Iran nuclear deal would require a new agreement setting out how Iran's breaches of the deal should be reversed. I agree with Director Grossi's assessment. Do you?

Answer:

President Biden has made clear he is committed to ensuring that Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon. Iran was in compliance with its commitments until the U.S. withdrew from the deal. Since then, and while it has violated several of its commitments under the deal, Iran has continued to allow intrusive IAEA verification as required by the JCPOA, the most intrusive verification procedures ever negotiated. The President has made clear that the United States will be prepared to resume participation in the JCPOA if Iran restores its compliance, and then, through follow-on diplomacy, the U.S. will seek to lengthen and strengthen the nuclear constraints.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#331)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I view any Iranian limitations on IAEA inspectors as a redline, and see Iran's obfuscation and refusal to answer questions to the IAEA regarding its undeclared sites as unacceptable. In your mind, are limits on IAEA inspectors a redline?

Answer:

Until the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA, both the IAEA and the Trump administration assessed on multiple occasions that Iran was in compliance with the deal, including the enhanced monitoring provisions. The IAEA identified and sought access to two Iranian nuclear facilities to which Iran initially resisted providing access. The issue was addressed last summer and the IAEA Director General has noted that Iran provided inspectors with access to those two locations. The JCPOA imposed the most intrusive inspection and monitoring regime ever negotiated and Iran has warned that if it cannot receive the benefits provided for in the deal, then it would soon cease to implement the enhanced monitoring procedures under the deal, including its provisional application of the Additional Protocol. This would represent a significant setback for the IAEA's ability to report reliably on Iran's program.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#332)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How do you plan to balance the requirement to hold the Russian defense and intelligence enterprise accountable with the need to avoid undue damage to U.S. alliances and partnerships, especially given the competition for partners?

Answer:

I appreciate the efforts of Congress to strengthen the tools available to hold Russia's defense and intelligence enterprise accountable through CAATSA. The Biden-Harris administration will consult with allies and partners on the appropriate means of holding Russia accountable and deterring further aggression.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#333)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If we deny requests to sell arms to U.S. allies and partners, should we then sanction those allies or partners if they acquire Russian defense equipment for what they see as their own legitimate defense requirements?

Answer:

It is important to keep U.S. allies and partners facing west, rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia and other adversaries. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on the appropriate approach on U.S. arm sales and sanctions for countries with issues of concern.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#334)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to respecting Congress's role in the arms sales process, and to adhering to the informal notification process as established for decades with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#335)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to restricting the informal arms sales review process to only SFRC and HFAC, and not to allow informal review by other Congressional committees?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with SFRC and HFAC to ensure full respect for their congressional jurisdiction over review of arms sales.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#336)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the decades since 9/11, the Department of Defense has acquired more and more authorities and resources for what were previously State Department-led security assistance activities.

a. Has that dynamic gone too far? Is it time for the State Department to take the lead in security assistance once again?
b. Is the State Department organized and equipped to lead security assistance efforts for the U.S. Government? What are the obstacles to the Department effectively leading these efforts? What changes are necessary to enable the Department to best lead these efforts?

Answer:

The State Department's leadership role in providing security assistance is intended to ensure that U.S. security assistance is advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives. If confirmed, I will review the current status of the Department's ability to lead security assistance efforts for the U.S. Government and consult with Congress on any necessary changes to enhance these efforts.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#337)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration has pushed our allies to contribute more to host nation support activities, expanding the scale of their expected contribution and the scope of activities that are expected to be covered. Some of these allies apparently believe the Biden Administration will not seek any additional contributions, and will return to status quo ante discussions of such topics.

Should Korea, Japan, Germany and others discard those considerations now? Are they off the hook for contributing more to support the deployment of U.S. forces?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the relevant agencies and departments to review the status of host nation support activities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#338)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In a March 2020 event at the Hudson Institute, incoming Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Dr. Kurt Campbell said, "I do not think there is a relationship that's more important for the United States to invest in over the course of the next 10 to 15 years than India." Do you agree? Why or why not

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration views India as a critical strategic partner in tackling a range of global challenges, from developing an international response to COVID, to fighting climate change, and working toward a global economic recovery.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#339)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how do you plan to responsibly return the Department's workforce to the office as the COVID-19 situation improves in certain countries?

a. Will you continue the Trump Administration's phased approach?
b. After the pandemic has subsided, should the Department return 100 percent of its workforce to the office full-time?

Answer:

On January 20, President Biden signed an Executive Order, "Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing." This Executive Order establishes guidance on safe workplace operations for federal agencies through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Personnel Management. The Order also establishes the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force to provide ongoing guidance to heads of agencies on the operation of the Federal Government, the safety of its employees, and the continuity of Government functions during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on public health best practices as determined by CDC. The Department of State will review and develop implementation guidance in accordance with federal guidelines, which reflects consultation with appropriate stakeholders, including Federal employees, unions, and contractors.

We will take an evidence-driven approach to determining the timing of a full return to in-person work. The Department has demonstrated agility and innovation in its approach to supporting staff telework while maintaining the quality of the Department's operations, and we

will explore how the lessons from this experience should shape the Department's telework posture in the future.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#340)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recent discussions with State Department staff indicated that the Department has mishandled its vaccine rollout. For example, on New Year's Eve, the Bureau of Medical Services (MED) was scrambling to find any employee in the National Capital Region to receive the vaccine because it had doses that were going to spoil. This transpired after MED staff told my staff two weeks earlier that the Department was set to receive one-tenth the number of doses it had requested and expected to receive.

a. Do you pledge to improve the Department's vaccine rollout?
b. Do you intend to address the mistakes that MED has made in its vaccine roll-out and hold accountable those within the Department who made mistakes with such a valuable resource not available to most Americans?
c. Do you intend for the Department to vaccinate all or parts of the workforce? If so, which parts and in what order? Should LES staff be included?
d. Recent reports have suggested that as of January 11th, over 1,000 State Department employees had already been vaccinated, while zero USAID employees had received the vaccine. Do you agree that this inequity is unacceptable? If confirmed, will you seek to ensure that all employees of USAID, over which the Department currently exercises foreign policy direction, have equitable access to vaccines?

Answer:

Yes. We intend to work with MED and others to review the vaccine rollout under the previous administration to ascertain lessons learned and next steps. Our goal is to ensure that the vaccine rollout plan is evidence-based and equitable, and to increase communication and transparency in its execution.

The logistics of the initial vaccine rollout in much of the country have been bumpy, and early challenges are inevitable. We are aware of mistakes made in an early round of the Department's vaccination program, will explore how these mistakes occurred, and will take action as appropriate to ensure they are not repeated.

The Department should prioritize the vaccination of its workforce based on clear parameters. Such prioritization should not differentiate between foreign service, civil service, contractors or LES.

We will follow administration policy on vaccine eligibility for the federal workforce, and will work to ensure that prioritization among foreign affairs personnel is driven by public health considerations rather than political or bureaucratic factors.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#341)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Department recently completed its "Reimagine Task Force" that aims to study lessons learns and then implement best practices.

a. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Reimagine Task Force?
b. If confirmed, do you intend to implement all of the currently planned changes?
c. If yes, which ones? If no, which are you choosing not to implement?
d. Do you intend to reverse any of the changes that have already been implemented?

Answer:

If confirmed as Secretary of State, I look forward to being briefed on the results of the Reimagine Task Force, particularly its efforts to streamline telework processes and workforce mobility. The Task Force goals of reimagining and expanding workforce capabilities align with President Biden's commitment to lead with diplomacy and "build back better." This will require a more modern, flexible, and responsive State Department, which I intend to support, if given the privilege to serve as Secretary of State.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#342)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Department had proposed creating a Bureau of Contingency and Crisis Management. Do you support the creation of this bureau?

Answer:

The outgoing administration's decision to proceed with creation of the Bureau of Contingency and Crisis Management, despite Congressional holds on the issue, warrants careful examination by the Biden Administration. As I noted in my opening statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 19, 2021, "Both the President-Elect and I believe that we have to restore Congress's traditional role as a partner in our foreign policy making." For this reason, if confirmed as Secretary of State, I will pause further action on creation of the Bureau of Contingency and Crisis Management in order to address Congressional concerns. Rather than divert energies towards formation of this new bureau in the midst of the global pandemic, I will ensure the component parts of the Office of Medical Services and relevant bureaus and offices collaborate closely to ensure safe and expeditious distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to State Department personnel worldwide, if confirmed as Secretary of State.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#343)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you intend to seek the advice and consent of the Senate for the State Department's Chief of Protocol?

Answer:

If confirmed, I intend to seek the advice and consent of the Senate for the State Department's Chief of Protocol, returning to norms in place since 1961. President-elect Biden believes – and I share his conviction – that no foreign policy can be sustained without the informed consent of the American people. You are the representatives of the American people. You provide that advice and consent. We can only tackle the most urgent problems our country faces if we work together, and I am dedicated to doing that.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#344)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, which special envoy or other similar positions at the Department do you intend to keep?
a. Which ones do you believe are not necessary?
b. Do you plan to create any new special envoy positions at the Department?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will retain the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Issues positions and will examine other special envoy positions to best align resources with Biden Administration foreign policy priorities. I will fulfill President Biden's commitment to restore the Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTQ+ Persons and Special Envoy for International Disability Rights positions, as part of our commitment to advancing universal human rights, and look forward to working with the new Special Presidential Envoy for Climate to address the global climate crisis.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#345)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How do you assess the D Committee chief of mission selection process? Are there areas in which you would like to make changes?

Answer:

As a former co-chair of the D Committee, I value the integrity and importance of this process to recommend career leaders to serve the American people as chiefs of mission worldwide. If confirmed as Secretary of State, I will examine ways to further optimize the D Committee process, increase transparency of the composition and actions of the Committee, advance diverse and inclusive leadership and fulfill President Biden's pledge to "put U.S. diplomacy back in the hands of genuine professionals."

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#346)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

During the last Congress, the D Committee concentrated first-time chiefs of mission in certain geographic areas, often without any regional expertise. Do you commit to making the distribution of first-time ambassadors more equal among regions as well as emphasizing experience in the region?

Answer:

While the regional distribution of ambassadorships depends on what is open in a particular year, and the President has ultimate prerogative on nominations, I look forward to examining the question of geographic distribution of first-time chiefs of mission, if confirmed as Secretary of State. President Biden has committed to ensuring that his chief of mission nominees are "the best people" and fully qualified for their posts, to include experience in the region in question.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#347)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The State Department has an infamously slow and difficult paper clearance process that reduces Department efficiency and effectiveness.

a. Do you believe that this process is in need of reform?
b. If yes, do you intend to address the paper clearance process?
c. If yes, how do you intend to do so?

Answer:

Yes, I believe the paper clearance process is in need of improvement, as part of a larger modernization of the policy coordination and implementation process at the State Department. This effort will require State leadership -- at all levels -- that rewards innovation, respects the career workforce and values transparency, but also challenges dysfunctional status quos where they exist, and drives more agile and effective diplomacy for the future. While encouraging an employee-led effort to optimize the internal policymaking process within the State Department, if confirmed, I also look forward to working with the Committee on legislative authorities and additional funding that may be necessary to rebuild the State Department and modernize U.S. diplomacy.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#348)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Department has frequently complained to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the number of congressionally-required reports it produces. Yet, the Department has refused to provide me or my staff with what it views as the comprehensive list of its requirements.

a. Do you commit to providing what the Department views as a comprehensive list of congressionally-required reports?
b. Would you support reducing the number of congressionally-required reports?
c. If yes, would you commit to working with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on reducing the number of reports and identifying exactly which reports you seek to reduce?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would ensure the State Department provides a comprehensive list of recommended congressionally required reports. I would also support close State Department consultation with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to rationalize the number of congressional reports and identify which reports can be streamlined or eliminated.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#349)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As in any other workforce, high morale among the State Department's employees is vital to attracting and retaining talent.
a. Is morale at the Department a problem?
b. If yes, how do you intend to improve and maintain morale at the Department?
c. Are there specific areas of morale (or bureaus) that you believe need immediate attention?

Answer:

The people who work for the U.S. Department of State are committed public servants who uphold U.S. policies to protect Americans and their interests abroad. The marginalization and exodus of career talent over the last four years has coincided with declines in overall employee job satisfaction in annual workforce surveys as well test takers for the Foreign Service exam. That said, while forces inside and outside of the Department have sought to denigrate their work and limit the impact of diplomacy, the reality is that the nearly 77,000 State Department employees worldwide are resilient. If confirmed, improving and maintaining State Department morale will be my job one, starting with "building back better." As I stated in my testimony on January 19, I am committed to advancing our security and prosperity by building a diplomatic corps that fully represents America in all its talent and diversity. That means recruiting, retaining, and promoting officers with the skills to contend with 21st Century challenges and who look like the country we represent. That means sparing no effort to ensure their safety and well-being. And that means demanding accountability – starting with the Secretary – for building a more diverse, inclusive and non-partisan workplace.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#350)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

CODELs and staffdels are important to the formulation of and support for U.S. foreign policy in Congress. These trips often spur or incubate ideas for Members and staff. However, CODELs and staffdels are often given to low-ranking junior officers and treated as a burden rather than an opportunity for discussion and collaboration.

a. Do you commit to emphasizing the importance of CODELs and staffdels?
b. Do you commit to pressing posts to assign higher ranking officers to support these critical missions?
c. Do you commit to emphasizing to posts the need to engage with CODELs and staffdels in policy discussions or ideas that would improve the State Department's interests in the local area or region?

Answer:

As I stated in my remarks on January 19, I had the privilege of serving as the Democratic Staff Director of the Senate Foreign Relations committee for six years, working alongside a distinguished group of senators to advance American diplomacy and safeguard the interests of the American people. Based on my experience, I know full well that CODELs and staffdels provide an opportunity to deepen Congressional knowledge and understanding of foreign policy issues, and they inform legislative decisions impacting American interests abroad and the U.S. government resources charged with advancing those missions. If confirmed, I will lead the Department in strengthening our relationship with Congress and will direct my staff in Washington, as well as chiefs of mission and their teams abroad, to elevate their engagement with CODELS and staffdels to do the same.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#351)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe it is important to build U.S. diplomatic posts in areas near host government buildings and other diplomatic missions in order to support the activities of U.S. diplomats?

Answer:

U.S. diplomatic posts must serve to advance our foreign policy mission and goals while also protecting the people who work there to advance that mission, as well as the local partners we engage. A one-size-fits-all approach, pursued under the standard embassy design until 2011, fails to recognize the nuance of each post's strategic priorities, geographic and security constraints, and level of public engagement. We must take all of these issues into account when identifying a site for construction and expansion, understanding that we must engage people to advance our foreign policy goals while mitigating risk. These considerations will result in some posts at sites nearer to government, economic, and cultural activity centers, and farther in other locations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#352)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to placing greater emphasis on ease of diplomatic access in choosing the location for future diplomatic posts?

Answer:

Increasing U.S. diplomatic staff engagement with foreign public audiences is important to advancing U.S. foreign policy. While we can accomplish public engagement in different ways using new and innovative platforms, nothing replaces face-to-face interactions. If confirmed, I will work with the Overseas Building Operation, Diplomatic Security, and posts to understand and expand how, when, and under what circumstances we can ease diplomatic access to improve dignity and accessibility of future diplomatic posts while also mitigating security and safety risks.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#353)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Bureau of Overseas Building Operations is moving to a more efficient and effective approach.

a. Do you commit to continuing to expand the pool of contract bidders?
b. Do you commit to lowering building costs through standardization?
c. Do you commit to following industry standards like design-build?

Answer:

I am committed to working with the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, as well as the Administration Bureau's Office of the Procurement Executive, to ensure the Department maintains transparency and accountability in the contracting processing in compliance with federal law and regulations. This includes ensuring that the bidding process is accessible to expand the pool of bidders, including to small disadvantaged businesses.

The one-size-fits-all approach, pursued by the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations under its standard embassy design program until 2011, failed to recognize the nuance of each post's strategic priorities, geographic and security constraints, and level of public engagement. When possible and appropriate for the local context, standardization can reduce costs. However, standardization and short-term costs savings cannot come at the expense of the safety and security of the people staffing the diplomatic posts and the U.S. foreign policy goals that they aim to advance.

I am committed to working with the Under Secretary for Management, the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, and the Administration Bureau's Office of the Procurement Executive to examine the impact of design-build processes. I am also committed to having the

Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources work with the interagency to examine the appropriate use of design-build contracts. This is an issue that not only impacts the State Department but also other agencies across the federal government. While a design-build is an industry standard that can reduce the time and costs of a contract by eliminating interim bidding steps and consolidating the contracting process, it can also reduce the pool of qualified contract bidders, a result that adversely impacts small disadvantaged businesses.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#354)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy be empowered to create and execute Department-wide public diplomacy strategies? If yes, how would you do so?

Answer:

Improving the efficacy of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R) will require restoring the State Department's primary role in leading U.S. Government public diplomacy and communications overseas and providing clear structure and mandates to the multiple bureaus responsible for the Department's overall public outreach and press strategies. Incoming Department leadership will need to better clarify missions and functions throughout the R family, including the Planning, Policy and Resources Office (R/PPR), the Global Public Affairs Bureau (R/GPA), the Educational and Cultural Affairs bureau (R/ECA), the Global Engagement Center (R/GEC), and the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (R/ACPD). The Department must strategically leverage its suite of Public Diplomacy (PD) tools in an increasingly complex global information environment in order to achieve foreign policy objectives and compete against adversaries who are dedicating significantly more resources to messaging and influence campaigns.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#355)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy control public diplomacy down to the embassy/PAO level?

Answer:

No. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy should orient, elevate, and integrate public diplomacy efforts throughout the State Department and across agencies, but not seek to micromanage the operational work of the thousands of public diplomacy officers serving worldwide and domestically.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#356)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How should the Department balance between the local knowledge of PAOs at posts and the overall public diplomacy messaging coming from the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to examining how the local knowledge of experienced PAOs and staff members at posts can inform the public diplomacy strategy and messaging formulated and articulated by the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and R family bureaus and offices.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#357)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, the Department committed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that it would move to a "shared EX" model in the R Family. Do you intend to honor that commitment?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will ensure the senior leadership team examines all commitments made to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including optimization and consolidation of Executive Office support.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#358)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the Department, through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, continue to build its alumni network to provide additional tools for advancing U.S. foreign policy?

Answer:

Yes, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs should continue to build and maintain its global alumni network. Public diplomacy programs -- from Fulbright Scholars to the International Visitor Leadership Programs to the Young African Leaders Initiative -- are not one-time events, but rather an initial investment in foreign audiences and a community of potential allies for our foreign policy goals.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#359)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I introduced legislation designed to enhance State Department and Congressional oversight of Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (MECEA) programs with the People's Republic of China. If you plan to reinstate these programs in the future, how will the Department exercise greater scrutiny of these programs given potential counterintelligence risks and their use as propaganda tools for the Chinese Communist Party?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would support re-examination of the decision to terminate the MECEA programs with China, with vigilance to potential counterintelligence and propaganda risks. Biden Administration efforts are focused on meeting the China challenge from a position of strength. China is our most serious global competitor. The challenges that China poses to our security, prosperity, and values, and how we conduct this competition, will be crucial for defining the 21st century. On the economic front, we must do much more to keep our economic and technological edge by making transformative investments at home in American workers, infrastructure, education, and innovation. We must counter China's aggressive and coercive actions, sustain our key military advantages, defend democratic values, invest in advanced technologies, re-engage robustly in the UN system, and restore our vital security partnerships. We must also make transformative investments at home in American workers, infrastructure, education, and innovation. All of this will require us to work together, across the aisle, across our government, and in close coordination with our allies and like-minded partners. I hope to work with this committee and Congress across the board to ensure this administration meets the China challenge.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#360)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There were press reports that Embassy Budapest was not supportive of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) decision to open a bureau in Budapest. Do you support RFE/RL's Budapest bureau? Would you instruct the chief of mission to support it?

Answer:

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty provides a vital platform for independent journalism, countering disinformation that undermines democracy and propaganda from geopolitical strongholds in the region. I am committed to working with the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Embassy Budapest to review the decision and determine a way forward informed by the expertise of our diplomats on the ground.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#361)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, legal restrictions—commonly referred to as section 889—have come into effect that severely limit the types of telecommunications networks that U.S. government departments and agencies can use overseas. However, many countries' networks are so saturated by prohibited telecommunications equipment that complying with section 889, absent a waiver, would severely limit the ability of our posts to operate abroad.

a. How do you assess the burden placed on the Department by these restrictions?
b. Will the Department be able to implement these restrictions fully without diminishing its ability to operate abroad?
c. Are there costs to the Department associated with these restrictions?
d. Would the Department be able to operate without the waivers currently granted by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to the Department?
e. Do you plan to request an extension of waivers?
f. Do you intend to request a blanket waiver authority for the Secretary of State that would allow the Department to adjudicate its own waivers?

Answer:

Ensuring the security of telecommunications networks at U.S. facilities overseas is vital to our national security. If confirmed, I will review the current state of telecommunications networks at Department embassies, consulates, and other facilities and the impact of restrictions on telecommunications networks. I will consult with the Director of National Intelligence on the necessity of waivers and whether any extensions are necessary. I will work with Congress to find a long-term solution to ensure the security and reliability of our networks.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#362)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

One troubling trend my staff and I have identified during our travels during the previous congress is that many of our diplomats are not getting out from behind embassy walls and meeting with the local population or even other diplomats. Frequently, we are told that the security requirements are too tight and sacrifice advancing U.S. interests for airtight security.

a. Does the inability of State Department diplomats to leave the embassies at which they are currently stationed put the Department at a strategic disadvantage?
b. Do Chinese, Russian, and Iranian diplomats face similar restrictions to those placed on U.S. diplomats?
c. Do you support getting our diplomats back outside posts? If yes, how so?
d. Do you intend to emphasize to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security your desire to do so?
e. Should security concerns always take precedence over the ability of our diplomats to operate abroad?
f. How should diplomacy be weighed in relation to security concerns, particularly regarding embassy security?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current operating posture of Department personnel overseas. I will also review whether there are restrictions on U.S. diplomats that put them at a disadvantage to their counterparts. I will discuss with the Bureau of Diplomatic security how to best strike the balance between enabling U.S. diplomats to engage outside of posts while ensuring their safety.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#363)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Between late 2016 and May 2018, the State Department found that certain U.S. Embassy community members suffered a series of unexplained injuries, including hearing loss and cognitive issues.

a. If confirmed, will you commit to continuing the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the sonic attacks?
b. Will you seek to ensure the safety and security of U.S. diplomatic personnel in Havana and other posts where personnel were injured?
c. Is it in the national interest of the United States to assign an ambassador to Cuba before the Cuban government fully and credibly explains the targeted attacks on U.S. diplomats in Havana?
d. If confirmed, do you commit to supporting all State Department employees and their families who were injured by these sonic attacks, including those employees who have since left the Department?
e. If confirmed, do you commit to work constructively with other government agencies on finding the cause of the attacks as well as on how best to support those U.S. government employees who have been injured?
f. If confirmed, do you commit to regularly sharing new information, including updates on any live investigations, to Congress?

Answer:

One of the first briefings I requested as Secretary-designate was on this issue. Congress has played an important role in pushing for further investigation of the source of these injuries. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to get to the bottom of the source of these injuries, including whether any foreign governments are behind them. I will commit to ensuring the State Department personnel receive the full support and benefits they deserve and to working with other government agencies on ensuring support for all injured U.S. government employees.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#364)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the Chief Information Officer report directly to the Secretary? If so, why? If not, to whom should they report?

Answer:

The Chief Information Officer is a vital role that will be involved in major technology issues facing the Department. If confirmed, I will commit to reviewing guidance from the Office of Management and Budget and legislation to determine the best reporting structure for the role.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#365)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support continuing to have cyber responsibilities split between the Bureaus of Information Resource Management and Diplomatic Security?

Answer:

There may be more we can do to integrate and coordinate the work of the Bureaus of Information Resource Management and Diplomatic Security. If confirmed, I will commit to reviewing this and consulting with Congress.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#366)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Department has been advocating for the creation of a Bureau of Cybersecurity and Emerging Technologies (CSET), to be based in the T Family.

a. Do you support the creation of CSET?
b. Do you believe it should be in the T Family?
c. Do you believe a cyber bureau should include all elements of cyber, to include e-commerce and privacy issues?
d. Should a cyber bureau include regular consultations with U.S. private sector actors to receive external views and leverage outside expertise?
e. Given the massive cyber hack that was reported in December 2020, how important is cybersecurity to the State Department and U.S. diplomacy?
f. What cybersecurity challenges does the Department currently face?
g. How do you intend to improve cybersecurity at the Department?

Answer:

I do support the creation of CSET. If confirmed, I will take a close look at where CSET should best be placed within the Department.

If confirmed, I would closely review the mission and scope of responsibility of the bureau, to include whether it should include responsibility for e-commerce and privacy issues.

If confirmed, I would closely review the mission and composition of the Bureau to ensure it is effectively established within the Department and with respect to external stakeholders.

If confirmed, cybersecurity will be a top priority for the State Department.

Nation-states and non-state actors leverage cyberspace, largely with impunity, to threaten our security and our way of life, online and off: combining hacking with malign influence operations to undermine election integrity and interfere in democratic processes; breaching major corporations to steal data, including intellectual property, to enable espionage; targeting industrial control systems across electric utilities, manufacturing plants, and oil refineries; and

brazenly stealing huge amounts of capital from over 40 countries around the world. The United States now operates in a cyber landscape that requires a level of data security, resilience, and trustworthiness that neither the U.S. government nor the private sector alone is currently equipped to provide. The Department will play a critical role in building U.S. cyber resilience by renewing our commitment to international engagement in cyberspace and digital governance.

The Department, like the whole of the Federal government, faces significant risks from a range of malicious cyber threat actors. Addressing these challenges will require a dedicated investment in infrastructure and talent to ensure the security and resilience of our networks. If confirmed, I will make this a top priority.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#367)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Many of the Department's employees work in dangerous settings abroad, and their health and safety should be protected. However, diplomacy is an inherently dangerous profession and a "risk nothing" approach does not make for an effective foreign policy.

a. Do you believe that the Department has allowed too much of a "bunker mentality" to set in?
b. Do you believe that the Department should encourage, not discourage, personnel to get outside of the embassy walls and be more proactive diplomats?
c. Do you believe that the Department needs to adopt a culture of risk management as opposed to risk avoidance?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current operating posture of Department personnel overseas and assess whether a "bunker mentality" is widespread and requires action to address.

As a general matter, State Department personnel serving overseas are most effective when they are able to engage freely outside of embassy walls and should be encouraged to do so. If confirmed, I would want to consult with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security on how to strike the appropriate balance between enabling U.S. diplomats to engage outside of posts while ensuring their safety.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with Department employees serving at all levels and in all capacities to determine whether any appropriate changes to the culture involving risk would help enhance our ability to carry out the mission of leading U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy making to advance the interests of the American people.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#368)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

When terrorist groups or rogue states make threats against our posts abroad, it is obviously a cause for serious concern.

a. What message does it send to our adversaries if we withdraw the vast majority of our Chief of Mission personnel in response to these threats?
b. Is it possible that by responding to threats with diplomatic drawdowns, the State Department has actually rewarded those who threatened and have encouraged them to threaten further our interests?

Answer:

As a general matter, U.S. personnel serving under Chief of Mission authorities are most effective in carrying out their missions when stationed at posts. However, I also believe the drawdown of U.S. personnel at posts is warranted when there are clear threats to their safety and security. If confirmed, ensuring that State Department personnel can safely carry out their missions will be my highest priority.

Those who threaten our interests are driven by their own motivations and I would not want to speculate on the actions of previous Secretaries of State responding to threat assessments.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#369)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Are there any regions or countries where you believe the department is underinvesting?

Answer:

I will also meet with current Department leadership to assess which regions or countries warrant further investment. In recent decades, Africa and the Western Hemisphere have often received less focus than Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Given the global challenges posed by Chinese malign influence, if confirmed, I will ensure that the Department is investing adequate resources to effectively counter this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#369)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Are there any regions or countries where you believe the department is underinvesting?
a. In what regions does the Department need to "staff up"?
b. Equally as important: where could we "slim down" our presence?
c. Does the Department have enough economic officers to promote U.S. business interests abroad and to help the U.S. private sector compete against Chinese government promotion of Chinese businesses?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would meet with Department leadership to review current staffing patterns and determine in which regions additional dedicated personnel might be warranted.

If confirmed, I would meet with Department leadership to review current staffing patterns and determine in which regions adjustments to existing staffing levels might be warranted.

The promotion of U.S. business abroad and ensuring a level playing field for the U.S. private sector should be an important back of the Departments economic diplomacy efforts. If confirmed, I will review the current number of economic officers dedicated to these lines of effort and consult with Congress on any necessary adjustments.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#370)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that chiefs of mission should generally be the U.S. government lead authority in a country? If yes, how do you intend to reinforce the primacy of chiefs of mission in country?

Answer:

Yes. I will work with the leadership of relevant federal departments and agencies with personnel serving under Chief of Mission authorities overseas to ensure proper recognition of and adherence to those authorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#371)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that the Global Engagement Center (GEC) has a vital role to play in our great power competition with Russia and China, and in countering our adversaries in Iran and North Korea?

Answer:

Authoritarian regimes continue to use disinformation campaigns, strategic corruption, and other coercive and corrupting tools to enhance their malign influence and to undermine and interfere in democracies. This is a serious concern for the U.S. and our allies. The Biden-Harris administration will confront the growing strength of autocratic powers and their efforts to divide and manipulate others, and will push back on their attempts to write the rules of the information age. We will do so by working with allies to define an affirmative, democratic vision for the global information space. The Global Engagement Center can play a leading role in this effort.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#371)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that the Global Engagement Center (GEC) has a vital role to play in our great power competition with Russia and China, and in countering our adversaries in Iran and North Korea?

a. If so, will you commit to providing the GEC with the resources and authority it needs to succeed?
b. How would you work to expand the GEC's influence within the interagency?
c. How would you grow the GEC within the Department?
d. If confirmed, will you appoint a qualified Coordinator that demonstrates the importance of the GEC?

Answer:

Yes. The GEC must play a prominent role in coordinating interagency efforts to counter disinformation, propaganda, and other forms of information malign influence around the world. I will work with the leadership of relevant departments and agencies to expand the role and influence of the GEC within the interagency.

If confirmed, I will meet with GEC leadership to identify any needs or resource requests that would enable it to grow within the Department.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#372)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve the diversity of the Department's workforce?

Answer:

To fulfill the President's ambitious international agenda and commitment to lead with diplomacy, the State Department must become more modern, more flexible, more responsive, and much more diverse and inclusive. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be a guiding principle that we uphold across all aspects of the Department -- in our people, funding and programs, and policies. If confirmed, increasing diversity -- especially women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, and religious diversity -- at all levels will be a major priority, including in appointments for senior leadership. I also plan to appoint a Chief Diversity Officer, empowered with the authority and staff to help me hold our organization accountable to our commitments.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#373)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is the relative importance of traditional recruiting efforts versus focused initiatives like the Rangel Fellowship?

Answer:

Traditional recruiting efforts and focused initiatives like the RangeL fellowship are both important to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion at the Department of State.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#374)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How can leadership within the State Department use their roles to be more proactive in pipelining diverse talent for senior positions?

Answer:

Department leadership can help identify and prioritize pathways to promotion for diverse talent. Department leadership can also serve as mentors to diverse talent. If confirmed, I plan to appoint a Chief Diversity Officer, empowered with the authority and staff to help me hold Department leadership accountable to our commitments.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#375)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What steps can the State Department take to increase support for women and minorities seeking promotions?

Answer:

Across the Civil Service and the Foreign Service, we must focus on retention and accountability for ensuring women and minorities have clear pathways to promotion. We must integrate accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion into our institution, from individual performance and evaluation measures to disaggregated data to create organizational metrics and benchmarks. If confirmed I look forward to consulting with Congress on steps we can take to make meaningful, lasting progress at the State Department.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#376)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How can State modify its current testing and recruitment process to make it more accessible for historically underrepresented communities?

Answer:

The State Department must become more modern, more flexible, more responsive, and much more diverse and inclusive. If confirmed, increasing diversity -- especially women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, people of various socio-economic and regional backgrounds and religious diversity -- at all levels will be a major priority, including in appointments for senior leadership. Across the workforce, we must focus on accountability, retention, and recruitment. This includes examining current testing and recruitment processes to identify any potential ways to improve accessibility for historically underrepresented communities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#377a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Currently, Foreign Service oral assessments are held in Washington, DC, throughout the year and once in San Francisco, CA.

a. Is geographic diversity important is building a Department that "looks like America"?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#377b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you think making it easier and more cost effective for Americans outside of the Washington, DC, and northern California areas to take the Foreign Service oral assessments would encourage a more geographically diverse Foreign Service?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will examine the most effective ways to enable Americans living across the country to take the Foreign Service oral assessment and encourage a more geographically diverse Foreign Service.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#377c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to expanding the number of places the Foreign Service oral assessment is administered?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will examine the most effective ways to enable Americans living across the country to take the Foreign Service oral assessment and encourage a more geographically diverse Foreign Service.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#378)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Is it important for Foreign Service Officers to have a strong understanding of the history of international relations/foreign policy?

Answer:

A strong understanding of the history of international relations or foreign policy can be useful to Foreign Services Officers.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#379)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Are strong language skills an essential to success for Foreign Service Officers serving abroad?

Answer:

Strong language skills are one important component for Foreign Services Officers serving abroad.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#380)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe it is important for Foreign Service Officers (FSO) to take external assignments throughout the interagency or in Congress to bring a greater understanding of those organizations back to the Department?

Answer:

Serving in various capacities throughout the interagency or in Congress can provide Foreign Service Officers unique experience and perspectives that they can incorporate into their careers moving forward.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#381a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There are many fewer job opportunities for Civil Service Officers at the GS-14, GS-15, and SES levels relative to the equivalent ranks of the Foreign Service, particularly in the "Foreign Affairs Officer" job series.

a. Is having a strong cadre of Civil Service Officers important to the Department? If yes, in what ways?
b. How can the Department retain and grow top Civil Service Officer talent given the lack of opportunities for growth beyond the GS-13 level?
c. Do you support expanding opportunities for Civil Service Officers to work at Department posts abroad, particularly in filling spots that are currently unoccupied for Foreign Service Officers?

Answer:

Yes. Civil Service Officers are core members of the State Department workforce and having a strong cadre is essential to the Department's ability to perform its assigned mission and responsibilities.

Civil Service Officers must be given clear opportunities for growth and promotion to the senior levels of the Department. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Global Talent Management to identify areas to improve such opportunities.

I support expanding opportunities for Civil Service Officers to serve overseas.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#382)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2017, Congress passed into law a lateral entry pilot program for the Foreign Service that the Department has yet to implement. Do you commit to starting the program in 2021 and to design it as Congress intended?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of the Department's plans to implement a lateral entry pilot program for the Foreign Service and consult with Congress on how best to implement it.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#383)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Currently, when the Department builds a new embassy or consulate, it assumes 10% growth in seats needed for the duration of the post, a one-size-fits-all solution that clearly is deficient. Do you commit to changing the process to include a realistic, informed estimate based on current and estimated future conditions?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review this current practice and determine whether more flexible construction planning would be more effective.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#384)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump administration issued an executive order requiring the State Department to produce a list of "schedule F" positions filled by civil service officers who advocate for or determine external policy. Do you agree with the re-designation of State Department civil service officers to "schedule F"?

Answer:

No.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#385)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support Congress passing a State Department authorization bill?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#386)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe it is important that the Department be explicitly authorized outside of the appropriations process consistently?

Answer:

I believe it is important for the Department to consistently work with Congress to ensure necessary and appropriate authorization outside of the appropriations process. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#387)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, do you commit to instructing Department personnel to play a constructive, supportive, and timely role with Congress in writing and passing a State Department authorization bill?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will instruct Department personnel to play a constructive, supportive, and timely role with Congress in the development and passing of a State Department authorization role.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#388)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How can the Department better support Congress in passing a State Department authorization bill?

Answer:

I believe the Department should work with Congress to identify necessary authorities or other legislative provisions for a State Department authorization bill that would enhance its ability to carry out its mission on behalf of the American people.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#389)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that the role the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is important in providing congressional oversight?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#390)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to making Department personnel available for timely briefings upon request?

Answer:

Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#391)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that the Foreign Service Act should be updated?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on appropriate updates to the Foreign Service Act.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#392)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will you organize and mobilize the resources of the State Department to counter malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#393)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will you organize and mobilize the resources of the State Department to counter malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#394)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Are China's growing commercial ties and investments in Latin America a security threat to the United States?

Answer:

The reality is that China is our most serious competitor, and competition with China is one of the central challenges that will define the 21st century. In Latin America, we will meet this challenge by ensuring that American companies can compete on an even playing field, providing a meaningful alternative to China's economic approach, promoting entrepreneurship and fair practices. As the region recovers from COVID-19, we will look to build a resilient hemisphere that is less reliant on China or other extra-hemispheric actors.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#395)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, your responsibilities will include overseeing the activities of the Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Several ballot measures in the November 2020 elections involved the legalization of illicit narcotics in the United States, including a measure in Oregon legalizing the personal possession of cocaine, heroin, oxycodone and methamphetamine. Please explain your views on the impact these measures have on United States efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations.

Answer:

Assistance to support other countries' counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics efforts overseas help to keep Americans safe at home and reduces the flow of drugs to our shores. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#396)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the implications of sanctions relief tied to JCPOA re-entry for Iran's malign activities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Iranian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#397)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your assessment of the strategic threat China presents in the Arctic? If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to strengthen bilateral efforts with Canada to deter and compete with China in the Arctic region?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to work with Canada on an effective strategy with respect to the Arctic region. I will review the current policy and determine if any adjustments are needed. I look forward to consulting with Congress.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#398)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your assessment of the strategic threat Russia presents in the Arctic? If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to strengthen bilateral efforts with Canada to deter and compete with Russia in the Arctic region?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to work with Canada on an effective strategy with respect to the Arctic region. I will review the current policy and determine if any adjustments are needed. I look forward to consulting with Congress.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#399)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2024 key provisions of the United States' Columbia River Treaty with Canada are set to expire. The Columbia River Treaty provides the northwest region stable flood control, hydroelectric power, and water flow throughout each year. The State Department has been engaged in modernizing the treaty since 2018.

a. Will you commit to making the renegotiation of the treaty a priority to the State Department?
b. As treaty renegotiations enter their fourth year, will you commit to allowing talk to move forward within their current scope? Or do you plan to expand the treaty areas of interest?

Answer:

I am aware of the urgency around negotiations to modernize the Columbia River Treaty, and if confirmed, I commit to addressing the issue with alacrity. I will review the current scope of negotiations, and I commit to work with Congress on the issue.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#400)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2008, Mexico enacted landmark judicial reforms moving from a closed inquisitorial system to an adversarial model, yet continues to face some challenges in implementation.

How can the United States best tailor support within the Merida initiative to ensure our assistance for the judicial sector is most effective in addressing U.S. interests?

Answer:

U.S. foreign assistance pays dividends for Americans. When we provide technical assistance to a country to strengthen its judicial system, for example, that creates a better legal environment, with spillover benefits for security and anti-corruption efforts. We are committed to working with Mexico on a range of issues in our mutual interest. We also will seek greater engagement with Mexico on democracy, rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#401)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Mexico has increased the pace of extraditions to the United States, with over 60 extraditions this past year, yet Mexico has taken actions recently that diminish our law enforcement efforts.

a. If confirmed, what efforts will you make to further increase the pace of extraditions and promote robust law enforcement cooperation between the United States and Mexico?
b. How would you message the importance of maintaining robust law enforcement cooperation with Mexican government officials?
c. What mechanisms can the United States employ to support strengthening Mexico's ability to defend and protect its southern border from transitional criminal activities?

Answer:

U.S.-Mexico security cooperation has been and will continue to be a top national security priority. If confirmed, I am committed to assess the state of our bilateral cooperation on security matters, and to adjust as necessary to increase effectiveness. For starters, we need to review and reestablish the institutional mechanisms that advanced our interests in the past, such as our High Level Security Consultative Group.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#402)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, Mexico approved reforms to the national security law, limiting the power and restricting operations of foreign law enforcement agents in the country. If confirmed, what efforts will you make to maintain continuity in United States-Mexico law enforcement cooperation as Mexico implements this law?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican government to ensure our law enforcement cooperation deepens and works for the benefit of the United States and Mexico.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#403)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the 2019 National Drug Threat Assessment, fentanyl and other highly potent synthetic opioids continue to be the most lethal category of illicit substances in the United States. The 2020 DEA report on fentanyl flows to the United States highlights that China remains the primary source of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances trafficked into the United States, increasingly through Mexico. Mexican transnational criminal organizations are producing increased quantities of fentanyl and cartels such as the Sinaloa and the New Generation Jalisco cartel are the primary trafficking groups responsible for smuggling fentanyl into the United States from Mexico.

a. If confirmed, how do you intend to communicate these concerns about fentanyl production and trafficking to the Mexican government?
b. What specific actions would you encourage Mexico to meaningfully tackle transitional criminal activities through its territory, including trafficking of illicit narcotics?

Answer:

I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican government to ensure our law enforcement cooperation deepens and works for the benefit of the United States and Mexico. Counternarcotics will be among the top priorities for these conversations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#404)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In September 2019, then-(Acting) Assist. Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Michael Kozak described to this Committee how, despite years of programmatic successes, the U.S.-Central America Strategy had failed to muster the political will necessary for aid-recipient countries to effectively combat endemic corruption, economic protectionism, and rampant criminality that have generated wave after wave of illegal migration from the region.

a. Do you agree with his assessment?
b. Please explain how the Biden Administration will build sustained political will in Central America to tackle the push factors of illegal migration.

Answer:

We recognize the ultimate solution for sustainably reducing migration in the region is to work with civil society, the private sector, governments and international partners to catalyze structural change to address corruption, security, and prosperity in the region.

The President has articulated a comprehensive $4 billion, four-year plan in this area that will provide financial and other forms of assistance and incentives to confront corruption, enhance security, and foster prosperity across the region. We look forward to working with Congress on this plan.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#405)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Strategy for Engagement in Central America was designed to promote economic prosperity, security, and good governance in order to deter illegal migration from the region. Pursuant to that strategy, Congress has placed multiple conditions on aid to these countries.

a. To what extent have legislative conditions contributed to policy changes in the recipient nations?
b. How do you plan to incentivize needed reforms if the recipient countries fail to meet conditions set by Congress, and those failures prompt restrictions on assistance?

Answer:

Congress is a partner in the State Department's foreign policy agenda. I commit to working with Congress to ensure we utilize all available congressional tools to maximum effect, and - simultaneously - that Congress provides adequate flexibility for the Department to implement policies with the speed and agility that the challenges require.

We will work with partners in the region so that people can find safety and build new lives without having to leave their home countries.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#406)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

President-elect Biden has proposed a four-year $4 billion strategy for Central America.

a. Can you describe the importance of concrete and verifiable benchmarks in any strategy toward the region and what these benchmarks would look like?
b. Can you describe the type of investment and specific reforms you are seeking from individual governments for this strategy to reduce illegal migration from the region? What is the off-ramp for this strategy?

Answer:

Concrete and verifiable benchmarks will be important to any strategy and should reflect both U.S. policy priorities and the needed reforms to address the root causes of migration in Central America.

We recognize the ultimate solution for sustainably reducing migration in the region is to work with civil society, the private sector, governments and international partners to catalyze structural change to address corruption, security, and prosperity in the region.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#407)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party have taken aggressive measures to silence and punish independent organizations and dissent. These measures include a "foreign agents law" and a special law on cybercrimes, among others. Can you describe what these repressive laws stipulate and how they violate fundamental freedoms essential for preserving democracy?

Answer:

We are committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights throughout the hemisphere, including in Nicaragua.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#408)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Nicaraguan exports to the United States have increased by approximately 70 percent since the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) went into effect in 2006. DR-CAFTA requires important reforms of the domestic legal and business environment that encourage competitive business development and investment, protect intellectual property rights, and promote transparency and the rule-of-law in the trade partners.

a. Is it your assessment that Nicaragua has instituted reforms that promote transparency and the rule-of-law over the last 15 years since the trade deal has gone into effect?
b. Is Nicaragua abiding by its commitments to DR-CAFTA?
c. How has DR-CAFTA benefitted the government of Nicaragua?

Answer:

The President made three commitments to the American people on trade:

- Re-orienting US trade policy to put US workers at the center;
- Rebuilding U.S. alliances and working with allies, in stark contrast to Trump's trade wars against allies.
- Using trade tools, with allies and partners, to combat climate change.

The President has pledged to carefully evaluate all of the steps taken by this Administration, including the private deals and assurances that may have been made, in order to ensure our trade policies achieve the goal of supporting workers and growing our middle class, both now and in the long-term. All the while, we are committed to anti-corruption efforts, challenging authoritarian governance, and standing up for the rights of all people, including the people of Nicaragua.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#409)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (PL 115-335) requires the United States to oppose any loan or financial or technical assistance by international financial institutions to the government of Nicaragua for a project in Nicaragua, except those provided to address basic human needs or to promote democracy in Nicaragua. In exercising that discretion, the Trump administration ensured that COVID assistance provided to Nicaragua in July 2020 did not flow to the government of Nicaragua, but rather to trusted non-governmental organizations. Do you commit to continue this practice as the Biden administration manages United States participation in international financial institutions?

Answer:

COVID-19 response and recovery, including vaccine diplomacy, will be an important focus for U.S. policy in the Americas. As the region recovers, we will look to build a resilient hemisphere that is less reliant on China or other extra-hemispheric actors, and we will remain committed to anti-corruptions safeguards in that process as well.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#410)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the 2019 State Department's Report on Human Rights in Nicaragua, "there were numerous reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings" in response to the April 2018 pro-democracy protests, where the government's violent crackdown left at least 325 people dead, over 2,000 injured, hundreds illegally detained, tortured, and disappeared, and more than 80,000 exiled in neighboring countries. An Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) team concluded in July 2018 that the Nicaraguan security forces' actions could be considered crimes against humanity. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights describes Nicaragua as suffering from a "climate of widespread terror." If confirmed, would you support an investigation into serious human rights abuses and crimes against humanity committed by the Ortega regime?

Answer:

We are committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights throughout the hemisphere, including in Nicaragua.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#411)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In November 2019, the Organization of American States (OAS) High Level Commission on Nicaragua concluded that the government's actions "make the democratic functioning of the country impossible," in violation of Nicaragua's obligations under Article 1 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

a. If confirmed, what instructions would you give the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS to encourage greater international pressure on the situation in Nicaragua?
b. Should Nicaragua be suspended from the OAS?

Answer:

The Biden administration will once again challenge authoritarian governance and stand up for the rights of all people, including the people of Nicaragua, in multilateral institutions.

If confirmed, I would seek to engage with allies across the hemisphere to ensure that democracy does not continue to falter in Nicaragua.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#412)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What direct role do foreign powers—particularly Russia and Cuba—play in Nicaragua? What are Russia's and Cuba's strategic objectives in Nicaragua?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to consulting with the intelligence community to assess the role of Russia and Cuba in Nicaragua and to determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#413)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What strategies would you employ to improve the capacity of the democratic forces to coalesce and become a credible challenge to Ortega ahead of the November 2021 general elections?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will stand with the Nicaraguan people and for democracy. It is past time for free and fair elections so the Nicaragua people can turn the page on the corrupt and repressive Ortega regime.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#414)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

For decades, the Cuban government has harbored a number of U.S. fugitives of justice, including: Joanne Chesimard, on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey state trooper Werner Foerster in 1973; Ishmael LaBeet, convicted of killing eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972; and Charles Lee Hill, charged with killing New Mexico state policeman Robert Rosenbloom in 1971; among others. The government of Cuba continues to refuse Colombia's request to extradite members of the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) National Liberation Army (ELN) living in Cuba after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 60 others. These instances underscore how Cuban government support of the Maduro regime has created a permissive environment for international terrorists to live and thrive within Venezuela.

a. Does Cuban provision of food, housing, and medical care for these U.S. fugitives constitute support for international terrorism? If confirmed, do you commit to prioritizing the extradition of all fugitives from U.S. law enjoying safe harbor in Cuba? Should Cuba be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism (SST) while they continue to harbor U.S. fugitives? Would you advise establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba while it continues to provide safe harbor to fugitives from the U.S. justice system?
b. Does Cuba's refusal of Colombia's extradition request constitute support for international terrorism?
c. If confirmed, would you support Cuba's removal from the SST list without verifiable assurances that it would cease to foster a permissive environment for international terrorists in Venezuela?
d. Please describe your role in the State Department assessment that recommended the removal of Cuba from the SST list in April 2015.
e. Please list the specific assurances provided by the government of Cuba in relation to its removal from the list in 2015.

Answer:

If confirmed, I will carefully review the recent decision to designate Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, including the underlying rationale, and I will consult with the intelligence community and Congress on the way forward. Regarding diplomatic engagement, in the past, it has opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and discussions on issues of disagreement, such as human

rights, property claims, and the return of fugitives from justice. Cuba was removed from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list in 2015 following a thorough review.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#415)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

During your last confirmation hearing before this Committee in November 2014, you testified that, "[a]t least in my judgment, unless Cuba is able to demonstrate that it is taking meaningful steps to move forward, I don't see how you move forward in the [bilateral] relationship." Within two weeks, President Obama announced a dramatic shift in U.S. policy towards Cuba.

a. Please provide a record of your guidance as Deputy Secretary of State in relation to the series of Cuba policy shifts that occurred between December 2014 and January 2017.
b. Please describe your involvement in the decision by President Obama to visit Cuba in March 2016.
c. Please explain your involvement in the September 2016 decision to name a United States Ambassador to Cuba.
d. Please describe the "meaningful steps" taken by the Cuban regime between November 2014 and March 2016 that merited President Obama's shift in Cuba policy.
e. Please describe the conditions under which you would recommend the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Answer:

Our Cuba policy will be governed by two principles. First, support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. Second, Americans -- especially Cuban-Americans -- are the best ambassadors for freedom in Cuba. In 2015 and 2016, the U.S. made tremendous progress in advancing U.S. interests on the island, increasing support for civil society, and empowering a new class of Cuban entrepreneurs independent of the state. Most importantly, President Obama's policies of engagement strengthened family ties, increased cultural and educational exchanges, and empowered Cuba's private sector.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#416)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your November 2014 confirmation hearing, you said, "anything that might be done in the future on Cuba would be done in full consultation, with the real meaning of consultation, that I just alluded to, with this Committee." In a January 2015 hearing before this Committee, just three months later, you said that you "regret" not consulting members of the Committee during White House negotiations to normalize relations with Cuba. Specifically, you stated with regard to your confirmation hearing that, "I did not live up to the standard I set during that hearing," and that "I think that I could have done a better job in engaging with you and in consulting with you in advance, and I regret that."

If confirmed, do you commit to conduct meaningful consultations with me, my office, and the rest of the Committee before and during any negotiations with Cuba?

Answer:

We recognize there are many different views in Congress on what our approach to Cuba should be. We will consult with Congress on any potential actions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#417)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There is well-documented evidence of Cuba's support for the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

a. Please describe the trajectory of Cuban involvement in Venezuela between November 2014 and January 2020.
b. Do you agree that Cuban military and intelligence support is the linchpin to Maduro's survival in Venezuela?
c. Please describe your views on the most effective approach to persuade the Cuban regime to play a more positive role in Venezuela.
d. If confirmed, how would you lead an international coalition of like-minded democracies to put pressure on Cuba regarding its involvement in Venezuela?
e. Is it in our nation's interests to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba before the Cuban government measurably and meaningfully reduces its presence in Venezuela?
f. Do you commit to the full and faithful implementation of the 1996 LIBERTAD Act?
g. Please describe your understanding of the conditions set by the LIBERTAD Act for the United States to normalize relations with Cuba.
h. Please describe your understanding of the role of military-controlled firms in the Cuban economy.
i. Is it in the national interest of the United States to facilitate or allow financial transactions that benefit military-controlled firms in Cuba? If so, how and why?
j. If confirmed, how will you work to ensure that U.S. public and private engagement in Cuba does not disproportionately benefit the Cuban military, intelligence, or security services or personnel at the expense of the Cuban people?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the Department and the Intelligence community to assess the role of Cuba in Venezuela and associated U.S. policies. With respect to resolving problems in Venezuela, I will work with like-minded allies to align our sanctions and diplomatic efforts toward those ends. We agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution. Our Cuba policy will be governed by two principles. First, support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. Second, Americans -- especially Cuban-Americans -- are the best ambassadors for

freedom in Cuba. We recognize there are many different views in Congress on what our approach to Cuba should be. We will consult with Congress on any potential actions.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#418)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In February 2016, the United States Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) allowed the Cuban regime to register the Havana Club rum brand in the United States.

a. Please describe the economic windfall that this decision has had for the Cuban regimesince 2016.
b. Should the U.S. Government rescind the 2016 OFAC license given to Havana Club rum?
c. What conditions and/or circumstances would need to be met before you would formally nominate a United States Ambassador to Cuba?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and associated Treasury

Department policies with respect to Cuba. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#419)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the State Department, in 2019, the government of Cuba maintained an estimated 50,000 medical personnel in more than 60 countries under conditions that represent forced labor. The United States, the United Nations, independent media outlets, and non-governmental organizations have all documented and called out the Cuban regime's exploitative and coercive practices toward its doctors participating in its overseas medical programs.

a. Can you describe your understanding of how Cuban doctors are forced to participate in the Cuban medical program, sent to a foreign country, and the conditions in which they are forced to live while participating?
b. Can you describe how these programs only serve to benefit the Cuban government at the expense of the Cuban people?
c. Do you consider the Cuban regime's overseas medical missions to be exploitative human trafficking efforts?
d. Do you commit to instructing United States embassies in countries that accept Cuban medical missions to communicate to host governments the realities of the forced labor practices employed by the Cuban regime?

Answer:

Support for human rights will be at the core of our efforts. We will engage directly with the Cuban government to denounce abuses and call for reforms.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#420)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the Mais Medicos program, which ran from 2013-2018, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) facilitated the deployment of thousands of Cuban doctors to Brazil, some of whom subsequently alleged misconduct and abuse.

a. How should PAHO be held accountable for its role in this program?
b. If confirmed, do you commit to working to ensure PAHO implements necessary governance changes to ensure increased oversight of future projects or programs such as Mais Medicos?

Answer:

If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the issue and the U.S. government's current policy approach to determine if any adjustments are necessary. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#421)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The State Department's 2019 Human Rights Report for Cuba painted a dismal picture of human rights abuses by the Cuban regime, to include accounts of disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrests and detentions; denial of fair public trial; and political prisoners and detainees. The regime also has cracked down on freedom of expression, limited internet freedom, and restricted freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

a. Will you commit to calling out human rights violations by the Cuban government?
b. How will you work to support democratic activists and human rights defenders in Cuba?

Answer:

We are committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights throughout the hemisphere. Despite our shortcomings, human rights defenders around the globe continue to look to the United States for support against authoritarian regimes.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#422)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In President Obama's reversal of longstanding United States policy toward Cuba, the Castro regime released a U.S. intelligence agent in exchange for three Cuban agents which our United States agent helped to capture.

a. Do you believe this was a fair exchange?
b. Do you believe this man's sacrifice was served with the return ofthe agents he helped capture?

Answer:

Engagement opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and the return of fugitives from justice.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#423)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2014, when President Obama first announced his plans to normalize relations with the Castro regime, he said a presidential visit to Havana was "not in the cards." Then in December 2015, Obama expressed desire to visit Cuba but drew a "red line" declaring he would only visit Cuba if the government makes "progress on civil liberties," and that he was not "interested in validating the status quo."

a. Do you believe progress was made on civil liberties by the time of Obama's visit?
b. Do you believe the human rights situation in Cuba worsened during the period of normalization?

Answer:

The Obama administration's negotiations leading up to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations resulted in the Cuban government's release of 53 political prisoners and its commitment to expand Internet access. Today, nearly half of Cuba's population have cell phones and almost a quarter have Internet access. Engagement opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and cooperation on law enforcement issues. During this period, we were effectively able to advance many U.S. interests on the island, including increasing support for civil society and empowering a new class of Cuban entrepreneurs independent of the state. Most importantly, President Obama's policies of engagement strengthened family ties between Cubans on the island and in the United States, increased cultural and educational exchanges for the Cuban and American people, and strengthened Cuba's private sector.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#424)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Legislative elections are more than a year overdue, there is not a functioning parliament, and the president is ruling by decree. If confirmed, what efforts would you make to support strengthening Haiti's technical capacity to hold elections?

Answer:

The Haitian people deserve democracy and prosperity. Haiti has been without a functioning government for too long, and in the meantime conditions continue to deteriorate. There is no time to waste. The political parties need to come together to end the misery, corruption and insecurity that has plagued the Haitian people for too long. If confirmed, I will work with Congress and with the United Nations and the international community to ensure Haiti's development and democratic stability is again a priority.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#425)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Coca production in Colombia has been steadily increasing since 2013, reaching 212,000 hectares in 2019. In March 2020, the United States and Colombia announced a joint action plan to reduce coca cultivation and cocaine production by 50 percent by the end of 2023. The plan would make full use of all available tools, including rural development, interdiction, as well as manual and aerial eradication.

a. Would you agree that achieving this goal by 2023 would deliver significant healthand security benefits for Americans here at home?
b. If confirmed, what tools and policies would you implement to ensure that our twonations meet this goal?
c. Please explain the level of prioritization you would give to the use of aerial eradication in order to achieve this goal by 2023.
d. Would you support the provision of United States technical assistance to Colombia foraerial eradication programs once Colombia has satisfied its domestic legal requirements to do so?

Answer:

Yes. Now is the time to reinvigorate the U.S.-Colombia partnership with a broad bilateral agenda.

We will support efforts to combat illegal narcotics trafficking and consolidate peace in Colombia. Only Colombians can decide how to build a just and lasting peace in their country. If confirmed, I will stand with Colombian leaders to seek an end to drug violence, promote investment and trade, and support the fight against corruption.

We need to work with Colombia to curb the flow of illicit drugs, but do so safely and responsibly.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#426)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Colombia is a critical United States ally in the Western Hemisphere. In 1997, the United States designated the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of displacements during the half century-long conflict, most of whom are still displaced today.

a. If confirmed, do you commit to keeping these entities listed as FTOs?
b. Please describe your understanding of the links between the Maduro regime and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN).
c. Please describe your understanding of the extent of Cuba's support for the ELN.

Answer:

In Colombia and elsewhere, the capacity to designate an entity as an FTO is an important tool of the United States. If confirmed, I will carefully review FTO designations, and I will consult with the intelligence community and Congress on the way forward.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#427)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, is the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela the result of political and security conditions in that country, or are they the cause of them?

a. Can the humanitarian crisis be resolved on Maduro's watch?
b. Please describe your understanding of Iran's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
c. Is it in the interests of Iran for the Maduro regime to end?
d. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Iranian influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

As President-elect Biden has said, we stand with the Venezuelan people and for democracy. It is past time for free and fair elections so the Venezuelan people can turn the page on the corrupt and repressive Maduro regime. The Venezuelan people are desperate for change. The Biden Administration will support the restoration of democracy and economic stability in Venezuela. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering Iranian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including Venezuela, and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#428)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of Russia's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
a. Is it in the interest of President Putin for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Russian influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#429)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of Cuba's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime?
a. Is it in the interest of the Cuban regime for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Cuban influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the Department and the Intelligence community to assess the role of Cuba in Venezuela and associated U.S. policies.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#430)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of China's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
a. Is it in the interest of China for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Chinese influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to understanding and developing strategies to address Chinese, Russian, and Cuban government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including Venezuela, and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#431)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In a January 2019 editorial, you credited the Trump Administration for isolating the Maduro regime, but criticized the alleged absence of a "comprehensive strategy" or a "Plan B if Mr. Maduro digs in or lashes out."

a. Please explain your comprehensive strategy to advance a peaceful transition in Venezuela.
b. Please explain your "Plan B if Mr. Maduro digs in or lashes out."
c. There have been more than a dozen failed attempts at negotiating with the Maduro regime. They have occurred in an environment of engagement during the Obama Administration, and under the pressure of punitive measures implemented by the Trump Administration.
d. Please describe the lessons learned from your tenure as Deputy Secretary of State in negotiating with the Maduro regime.
e. Please describe your views on the conditions under which there can be successful negotiations with the Maduro regime resulting in a peaceful transition to democratic rule in Venezuela.
f. Please explain how the United States could work more closely with the European Union—and specifically Spain—to increase economic pressure on Maduro.
g. If confirmed, do you commit to not supporting or promoting negotiations without previous and meaningful behavior change by the Maduro regime?
h. Do you commit to not settling for inadequate conditions under which free and fair presidential, legislative, and local elections would be conducted?

Answer:

I understand the pain that the current crisis in Venezuela is inflicting on Venezuelans and their families. If confirmed, I will be committed to: (1) granting Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelans already in the United States; (2) addressing the humanitarian situation affecting millions of Venezuelans; (3) targeting government officials and their cronies involved in corruption and human rights abuses; and (4) to restoring democracy in Venezuela through free and fair elections and aiding in the country's long-term recovery. If confirmed, I will seek to work with partners like the European Union and Spain to seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the release of political prisoners, and implement sanctions against Venezuelan

officials credibly accused of corruption and human rights abuses. Recent reports that the Biden-Harris administration is planning to open talks with the Maduro regime are not correct. No such decision has been made. If confirmed, I will ensure that the overriding goal of the United States must be to press for a democratic outcome in Venezuela, through free and fair elections, and to help the Venezuelan people rebuild their lives and their country.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#432)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In September 2020, the UN Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Venezuela cited evidence of unlawful executions, forced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture in the country since 2014, amounting to crimes against humanity.

a. Do you believe the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity have been held accountable?
b. If confirmed, what tools will you use to ensure every person responsible for crimes against humanity in Venezuela is brought to justice?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the release of political prisoners, and implement sanctions against Venezuelan officials credibly accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

President Biden has been clear throughout the campaign and during the transition that he believes Maduro is a dictator. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Biden-Harris administration will stand with the Venezuelan people and their call for a restoration of democracy through free and fair elections.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#433)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, the General Secretariat of the OAS raised concerns about the failure by the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take swift action following a UN report documenting evidence that Nicolas Maduro and senior members of the regime ordered or contributed to what amounted to crimes against humanity.

Do you support the ICC opening a formal investigation into allegations that the government of Nicolas Maduro committed crimes against humanity?

Answer:

As President Biden has said, we stand with the Venezuelan people and for democracy. It is past time for free and fair elections so the Venezuelan people can turn the page on the corrupt and repressive Maduro regime.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#434)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, U.S. Southern Command Commander, Navy Admiral Craig S. Faller stated that, "We are seeing growing Iranian influence in [Venezuela] to include the Quds force, which is alarming and concerning, and some weapons ties … It's not just oil shipments. It's arms shipments as well … We saw an uptick in that this year. We're watching the rate of change very carefully to see if it connects to any other Iranian malfeasance around the globe."

a. Please describe your understanding of Iranian influence in Venezuela?
b. To what extent are Iran and Venezuela working together, and what does each country have to gain from the partnership?
c. What security risks does Iranian presence in Venezuela present for the U.S. and the Western Hemisphere more broadly?
d. What are the intentions of Iran-backed Hezbollah in Venezuela?

Answer:

We will work with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, including its support for violent proxies. The Biden-Harris administration will be committed to protecting our diplomats around the world. We will ensure that our diplomats are safe.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#435)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Foreign maritime operators continue to facilitate tanker travel to Venezuela despite U.S. sanctions and employ new strategies to avoid detection. At least 17 oil tankers have traveled to Venezuela in recent months, facilitating crude exports to Cuba, China, India, Malaysia, and Spain.

a. If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to prevent Venezuela from evading sanctions through Iranian operators?
b. Do you believe the Venezuela crisis poses the greatest national security threat in the Western Hemisphere? Where does Venezuela fall on your list of priorities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

We will work with like-minded allies to align our sanctions and diplomatic efforts toward those ends. We agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution to the problems in Venezuela.

The Venezuelan people are desperate for change. The Biden Administration will support the restoration of democracy and economic stability in Venezuela.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#436)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please explain your understanding of how the Maduro regime operates as a narco-terrorist regime. Can you describe the role of the Venezuelan military in narcotics trafficking? Can you explain the relationship between the Maduro regime and United States-designated foreign terrorist organizations, FARC and ELN? Do you believe the United States should negotiate with narco-terrorists?

Answer:

President-elect Biden has been clear throughout the campaign and during the transition that he believes Maduro is a dictator and the Biden-Harris administration will stand with the Venezuelan people and their call for a restoration of democracy through free and fair elections. We agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution to the problems in Venezuela. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and context with the Intelligence community and the Department to determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#437)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please explain your understanding and view of the humanitarian exemptions outlined in United States sanctions toward Venezuela that allow for humanitarian support to the Venezuelan people. If confirmed, what instruction would you give to the United States ambassador to the OAS to encourage greater international pressure to promote a transition to democracy in Venezuela?

Answer:

Humanitarian assistance is a first-order priority as we will seek to address hunger inside of Venezuela and the largest refugee crisis in the modern history of Latin America and the Caribbean. There are a few international NGOs on the ground but not nearly enough to meet urgent needs. We would like to see the World Food Program and others be able to get in and distribute aid.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#438)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The tri-border area (TBA) between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay has long been considered a hub for criminal activities including arms and drug trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, and terrorist financing, notably involving Iran-backed Hezbollah.

a. What is the extent of Hezbollah's presence in the TBA and what are its main objectives in the region?
b. What is the connection between terrorist groups and organized crime in the TBA?
c. How can the United States support and strengthen counterterrorism efforts with countries in the region that currently do not have the capacity to enforce a terrorist designation?
d. If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to put pressure on Iran to limit its support for Hezbollah's activities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Iranian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including support for Hezbollah's activities, and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. For starters, the United States can engage in a counterterrorism dialogue with countries in the region and share potential tools for combating terrorist threats. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#439)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In July 2020, more than 350 Chinese fishing boats were detected conducting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities off the coasts of Ecuador, Chile, and Peru in the Pacific Ocean. There are concerns about similar Chinese IUU activities in the South Atlantic Ocean off the coasts of the Falkland Islands.

a. Please describe your views about Chinese Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the waters of the Western Hemisphere?
b. If confirmed, what policy tools would you employ to support Western Hemisphere partners threaten by these malicious activities?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

If confirmed, I will review all policy tools at our disposal to combat malicious activities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#440)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

For the purposes of U.S. domestic law and Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, does the Paris Climate Accord have the status of a treaty, yes or no?

a. If the Paris Accord has the domestic law status of a treaty, does the President intend to transmit it to the Senate for its consideration?
b. What is the nature of the Paris Climate Agreement? Is it an executive agreement, a treaty, or an agreement negotiated under ex ante agreement authority provided by the Congress? Should it have been a treaty or an agreement based on ex post congressional authorization? If not, why not?
c. Is the U.S. still a party to the Paris Climate Agreement? If not, can President Biden take actions to have the US rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement? Under what authorities can he recommit the U.S. to the agreement?
d. The word "shall" appears in the text of the Paris Climate Accord at least 117 times. In which places does the word "shall" create a binding commitment on the United States? If "shall" does not create a binding commitment, which provisions of the Paris agreement are, in the view of the Department, binding on the United States as a matter of international law?
e. Is the U.S. nationally determined contribution (NDC) of a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to "26-28 per cent below its 2005 level in 2025 and to make best efforts to reduce its emissions by 28 percent a binding commitment on the U.S. or is it aspirational? Can the U.S. redefine its NDC downwards if circumstances warrant it?

Answer:

The United States joined the Paris Climate agreement in 2016 as an executive agreement, based on long-standing authority of Presidents to enter into international agreements.

As when the U.S. joined the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016, the President rejoined the Agreement based on existing authority. We will consult closely with Congress on all of our climate diplomacy efforts.

The Paris Agreement is a legal instrument that will guide the process for universally acting on climate change.

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On January 20, 2021, President Biden signed the instrument to rejoin the Paris Agreement on climate change. The instrument was deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General. In accordance with the terms of the Agreement, the United States will become a Party thirty days after depositing the instrument.

The Paris Agreement is a legal instrument that will guide the process for universally acting on climate change.

Under the terms of the Paris Climate Agreement, parties' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are not legally binding. To meet our commitments under the Paris agreement, the Biden-Harris administration will begin work immediately to develop a new NDC for emissions reduction targets. We will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including members of Congress, concerning the shape of the NDC.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#441)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Article 4.3 of the Paris Climate Accord states:

> "Each Party's successive nationally determined contribution will represent a progression beyond the Party's then current nationally determined contribution and reflect its highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances."

a. Is this so-called "ratchet up" provision binding upon the U.S. or merely aspirational?
b. President Obama claimed he had sufficient existing authority to substantially, if not fully, implement the Paris Climate Accord. Do you agree with that assessment that the President continues to have sufficient executive and congressionally mandated authority to implement the Paris Climate Accord? Please cite the specific authority relied upon to implement.
c. Did President Obama make the claim that he had the authority to implement the Paris accord using only the authorities in the UNFCCC, executive authorities under Article II, and existing statutory authority, such as the Clean Air Act? Do you agree with that claim?

Answer:

The Paris Agreement creates an unprecedented framework for global action to avoid potentially catastrophic planetary warming, while building global resilience to the climate impacts we are already experiencing. The U.S. was instrumental in achieving the Agreement, and the Biden-Harris administration will again exercise global leadership in addressing what is a top challenge for America and the world. The United States joined the Paris agreement in 2016 as an executive agreement, based on long-standing authority of Presidents to enter into international agreements.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#442)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a multiyear, multibillion dollar effort that will lend and provide support to private and public sector borrowers. The Obama Administration pledged $3 billion to the GCF.

a. What does the Biden Administration intend to pledge?
b. The GCF is intended to support a range of climate investment, including investments in the private sector such as technology development. How will the Biden Administration ensure that such investments are complementary and do not crowd out the private sector?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will work with the private sector to help promote a large-scale shift in private capital toward climate-friendly activities. This will help finance the transition to a net-zero carbon economy.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#443)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The GCF could be investing in projects around the global in both the public and private sector space. The UNFCCC and COP process envisions some $100 billion annually spend on mitigation and resilience with the GCF as an important part of that effort. In fact, in practice, the GCF will look a lot like a Bretton Woods statute bank, like the IDB or the African Development Bank.

a. Do you agree that it is appropriate that Congress should have oversight over U.S. contributions to the GCF?
   Should the GCF be authorized by Congress as other similarly situated development banks, such as the World Bank or regional development banks are?
b. Should the U.S. representative to the GCF, as a senior official overseeing billions inclimate investments, be presidentially-appointed and Senate confirmed?
c. Is the GCF performing as well as expected? Should the U.S. fund pledges to the GCF?
d. Should the U.S. demand proper safeguards at the GCF to prevent waste and corruption, improper intrusion into private market lending, lending to repressive regimes such as North Korea, Cuba, and Sudan? Does the GCF currently have those safeguards? Will you commit to working with the Congress to ensure such safeguards are in place?

Answer:

President Biden is committed to ensuring that the United States meets its climate finance pledge. These resources are essential for ensuring developing countries can reduce their emissions and build resilience against the destabilizing impacts of climate change -- both of which have clear benefits not only for the recipient countries, but also for the U.S. and the rest of the world. The Biden-Harris administration will work closely with Congress to increase the international climate finance it provides through a variety of channels, including our bilateral agencies and multilateral funds and organizations, such as the Green Climate Fund and the multilateral development banks. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to ensure appropriate safeguards at the GCF are in place.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#444)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

President Biden has announced that his administration will place climate issues at the forefront of his policy priorities. He has stated his intention to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement on "Day One" of his administration. As part of this emphasis, he has announced that former Secretary of State John Kerry will serve as his climate envoy to the world.

a. As Secretary of State, will you commit to work on climate issues in a bipartisan manner? Or do you intend to work around those with differing views?
b. As Secretary of State, how will you ensure that the priorities of the State Department will not be overrun by the former Secretary of State's specific portfolio?
c. What resources will Mr. Kerry be provided to meet his objectives and what limitations will be placed on him and his resources?
d. As the two of you travel and meet with world leaders to discuss foreign policy, how will these leaders know which of you represents the final say on U.S. policy?

Answer:

As Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, former Secretary Kerry will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge. The Envoy's office will be housed at the State Department, and he will maintain a presence at the White House as well. His climate diplomacy work will be closely coordinated with the Department's and our administration's broader diplomatic engagement. As part of his efforts to lead U.S. climate diplomacy, the Envoy will also be coordinating with the Administration's efforts on the domestic side. He will also engage in consultations with the Senate.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#445)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is currently struggling to overcome a health and economic crisis caused by a previously unknown virus that jumped from wildlife to humans – who had no previous immunity to it. According to the CDC website, scientists believe that 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals, and most of these originate in wildlife. Many of the most well-known pandemics and epidemics have started when these kinds of diseases have spilled over from wildlife to people, including SARS, Ebola, HIV, and of course, COVID-19. Scientists also believe that these spillover events are becoming more frequent and are closely linked to human-wildlife interactions involving trade in wildlife species that are likely to transmit these diseases and the destruction of forests and other habitats where these species live. This is particularly true in places like Southeast Asia and Central Africa.

a. Given the massive harm that this pandemic has caused the U.S. in term of loss of life and economic damage. What do you think the role of the State Department should be in trying not just to respond to these kind of spillover events after they happen but to prevent them from happening in the first place?
b. How should we work with countries around the world to address the root causes of these events – such as high-risk trade in wildlife or the destruction or fragmenting of tropical forests due to human development and infrastructure?
c. Do you think funding to support these activities should be part of our response to the current pandemic, and efforts to prevent the next one?

Answer:

The State Department can play a leading role to elevate global health diplomacy to identify potential global health risks and to work within the international community to prevent epidemics and pandemics before they occur. This includes addressing the root causes of these events and strengthening the prevention and response capabilities of local health systems. The Biden-Harris administration is seeking supplemental funding to respond to the current pandemic and to increase global preparedness and prevention mechanisms, and looks forward to consulting with Congress in this critical area.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#446)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the developing world in particular, natural resources make up bread and butter of many countries' economies, in addition to supporting the jobs, nutrition, and health needs of local communities. They can also be highly sought after – whether by our global competitors, such as China, or by bad actors who may rob them for profit or to finance criminal and even violent activities. In the 1990s we heard a lot about "blood diamonds" in Africa that financed war in west Africa and the Congo Basin. Over the past decade, the same has been true of elephant ivory and illegal timber, that have helped fund militias and even terror groups like the Lord's Resistance Army and al Shabaab. And of course, when natural resources become scarce, like food and water, that can feed into extremism and create recruitment opportunities for groups like Boko Haram in the Sahel, or the rise in piracy we saw off the coast of Somalia due to overfishing by foreign fleets from China and elsewhere. The United States has been a leader on issues like stopping wildlife trafficking and illegal fishing, and Congress has been consistently supportive of these efforts in a bipartisan way. We have also passed laws such as the Global Fragility Act, and these issues involving scarcity of food, water and other resources clearly play a role in the fragility or stability of countries and regions.

What sort of priority do you to hope to place on these kinds of issues as Secretary of State, and how can they be better integrated into our approach to U.S. foreign policy and national security policy?

Answer:

The United States must continue to be a leader in combatting wildlife trafficking, poverty alleviation. Congress has taken important action through the Global Fragility Act to strengthen efforts to stabilize conflict-affected areas and prevent violence globally. If confirmed, I will prioritize these issues and consult with Congress on further steps to integrate them into U.S. foreign policy.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#447)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Over the past year, we've heard a lot of discussion of the importance of protecting forests around the globe. The fires in the Amazon clearly focused the world's attention, and bipartisan bills in Congress have been introduced to encourage tree-planting and the efforts to protect and restore forests around the world. At the same time, illegal logging and the trade in illegal timber in many countries around the world isn't just destroying forests, it's also hurting the American forestry industry and its workers by depressing prices for timber on the global market. A good portion of that illegal timber also flows through China after being logged in places like the Russian Far East or Southeast Asia, and then making its way into the United States. Estimates are that these kinds of illegal activities are costing the U.S. forestry sector between half a billion and a billion dollars a year in lost revenue. And illegal clearing of forests for agriculture has a similar impact on U.S. commodity producers, when imported products are produced more cheaply on illegally deforested lands.

President-elect Biden has talked about wanting to support renewed international efforts to protect forests like the Amazon. What role do you see for the State Department in supporting these efforts, and what can we do diplomatically and by using carrots and sticks to stop the kinds of illegal activities that are destroying these forests and harming American workers?

Answer:

The State Department has an important role to play in leading international efforts to prevent deforestation in the Amazon and other regions. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on how to strengthen the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal to stop illegal activities, protect forests, and support American workers.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#448)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the fragility of "just in time" inventories and the United States' reliance on foreign nations for critical personal protective equipment, disinfectants, and other items important to national security.

a. As Secretary of State, how will you work to address this challenge?
b. Should the United States move to broaden and diversify its supply chains, with which countries should we increase trade and with which should we decrease trade?

Answer:

The U.S. needs to close supply chain vulnerabilities across a range of critical products on which the U.S. is dangerously dependent on foreign suppliers. If confirmed, I look forward to working with other agencies in the U.S. government and with Congress to implement a comprehensive approach to ensure the U.S. has the critical supplies it needs for future crises and its national security.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#449)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

A significant number of nations wish to negotiate trade agreements with the United States.
a. With which countries should the United States prioritize negotiating trade agreements?
b. What are the blocks of nations that you would prioritize negotiating multilateral agreements?

Answer:

The immediate priority of the Biden Administration is new investments in the American economy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the U.S. Trade Representative, others in the administration, and Congress on the administration's economic and trade priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#450)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There are eleven countries that are members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. This agreement could be an important network for U.S. trade and an influential group of countries to counter Chinese actions. Should the United States work to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement?

Answer:

The immediate priority of the Biden Administration is new investments in the American economy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the U.S. Trade Representative, others in the administration, and Congress on the administration's economic and trade priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#451)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What specific steps would you propose to increase U.S. trade interaction with lower-volume trading partners?

Answer:

The immediate priority of the Biden Administration is new investments in the American economy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the U.S. Trade Representative, others in the administration, and Congress on the administration's economic and trade priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#452)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

American and other foreign companies have experienced significant and growing regulatory challenges in Mexico under President Lopez Obrador by his administration, creating regulatory challenges for U.S. investors that include increasing difficulties in getting permits for a range of activities. These actions are contrary to USCMA. What steps and actions will you take as Secretary of State to ensure that Mexico abides by the commitments that it has made as part of USCMA?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, and others in the administration to ensure that all U.S. trading partners live up to their commitments in trade agreements.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#453)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your stance on continuing or expanding State-led initiatives such as Asia EDGE, which has helped support demand creation for U.S. energy exports through work to create more open, efficient, rule-based and transparent energy markets and the construction of energy infrastructure?

Answer:

Energy is critical to achieving the administration's economic, national security, and climate goals. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, and others in the administration to identify our global energy priorities and to leverage all available tools to advance those goals.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#454)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

President-elect Biden has said he will not "make any immediate moves" to lower or eliminate tariffs on U.S. imports from China, but rather freeze the current policy while he and his administration conduct a thorough review of the U.S.-China relationship. This decision has the merit of ensuring that Beijing does not get used to the idea that we will grant them concessions in exchange for nothing. However, our approach must also take into account that thousands of U.S. businesses are burdened by these tariffs, through no fault of their own, with no relief in sight and no process to be considered for exclusion. If confirmed, you will likely play a leading role in this review. Do you commit to including a Section 301 tariff exclusion process that provides a clear path to U.S. businesses seeking tariff relief, which is especially important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answer:

The administration is aware that the Section 301 exclusions related to COVID-19 have been extended until the end of March. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this issue with the U.S. Trade Representative and others in the administration.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#455)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States has been the world leader in innovation and technology for the past century. China has adopted the method of using U.S. technology, largely without compensation, to further their own economic, social, and foreign policy objectives. China has expressed a desire to move its economy up the global supply chain by dominating industries critical to U.S. national security such a semiconductor production, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and autonomous vehicles, among others.

a. What priority will you assign to this economic aggression among matters with China?
b. How will you determine which industries are critical to the future of the United States and how will the State Department work to protect the U.S. competitive advantage?
c. Under your leadership, how aggressively would the State Department defend U.S. intellectual property? What specific actions will you take to defend U.S. intellectual property?

Answer:

The economic dimension of U.S.-China competition is crucial. China is stealing intellectual property and engaging in other practices to give it an unfair technological advantage, including forced technology transfer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with other agencies and with Congress on the administration's priorities with respect to combating these practices using the full array of U.S. tools, as well as to working with allies to hold Beijing accountable.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#456)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The majority of increased energy demand in the near future is most likely to come from emerging nations, India, and China. U.S. industry and the State Department will have a role in supporting these nations in meeting the demand for this additional energy. A recent Center for Strategic and International Studies report concluded that U.S. exports of nuclear power is in steep decline, while Russia and China are increasing domestic production as well as international exports.

a. What benefits, if any, do you believe the United States accrues by exporting nuclear technology to foreign markets?
b. Is it a priority for the United States to continue support for nuclear research and development in order to export those technologies to foreign markets?
c. What role do you see for United States foreign assistance in promoting access to energy in emerging nations?
d. In the Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force Recommendations, President-elect Biden supports technology neutral clean energy programs and next generation nuclear power. Will the priorities outlined in the Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force Recommendations apply to the State Department's international efforts as well?
e. Specifically, what programs and other agencies will the Department utilize to advance these goals?
f. How will you prioritize resources for wind, solar, nuclear, or other sources of carbon free power when evaluating support for energy production projects?

Answer:

Energy is critical to achieving the administration's economic, national security, and climate goals. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, and others in the administration to identify our global energy priorities and to leverage all available tools to advance those goals.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#457)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

President-elect Biden has said he will not "make any immediate moves" to lower or eliminate tariffs on U.S. imports from China, but rather freeze the current policy while he and his administration conduct a thorough review of the U.S.-China relationship. This decision has the merit of ensuring that Beijing does not get used to the idea that we will grant them concessions in exchange for nothing. However, our approach must also take into account that thousands of U.S. businesses are burdened by these tariffs, through no fault of their own, with no relief in sight and no process to be considered for exclusion.

If confirmed, you will likely play a leading role in this review. Do you commit to including a Section 301 tariff exclusion process that provides a clear path to U.S. businesses seeking tariff relief, which is especially important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answer:

The administration is aware that the Section 301 exclusions related to COVID-19 have been extended until the end of March. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this issue with the U.S. Trade Representative and others in the administration.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#458)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On November 23, 2020, then-President-elect Joe Biden announced that he intended to appoint former Secretary of State John Kerry to be a "Special Presidential Envoy for Climate." The announcement stated that Secretary Kerry:

> will fight climate change full-time as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and will sit on the National Security Council. This marks the first time that the NSC will include an official dedicated to climate change, reflecting the president-elect's commitment to addressing climate change as an urgent national security issue.

a. What is the chain of command for this new position and to whom will the officeholder report?
b. What will the role of the Secretary of State be with respect to this position?
c. Will this position be located within the Department of State?
d. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create duplication of effort within the Department? If so, how would you avoid such duplication? If not, why not?
e. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create confusion within the Department in terms of overlapping authorities and unclear organizational charts? If so, how would you avoid such confusion? If not, why not?
f. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create confusion within foreign governments about which official(s) have the lead on different issues? If so, how would you avoid such confusion? If not, why not?
g. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to undermine morale among State Department employees in offices where their work has been supplanted by a new special envoy?
h. Should the Department consult with this committee before the creation of any new special envoy or similar position at the Department? Why or why not?
i. Do you believe that the Department should first look to its extant workforce before creating special envoys?
j. Do you believe that an assistant secretary should have responsibility for every element of their bureau's portfolio?
k. In general, what circumstances would merit the creation of a special envoy?
l. How will Mr. Kerry's portfolio differ from the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science?
m. Will the OES assistant secretary report to Mr. Kerry?
n. How will OES and Mr. Kerry's team de-conflict any overlap in their portfolios?
o. Do you commit to ensuring that there is no duplication of effort among Mr. Kerry's staff and the rest of the Department?

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Answer:

As Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, former Secretary Kerry will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge. The Envoy's office will be housed at the State Department, and he will maintain a presence at the White House as well. His climate diplomacy work will be closely coordinated with the Department's and the Biden-Harris administration's broader diplomatic engagement. As part of his efforts to lead U.S. climate diplomacy, the Envoy will also be coordinating with the administration's efforts on the domestic side. He will also engage in consultations with the Senate. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the role of special envoys, which have long been used by administrations on a bipartisan basis to respond to focused and urgent priorities, does not lead to duplication of efforts or lack of organizational clarity, create confusion among foreign governments, undermine morale at the State Department. I will consult with Congress on the appropriate roles and responsibilities of special envoys to advance foreign policy and national security priorities.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#459)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution provides that the President:

> shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

Under this provision, all "Officers of the United States" not otherwise provided for in the Constitution may only be appointed "with the Advice and Consent of the Senate." The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted the meaning of "Officers of the United States" to include "any appointee exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States." Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1, 125–26 (1976).

a. In your view, would Secretary Kerry, as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, be "exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States"? Please explain your answer.
b. Does President Biden intend to submit a nomination for Secretary Kerry to the Senate for its advice and consent regarding his appointment as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate?
c. Do you commit to advising President Biden that he should submit a nomination for Secretary Kerry's appointment to the Senate for its advice and consent before Secretary Kerry takes office?
d. Do you commit to advising President Biden that he should submit a nomination for any appointee who will be "exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States" to the Senate for its advice and consent before the appointee takes office?

Answer:

Special envoys have long been used by administrations on a bipartisan basis to respond to focused and urgent priorities. If confirmed, I will consult with Congress on the appropriate roles and responsibilities for special envoys. As Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, former Secretary Kerry will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#460)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On December 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. This legislation includes a provision that I supported which establishes an Office of Sanctions Coordinator within the State Department.

a. If confirmed, do you commit to give this new office the attention, support, and resources needed to ensure its success and the fulfillment of its statutory mandate?
b. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that this new office will fulfill its mandate vis-à-vis other offices and bureaus within the State Department to "serve as the coordinator for the development and implementation of sanctions policy" within the State Department?
c. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that the head of this new office will serve as the lead representative of the United States in diplomatic engagement on sanctions matters?
d. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that this new office will serve as the lead representative of the State Department in interagency discussions with respect to the development and implementation of sanctions policy?
e. 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?
f. If confirmed, do you commit to support the hiring of qualified sanctions professionals with expertise in the sanctions field to work in this office?
g. If confirmed, do you commit to work with my office and this committee to ensure that this office succeeds and fulfills its statutory mandate?
h. 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:

I believe that sanctions are an important tool to help achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives and I appreciate the emphasis that Congress has put on the State Department's resources in this area. If confirmed, I commit to consulting closely with Congress on sanctions policy and to working on implementing the provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#461)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Section 1263(d) of the Global Magnitsky Act requires that the President make a sanctions determination within 120 days after receipt of a joint request from the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (or other relevant committee leadership). If confirmed, will you commit to help ensure Congress receives a specific determination to any such request within 120 days of submission?

Answer:

President Biden and I are committed to using the Global Magnitsky Act to hold violators of human rights accountable. If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress as provided for in the Global Magnitsky Act.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#462)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under the Constitution, the President and the Senate share the treaty-making power. Over the last few decades, the President has increasingly claimed the authority to unilaterally withdraw from treaties with no further action by the Senate or Congress. Reserving the right to object to such a claim of authority to which the Senate has not consented, some have argued that, in recent cases, the President has failed to adequately notify the Senate in advance of such a unilateral withdrawal.

a. What is your view with respect to the Senate's role in treaty withdrawal? Should the President, acting through the Secretary of State, notify the Senate in advance of any presidential decision to suspend, terminate, or withdraw from any treaty that has received Senate consent to ratification?
b. Should the Secretary provide to the Senate, through the Foreign Relations Committee and with adequate advance notice, a detailed written justification for the withdrawal?
c. In your view, what does "advice and consent" mean? What is and should be the role of the Senate be with respect to entering into and terminating treaties?
d. What is the scope of the President's authority to abrogate a treaty or other international agreement? Is it unlimited? If not, what are the limitations?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters and treaties. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation involving treaties, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#463)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, does the President have the authority to re-join a treaty without resubmitting that treaty to the Senate for advice and consent? Please explain.

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters and treaties. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation involving treaties, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#464)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expert legal witnesses have suggested that Congress consider requiring the reporting of significant non-binding political commitments to Congress. Should Congress be informed of these non-binding arrangements? If so, in what form?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#465)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Case-Zablocki statute (22 U.S.C. 112b) requires the Secretary to provide to the Congress the text of international agreements to which the United States has agreed to become a party. The intent of the statute is to ensure Congress is fully informed of executive decisions to create international, legally binding obligations on the United States.

In recent years, presidents have made "political" or "oral" agreements with potentially binding commitments on the United States. Successive administrations appear to have taken the view that such agreements fall outside the scope of Case-Zablocki and therefore do not have to be provided to the Congress.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expert legal witnesses have suggested that Congress consider requiring the written reporting of significant binding political commitments that have not been reduced to writing to Congress.

a. What are your views regarding providing the Senate with the written text of any political or oral agreement intended to be binding on the United States under international law?
b. With respect to any oral international agreement or political commitment that creates or is intended to create a legally binding commitment for the United States under international law, will you commit, if confirmed, to working with Congress to establish a meaningful process for reducing such commitments or agreements to writing and transmitting to the Congress the text of such agreement?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#466)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Although the State Department's Circular 175 process calls for consultation with Congress on treaties and agreements, it does not provide much guidance on how such conversations should occur. As a practical matter, no established routine procedure for consultation with the Senate (formal or informal) currently appears to exist, at least from the perspective of the Senate side. In recent years, to the extent they occur, State Department briefings to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC) have been ad hoc and by affirmative request of the Committee.

The paucity of information has led some Senators to grow skeptical with respect to treaties presented to the Committee for advice and consent but completed without the opportunity for consultation. This problem is further complicated if the treaty requires implementing legislation on subject matter over which another Senate committee may have jurisdiction. As a result, some Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senators have expressed wariness with taking up such treaties. Avoidable misunderstanding and confusion can result, complicating or preventing required Senate action.

Alternatively, with a more regularized and institutionalized consultation process with SFRC, the Senate and Administration can develop a more dynamic approach to these agreements. Enhanced and meaningful consultation can build support for these agreements and prove valuable in increasing Senate understanding of administration policy objectives over time.

Will you commit to directing the Department to address this oversight and work with the Committee to establish a process under which the Department will, on a regular periodic basis, engage in meaningful, advance consultation with the SFRC regarding the Departments' intention to negotiate significant international agreements and treaties?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#467)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In October 1999, the Senate voted to reject the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by a vote of 51-48.

a. Setting aside the fact that the United States Senate has not consented to ratification of the Vienna Convention on Treaties, please describe your views with respect to the scope of the "provisional application" doctrine.
b. What are your views with respect to the legal effect of a Senate vote to reject a treaty? If rejected, does the President have authority to subsequently implement the provisions of that treaty in spite of that vote? Does such a Senate vote place limits on a future claim of presidential authority to provisionally implement the rejected treaty?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#468)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your views with respect to the binding legal effect of the Senate's inclusion of conditions to consent to ratification of a treaty under constitutional advice and consent, such as reservations, understandings, and declarations (RUDs). If the President decides to ratify a treaty to which the Senate has consented but has also included such RUDs in its resolution of consent to ratification, is the President legally bound to implement such conditions as included by the Senate in its consent to ratification resolution?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#469)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The War Powers Resolution requires congressional notifications when United States Armed Forces are introduced into hostilities or into situations where there is imminent involvement in hostilities.

a. Based on your experience, what do you think the term "hostilities" means?
b. Separate from military action authorized under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), do you believe the United States has been or is engaged in ongoing hostilities in Yemen?

Answer:

President[-Elect] Biden campaigned on a promise to bring to a responsible end the "forever wars" that have continued since 9/11, while also protecting Americans from terrorist and other threats. This will mean rightsizing our counterterrorism operations, as well as restoring and enhancing safeguards to make those operations transparent and to protect civilians. We will also work with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. It has been almost twenty years since the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force became law. In the ensuing two decades, that law has been invoked for military actions in countries and against groups that are not named in the statute. For the sake of good governance and public accountability -- and consistent with Congress's role when it comes to critical decisions to use military force -- we think it is time for an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. Ifconfirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#470)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under both the Obama and Trump Administrations, certain terrorist detainees held at Guantanamo Bay have not been released for good reason. Do you envision or support a shift in policy with respect to Guantanamo Bay detention?

Answer:

President[-Elect] Biden campaigned on a promise to bring to a responsible end the "forever wars" that have continued since 9/11, while also protecting Americans from terrorist and other threats. This will mean rightsizing our counterterrorism operations, as well as restoring and enhancing safeguards to make those operations transparent and to protect civilians. We will also work with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. It has been almost twenty years since the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force became law. In the ensuing two decades, that law has been invoked for military actions in countries and against groups that are not named in the statute. For the sake of good governance and public accountability -- and consistent with Congress's role when it comes to critical decisions to use military force -- we think it is time for an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. Ifconfirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#471)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you agree with the Trump Administration's use of force pursuant to the 2001 AUMF? Why or why not?

a. Do you believe that the 2001 AUMF should be repealed or updated? Why or why not?
b. Is it possible for Congress to update the 2001 AUMF without negatively impacting current detention authority for terrorist detainees?
c. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should ensure that detention authority for terrorist detainees is not interrupted? Why or why not?
d. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should ensure that current military operations against terrorists around the world continue to be authorized?
e. Do you believe that the 2001 AUMF authorizes the use of military force against associated forces of Al Qaeda?
f. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should contain geographic constraints? Why or why not?
g. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should include a hard sunset? Why or why not?

Answer:

President[-Elect] Biden campaigned on a promise to bring to a responsible end the "forever wars" that have continued since 9/11, while also protecting Americans from terrorist and other threats. This will mean rightsizing our counterterrorism operations, as well as restoring and enhancing safeguards to make those operations transparent and to protect civilians. We will also work with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. It has been almost twenty years since the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force became law. In the ensuing two decades, that law has been invoked for military actions in countries and against groups that are not named in the statute. For the sake of good governance and public accountability -- and consistent with Congress's role when it comes to critical decisions to use military force -- we

think it is time for an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort.

UNCLASSIFIED

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#472)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the 2002 AUMF be repealed? Why or why not?
a. How would a repeal of the 2002 AUMF impact current detention operations?
b. Do you commit to working closely with this committee and directing your staff to brief the committee on any use of force undertaken pursuant to the 2001 AUMF, 2002 AUMF, or Article II of the United States Constitution?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress to review and repeal outdated authorities and to put in place an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort. I will work closely with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and direct Department personnel to provide the appropriate briefings on the use of force.

Responses to Questions
Resubmitted to Hon. Antony J. Blinken
by Senator James E. Risch [1]

[1] Many of the responses we received in the initial responses (Secretary-Designate Blinken's responses in the reformatted version) were unresponsive to the questions asked, so we re-submitted that list of unresponsive answers to State. The attached are their responses to that list of questions only (not a full list of responses).—*Senator Risch's staff.*

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#1)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There are several vacant ambassadorial posts in Sub-Saharan Africa without a named nominee to be considered by the Foreign Relations Committee, including such high-priority posts as Sudan. Many other posts will become vacant in the coming year.

a. As Secretary of State, are you committed to working with the White House to ensure that Ambassadorial positions in Sub-Saharan Africa are filled by qualified, experienced nominees in a timely manner?
b. Under your leadership as Secretary of State, what actions will you pursue to ensure that hard to fill posts in Sub-Saharan Africa are sufficiently and consistently staffed?
c. In your opinion, is Africa fully integrated into the Department's strategic frameworks and strategy documents?
d. Do you believe that Africa is adequately represented in the State Department's Indo-Pacific strategy?
e. How can the Department better leverage the Bureau of African Affairs and encourage better coordination with the Bureau of Near East Affairs on Red Sea Corridor issues?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work closely with the White House to ensure timely selection and nomination of qualified, experienced candidates for Ambassadorial positions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I support continued use of recruitment incentives to ensure that hard-to-fill posts in Sub-Saharan Africa are sufficiently and consistently staffed. These posts face chronic gaps, and I am committed to ensuring that we use every tool available to us under existing law and regulation.

I believe there may be more we can do to integrate Africa into the Department's strategic frameworks and strategy documents. I will commit to reviewing this, including with USAID, and consulting with Congress.

I agree there may be more we can do to ensure that Africa is adequately represented in the Department's Indo-Pacific strategy. Security and economic challenges across the Indian Ocean region extend to a number of critical African countries. If confirmed, I will commit to reviewing this and consulting with Congress.

A comprehensive and coordinated interagency approach to the Greater Horn of Africa would better serve U.S. national security interests. I will closely review existing coordination between the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs on Red Sea Corridor issues and ask senior leadership to identify and implement mechanisms for better coordination. As part of our strategy, I will review whether a special envoy for the Greater Horn of Africa and the Red Sea is needed.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#3)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The proliferation and activities of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) across sub-Saharan Africa increasingly pose a national security threat to the United States, as evidenced by the attack on American and Kenyan personnel by Al-Shabaab at Camp Simba in Manda Bay, Kenya in January 2020.

a. What is your perspective on the decision announced by the Pentagon in December 2020 to withdraw U.S. troops from Somalia?
b. Do you plan to coordinate with the Secretary of Defense and other relevant U.S. government departments and agencies to develop a comprehensive, continent-wide strategy to address the terror threat posed by ISIS-affiliated and other VEOs active in the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, the Swahili Coast (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)?
c. Of the security assistance tools available to the Department of State, which are the most underutilized in Sub-Saharan Africa, and how do you intend to rectify such imbalances?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will seek to address the threat posed by al-Shabaab and adopt a tailored, effective, and sustainable strategy to achieve our interests in Somalia and East Africa. If confirmed, I will work with relevant interagency counterparts, including but not limited to the Department of Defense, to review our posture in the region, looking closely at the safety of U.S. personnel operating in the country and the terrorist threat in the region.

Further, I plan to coordinate with the Secretary of Defense and other relevant U.S. government departments and agencies to develop an effective strategy to address this threat and will consult with Congress.

I will conduct a review of all current security assistance tools being utilized by the Department in Sub-Saharan Africa and identify any imbalances that must be addressed. I look

forward to engaging with Congress on this matter and seeking the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's input on tools that can be better utilized.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#5)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

With 49 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, there are myriad opportunities and challenges to the security, economic, health and humanitarian interests of the United States. The U.S. government is presently engaged on a variety of fronts.

a. What is the number-one threat posed to the United States in Africa? What is the greatest opportunity for the U.S. in Africa?
b. Please list the near-term challenges and opportunities that the United States must engage in during your first 60, 90, and 180 days, if confirmed, as Secretary of State.
c. In the early days of your tenure as Secretary of State, if confirmed, how will you make clear inside the Department, across the administration and externally, that Africa is a priority for the Biden Administration?
d. How will you ensure the United States respects and values our African partners, while also representing our values and interests, particularly as it relates to respect for the rule of law, protecting human rights, and advancing democracy?
e. Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing a massive "youth bulge." While programs like the Young African Leaders Initiative and its Mandela Washington Fellowship are vital, what can the United States do to expand its reach and effectively engage with Africa's enormous youth population?

Answer:

Africa is a priority for the Biden administration. We intend to engage African countries early and often as partners in pursuing our shared interests and values – including security, global health, climate change, freedom and democracy, and shared prosperity. Senior-level engagement on a consistent basis will be a signal of our commitment. Our policy priorities include strengthening democratic institutions, advancing lasting peace and security, promoting economic growth, trade, and investment; and promoting health and sustainable development. We will reinvigorate and restore our partnerships across the continent – building substantive, reciprocal partnerships with African governments, institutions, and publics based on shared interests and respect. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with Congress to ensure increased U.S. engagement with the African Union and other sub-regional bodies across the range of U.S. national security interests. We will work with African governments, the U.S. private sector, and international financial institutions to restore

economic growth across the continent to help return African economies to some of the fastest growing in the world and open new opportunities for American businesses. With a population of 1.3 billion people whose median age is 19 years old, one of Africa's most important resources is its youth. By supporting the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), we intend to work with public, private sector, and civil society partners across the continent to develop initiatives and economic opportunities to harness the innovation and energy of Africa's youth. Assessing ways to expand YALI and our engagement with Africa's youth will be a priority for the Bureau of African Affairs.

U.S. engagement in Africa keeps Americans and Africans safe. We will take a holistic approach to security challenges, ensuring that U.S. security and governance approaches are mutually reinforcing and sufficiently comprehensive. Working with our partners at DoD and the intelligence community, we will review all of our deployments, including in Africa, to ensure they are right-sized and necessary to assist partners confront a serious terrorism threat as we work to help Africans advance their own security.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#6)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, Africa accounted for just 1.4% of U.S. global trade and received 0.7% of U.S. foreign direct investment. Such shares have declined relative to their historical highs a decade or so ago.

a. What are your views on the role trade and investment could and should play in building stronger ties between the United States and the African continent? How should U.S.-African trade and investment initiatives factor into the U.S. global strategy to counter China, particularly in Africa?
b. How can the U.S. government better promote African countries as destinations for U.S. private sector foreign investment? How can the United States improve access for African firms seeking to do business here? How can we best engage the U.S. African diaspora?

Answer:

Using economic diplomacy and the tools of the DFC, USAID, MCC, and Treasury, I will work with the U.S. private sector, African governments, and international financial institutions to increase trade and investment in Africa and promote U.S. business. Our chiefs of mission and embassy country teams are a full part of this effort. We also intend to engage Congress early to discuss the road ahead for renewing and updating the Generalized System of Preferences and looking further down the road, to determine the prospects for the African Growth and Opportunity Act and other trade preference programs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#8)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

One vital area of Prosper Africa that requires greater emphasis is improving the enabling environment within African partner countries to better attract U.S. business investment. Improvements in anti-corruption initiatives, human rights, the rule of law, and overall good governance would create better conditions for U.S. investment conditions. Such enhancements would also counterbalance efforts by Chinese firms and the Chinese Communist Party to undermine free-market competition in African markets to their advantage.

How can the U.S. government most effectively support efforts to improve the enabling environment for competitive foreign investment by U.S. firms in Africa? What types of partnerships work best, and how can the United States best incentivize reforms and other actions necessary to foster economic opportunity and expand two-way trade and investment with the African continent?

Answer:

The United States has an interest in Africa's success and sustainable development. U.S. companies are already working to take advantage of opportunities and benefitting from these market opportunities. For example, the Prosper Africa Initiative is clearing impediments to economic growth in Africa, creating new export and investment opportunities for U.S. companies and increasing prosperity at home. The Department's Prosper Africa engagement and Embassy Deal Teams help identify trade and investment opportunities for U.S. companies and U.S. government financing mechanisms to provide transparent, competitive financing options for purchases of U.S. goods and services, benefitting companies and consumers alike. The Department is aligning its technical assistance and development offerings to eliminate barriers to trade, increase transparency in procurement, and foster government regulatory environments to improve the business climate.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#9)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On May 30, 2019, the framework agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) entered into force. While trading under the AfCFTA framework is not expected to occur until mid-2021, the AfCFTA, if fully realized, would cover 54 countries (the largest of any regional trade bloc), creating a market encompassing 1.2 billion people with combined economic output in 2018 of $2.5 trillion.

a. How can market integration under AfCFTA best incentivize U.S. trade and investment in the region?
b. How can the United States best support the successful implementation of the AfCFTA, while also pursuing bilateral trade deals, such as the ongoing trade talks with Kenya? Would such bilateral trade initiatives conflict with or improve AfCFTA negotiations and implementation?
c. How should we prioritize varying U.S. trade policy goals in the region? How may the AfCFTA affect these competing policy priorities?

Answer:

By 2050, one of every four people in the world will live in Africa. The continent has the world's youngest population and workforce. If successful in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the region will create the fifth-largest economy in the world. At the same time, Africa has slipped into a recession for the first time in 25 years due to the impacts of COVID-19, stalling growth and threatening years of progress in reducing extreme poverty.

Using economic diplomacy and the tools of the DFC, USAID, MCC and Treasury, the State Department can leverage the U.S. private sector, African governments, and international financial institutions to increase trade and investment in Africa and promote U.S. business.

If confirmed, I intend to consult with Congress early to discuss the road ahead for renewing and updating the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and, looking further down the road, determine the prospects for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and

other trade preference

programs. The Biden administration is committed to a trade policy that promotes American workers and strengthens alliances with key partners, like Kenya. I intend to work with interagency partners and closely review the status of ongoing negotiations with Kenya.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#10)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, democratic gains are under threat as long-serving rulers manipulate constitutional and electoral processes to remain in power while stifling dissent and limiting opposition parties and candidates' activities. In 2020 alone, several African ruling parties and incumbent leaders applied authoritarian tactics that manipulated democratic processes and frameworks, including in Cameroon, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

a. If confirmed as Secretary of State, will reinforcing democratic institutions and norms in Africa be a priority?
b. Will you commit to ensuring that messaging from the Department of State and its embassies and leadership consistently reinforces the U.S. democratic values and interests, including the need to respect democratic institutions and norms, advance human and political rights, and enhance citizen responsive governance?
c. What is your perspective on balancing competing U.S. priorities in the areas of security, democracy, and human rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially when some of our top security partners – including Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Mali – periodically or consistently engage in undemocratic practices? In your view, which should take priority in Africa?

Answer:

Yes. I am concerned about the worrying backsliding in democracy and human rights on the continent, including several problematic elections. The Biden-Harris administration will restore democracy and human rights to the center of U.S. foreign policy, including in Africa. Working in partnership with African governments and civil society, our support aims to protect the democratic and development gains made across the continent, strengthen democratic institutions, and prevent further democratic backsliding. In diplomatic engagements, I will pay close attention to term limits, democratic norms, media freedom, and the health of civil society. If confirmed, I will pay attention both to security concerns and democracy and human rights and ensure a proper balance of the two. I look forward to discussing this matter further and engaging with Congress as the Department develop strategies toward each country mentioned in this question and the broader region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#12)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States and France share several overlapping priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa and work together on many fronts, including fighting the terror threat in the Sahel. However, American and French interests in the region do not always align, including with regard to the ongoing conflict in northwest and southwest Cameroon.

a. If confirmed, how will you engage our French partners to ensure that we employ a mutually-beneficial partnership across the Sahel and West and Central Africa that reflects the various points of leverage and capability the United States and France each bring to the table?
b. How can the United States better coordinate with France to holistically address security threats and improve diplomatic engagements in the Sahel and West and Central Africa from a holistic perspective?
c. How can the United States better coordinate and collaborate with the European Union, as well as individual European governments, including the U.K., to enhance policy consistency and advance mutually-beneficial opportunities for trade, investment, development, and security cooperation with the African Union, regional bodies, African governments, and private sector partners?

Answer:

Coordination and collaboration are essential, and we must work to align our approaches with our European partners, including France, to holistically address the security and governance challenges across the Sahel, West Africa, and Central Africa. The Biden-Harris administration will undertake an early interagency review of our diplomatic, security, and other assistance to the region to ensure that we have a strategy that addresses the underlying drivers of violence and extremism. I look forward to engaging with Congress and would welcome any input on the front end. If confirmed, I will work with our African and European partners to ensure our companies can compete on a level playing field across Africa, as well.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#16)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Political and ethnic tensions and violence in Burundi have contributed to instability, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises in central Africa's Great Lakes region for decades. On June 9, the government of Burundi announced that sitting President Pierre Nkurunziza (age 55) died suddenly of "cardiac arrest," two and a half months before he was expected to step down following general elections on May 20, 2020. Nkurunziza's elected successor, CNDD-FDD party head Evariste Ndayishimiye, was inaugurated in late August, after the constitutional court upheld his victory with 68% of the vote in the May 2020 elections.

a. How optimistic are you about deepening ties with the new Burundian administration under President Ndayishimiye?
b. What reforms are most needed for Burundi and what should be the U.S. approach toward engaging the Ndayishimiye administration on a reform agenda?
c. Under what conditions would you advocate for changes to the U.S. sanctions program for Burundi and/or aid restrictions? Will you commit to reviewing incidents of human rights abuses among actors by the Nkurunziza regime who are currently serving in President Ndayishimiye's government?
d. How should President Ndayishimiye approach exiled Burundian opposition groups? What role can and should the United States play in facilitating reconciliation between the Burundian government and opposition groups?
e. How would you evaluate the performance of Burundian troops in AMISOM? How can the United States better monitor their human rights record in Somalia?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will assess the current U.S. approach to reform in Burundi, including the approach of the new administration under President Ndayishimiye. This will include a review of the sanctions program for Burundi, the current approach to accountability, the role of justice and reconciliation in the political dialogue, and the human rights record of the Burundian military. I look forward to engaging Congress on this matter and would welcome any input as we conduct our review.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#17)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon is one of the world's most neglected yet intensely brutal conflicts. The United States has employed many of the diplomatic tools at its disposal, including the suspension of most security assistance and AGOA eligibility, yet the conflict rages on.

a. What other tools does the United States have at its disposal to encourage a peaceful and enduring resolution to the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon? If confirmed, what tools would you intend to deploy?
b. Will you consider imposing targeted sanctions on individual government and separatist leaders "responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights"?
c. How can the United States more effectively encourage France to use its significant leverage in Cameroon to encourage the government to engage in meaningful dialogue and end the conflict?
d. Will you commit to continuing to limit U.S. security assistance to Cameroon and ensure that U.S. training and equipment is not being used to commit or enable human rights abuses in the Northwest and Southwest regions or the Far North?
e. Do you commit to making Cameroon a priority in the UN Security Council? How can the United States work with like-minded Security Council members to raise the Anglophone conflict's profile and get it placed on the Security Council agenda?
f. Will you commit to encouraging both government and Anglophone stakeholders to engage in constructive and inclusive dialogue, including with the involvement of an independent international mediator, to address the root causes of the Anglophone conflict and support sustainable peace and reconciliation?

Answer:

I am concerned about continued violence in Cameroon and condemn all attacks against civilians and humanitarians in the Anglophone regions. Both sides need to end all violence. It is important that children attend school and that aid can be delivered. More broadly, political dialogue is needed to resolve this ongoing conflict and to improve respect for human rights. If confirmed, I will review the different tools we have to press for a resolution of this conflict and to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including evaluating the use of sanctions, as well as ensuring that security assistance is not provided to those who have committed

such violations. I look forward to engaging with Congress and welcome the Committee's input on this matter.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#19)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Following controversial elections in 2018 elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United States publicly and adamantly backed President Tshisekedi and supported efforts to reform and challenge the status quo established by former President Kabila.

a. What is your perspective on the performance of the Tshisekedi Administration to date?
b. Is it your assessment that the Tshisekedi Administration is in a position to continue to advance reforms, including in the areas of anti-corruption and in the security and mining sectors?
c. In your view, how can the United States continue to support democratic reforms in the DRC, including by enhancing prospects for free, fair, and transparent elections in 2023?
d. If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the legitimate victor of a free and fair electoral process in 2023?
e. In your view, what is the Privileged Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (#PP4PP)? Is this an initiative you plan to continue if confirmed?
f. In your perspective, what should the United States, our European allies, and the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) be doing to support a peace process and help facilitate the end of the conflict in Eastern Congo?
g. In your opinion, how can the Department of State and Department of the Treasury better coordinate on sanctions for corruption and human rights abuses in the DRC, including as they relate to existing sanctions on Dan Gertler and his affiliated interlocutors and entities in the DRC's mining sector?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would support DRC President Tshisekedi and the DRC government's goal of building a more peaceful and prosperous DRC, including in the restive eastern DRC region, such as we have done through the Privileged Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, a joint pledge launched in 2019 to foster closer bilateral ties and a better future for the Congolese people. I am committed to working with the DRC government, civil society, and like-minded partners to encourage electoral reforms and free and fair elections in 2023. Sanctions remain an important foreign policy tool to combat corruption and human rights abuses. I will work closely with the Department of the Treasury to ensure the appropriate use of sanctions in response to these issues. Continued U.S. engagement through our ambassador and at the United Nations will be critical to

this effort.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#22)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States views Kenya as a strategic partner in the region. While Kenya is not a major U.S. trade partner globally, it is one of Africa's most dynamic economies and the second-largest beneficiary of AGOA's tariff benefits, excluding crude oil. On February 6, President Trump and President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya announced their intent to begin free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations. If successful, it would be the first U.S. FTA with a country in sub-Saharan Africa.

a. Do you believe the U.S.-Kenya FTA talks support or undermine regional trade initiatives and agreements under the pan-African AfCFTA and sub-regional trade initiatives under the East African Community?
b. Do you support continuing to prioritize FTA negotiations with Kenya? If not, why not? If so, would your approach to negotiations differ from that of the Department under the Trump Administration? If so, how?
c. How would you seek to position a future U.S.-Kenya FTA to build upon AGOA objectives and expand U.S. trade and investment ties with Africa?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to a trade policy that promotes American workers and strengthens alliances with key partners like Kenya. If confirmed, I intend to closely review the status of ongoing negotiations with Kenya and work with the U.S. Trade Representative and the other economic departments and agencies to develop a broader approach to AfCFTA and trade and investment. I look forward to engaging Congress and would welcome the input of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on this matter.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#26)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

South Sudan has been a U.S. priority issue for decades. Throughout this troubled history, the United States has provided strong support for the peace process in an attempt to resolve Sudan and then-Southern Sudan's decades-long civil war, preparations for South Sudan's separation and independence from Sudan, and the provision of extensive U.S. humanitarian and development assistance (upwards of $1 billion per year). This includes the years since the outbreak of South Sudan's civil war in 2013.

a. Given that the United States is a significant stakeholder in ensuring that South Sudan achieves sustainable peace and development, what diplomatic investments would you make as Secretary of State bilaterally, regionally, and with multi-lateral institutions?
b. What is your perspective on the ongoing U.S. assistance review, announced in 2018, for South Sudan? If confirmed, how would you support a timely conclusion to the assistance review and enable action on its findings?
c. Would you support a reorganization of the State Department's Office of the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan (USSESSS), such that it is better streamlined and integrated within the Department's Africa Bureau?
d. Do you support the use of separate U.S. Special Envoys for Sudan and South Sudan? How can the United States better approach providing specific high-level diplomatic attention to South Sudan while also ensuring that broader regional diplomatic issues are considered and leveraged as necessary for a more comprehensive policy toward the Sudans and the surrounding countries?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would look to continue the United States' long, bipartisan history of support for the South Sudanese people and to work with partners and donors to ensure a robust response to humanitarian crises. Our efforts will also focus on encouraging implementation of the peace agreement, promoting security sector reform, supporting economic development, encouraging accountability and anticorruption. We will also focus on ending violence against humanitarian workers. The Department will continuously review assistance programs to ensure they support our strategic goals. The Office of Sudan and South Sudan is already housed and integrated within the Bureau of African Affairs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#27)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The ouster of longtime President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 and installation of a power-sharing government between the Transitional Military Council and the civilian Forces for Freedom and Change served as a historic moment not just for the Sudanese people but also the U.S.-Sudan bilateral relationship. The United States has since served as one of Sudan's closest transition partners. The Trump Administrations formal rescission of Sudan's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) in December 2020, the pledged exchange of ambassadors between the United States and Sudan, and a near settlement of claims between Sudan and American victims of terrorism have created a new impetus for deepening what has been for decades a turbulent bilateral relationship under former President Bashir.

a. If confirmed, what approach will you take to ensure that the United States continues to prioritize normalizing relations with Sudan's fragile yet historic civilian-led transitional government? Will you commit to supporting the nomination of a capable U.S. ambassador to Sudan as one of your early actions as Secretary? Furthermore, will you work to ensure that U.S. relationships with Sudan are managed through the civilian leadership of the transitional government?
b. How should the United States prioritize its assistance to Sudan? Will you ensure that sufficient assistance is given to support U.S. democracy and governance strengthening initiatives in Sudan?
c. Do you support the bilateral deal signed between the United States and Sudan on resolving outstanding terrorism claims, and will you commit to resolving any outstanding issues to ensure that Sudan achieves legal peace and American victims of terrorism are properly compensated?
d. Given the planned drawdown of the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) through 2021, what policies will you pursue to ensure necessary protection of civilians in Darfur? Do you believe that the existing UN arms embargo and other sanctions should remain in place in Darfur until the Sudanese government demonstrates that it can and will adequately protect civilians? If confirmed, how would you ensure that justice is pursued regarding atrocities committed against the Sudanese people, particularly in Darfur and "the Two Areas" of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile?

Answer:

If confirmed, the Department will sustain senior-level engagement to support the civilian leadership of the transitional government. If confirmed, I would ensure the State Department works with the White House to nominate fully capable ambassadors for Sudan and other vacant posts. I intend to review newly appropriated assistance and will take your concerns about including support for democracy and governance programs into account. Given recurring intercommunal violence in Darfur and elsewhere, it will be vital to that local voices in these areas are included as the Sudanese

navigate their transition. We will work with Sudan and other partners to help address the root causes of conflict and protection of civilians. We will also be focused on the stand-up of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). Recognizing the efforts of Sudan's government to address terrorism claims, I will review the bilateral agreement to ensure U.S. victims of terrorism are properly compensated.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#35)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States shares a "special relationship" with Liberia reflecting a shared history and the investment of significant U.S. assistance, including helping Liberia emerge from conflict, build democratic institutions, and overcome the West Africa Ebola outbreak (2014-2016). Liberia endured two brutal civil wars from 1989-1996 and 1999-2003, both characterized by gross human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, to include rape, massacres (including in places of worship), torture and the use of child soldiers. While Liberia has experienced peace for 17 years and the transfer of power from President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to President George Weah in 2018, the country still experiences significant development challenges and trauma. While the deposed Liberian despot Charles Taylor was convicted of crimes against humanity committed in neighboring Sierra Leone by the Special Court in Sierra Leone, and others have been convicted in foreign countries, including the United States, to date, Liberia itself has not prosecuted anyone for crimes committed during its civil wars.

a. From your perspective, what role does the combination of rampant corruption, including at the highest levels of government, and the legacy of violent conflict play in Liberia's development and economic outlook?
b. In your view, has the United States done enough to encourage Liberia to pursue justice and reconciliation for crimes committed during its civil wars?

Answer:

Corruption is endemic in Liberia, affecting nearly every facet of life and severely inhibiting economic growth and development. U.S. assistance was critical to rebuilding the Liberian security sector following the country's two civil wars, and we share a robust security relationship with Liberia today. The Leahy Law prohibits furnishing U.S. assistance to a security force unit, where there is credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. The United States stands ready to be a partner with Liberia in justice and reconciliation efforts and will continue to encourage the Liberian government and people to pursue such efforts.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#37)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, Secretary Pompeo designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, citing the country for "systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom."

a. What is your assessment of the appropriateness of Nigeria for this designation?
b. Are concerns about religious freedom among your top priorities for engagement with Nigeria?
c. What is your assessment of the drivers of conflict in Nigeria? How do the drivers of conflict in Nigeria differ across geographical regions?

Answer:

I strongly condemn violence in Nigeria aimed at communities because of their faith – whether they are Muslim or Christian. To end these cycles of violence, the Nigerian government must redouble its efforts to protect civilians and hold to account individuals who perpetrate violence and human rights abuses.

Religious freedom is a key U.S. foreign policy priority and currently plays a prominent role in our engagement with the Nigerian government. I support this work continuing.

The causes of conflict in the region are complex. In addition to religious differences, ethnicity, politics, lack of accountability and access to justice, and competition over land resources are drivers of the violence.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#38a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Indo-Pacific is the most important region for U.S. security and economic growth. It represents nearly half of the global population and is home to some of the most dynamic economies in the world, but is also home to security challenges that threaten to undermine U.S. national security interests, regional peace, and global stability. The Trump Administration articulated a strategy to advance a "free and open Indo-Pacific," and has expanded partnerships with regional countries and implemented multiple initiatives in the region to support this goal.

a. Do you agree with the core tenants of a vision for the "free and open Indo-Pacific" strategy advanced over the last several years? If so, what should the State Department's role be in this strategy? If not, why not?

Answer:

The Biden administration sees the Indo-Pacific as a vital region that must be a leading priority of U.S. foreign policy. The United States will continue to advance the shared interests and values that underpin peace, security, and prosperity for a free and open Indo-Pacific region. As the lead agency for foreign policy, the Department of State will maintain a strong leadership role in this whole-of-government effort. I look forward to staying in close touch and engaging with Congress on matters that affect the Indo-Pacific region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#38c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What should be our objectives in the region?

Answer:

The United States already works with allies and partners to ensure peace, security, and prosperity for a free and open Indo-Pacific region and across the world. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen our longstanding alliances, including with Japan, Australia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand and deepen partnerships across the region, including with India. Under the Biden administration, the United States will focus on economic policies that deliver for the American people. We will join with allies and partners to uphold our shared international law, institutions, and values and confront any malign, abusive, or exploitative behaviors, including those conducted by China. The Department of State will pursue closer cooperation in priority areas including technology, democratic resilience, human rights, climate change, and pandemic response efforts.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#40)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Over the last four years, the Department of State has established a number of new initiatives and expanded partnerships under the Indo-Pacific strategy related to infrastructure, energy, digital economy and smart cities, public health, education, democracy, anti-corruption, and the Mekong Region, among others. Despite the overall narrative that the Trump Administration hurt U.S. position and reputation, such initiatives have delivered concrete outcomes on the ground.

If confirmed, what are the key principles, initiatives, and other elements of the Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy would you intend to retain and continue? How would you build on these initiatives?

Answer:

In recent years, and on a bipartisan basis, Congress has taken some important steps to advance and implement the Indo-Pacific strategy. These include the BUILD Act, which established the Development Finance Corporation, which is vital if the United States is to work with partners to advance an alternative, higher-standards infrastructure development model; it includes the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which improves our regional force posture; and it includes legislation on Tibet, Hong Kong's status, and human rights violations in Xinjiang, which are vital to upholding our values and rule of law in the region.

The Biden administration looks forward to working with Congress to build on these steps, including by pursuing closer cooperation in priority areas such as technology, democratic resilience, human rights, climate change, and pandemic response efforts and continuing successful initiatives in areas like infrastructure, energy, and the digital economy.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#42b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are your views on the United States joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership agreed to by 11 other nations in 2019?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration's economic policies begin with investment in everyday Americans, equipping them to succeed in the global economy. Any new trade agreements must protect workers, transparency, the environment, and middle-class wages. The administration will review and assess the CPTPP agreement accordingly. I look forward to hearing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's views on this matter and on other issues that are vital to the economic interests of our own people and our partners.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#44)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The 2018 National Defense Strategy states that "great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security."

a. Do you agree with the Defense Department's assessment?
b. How do you believe U.S. diplomacy should change to reflect a greater emphasis on China and Russia?

Answer:

The 2018 NDS correctly identifies strategic competition with China and Russia as the primary challenge animating the global security environment; because of its ascent and the scope and scale of its attempts to exert power, China is the top priority. I am also concerned about transnational threats as the security landscape evolves, including those posed by pandemics, climate change, and emerging technologies. U.S. diplomacy must prioritize these leading challenges but be prepared to address them all. We will conduct a full policy review before charting an approach to these important challenges. I look forward to engaging Congress and hearing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's views on this matter.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#46)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The objectives and policies being advanced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) present the greatest foreign policy challenge facing the United States today and will continue to do so into the future. Therefore, it must be our top foreign policy priority. If not, why not? What do you think is the greatest foreign policy challenge for the United States?

Answer:

As we look at China, there is no doubt it poses the most significant challenge of any nation-state to the United States in terms of our interests and the interests of the American people. The challenges that China poses to our security, prosperity, and values, and how we conduct this competition, will be crucial for defining the 21st century. China's government is engaged in conduct that hurts American workers, blunts our technological edge, modernizes its military, threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations, and is designed to make the United States and its allies more dependent on China, and China less dependent on the United States and our allies. In these domains and others, China presents a significant challenge to U.S. interests and values, and I look forward to engaging with Congress on this matter of bipartisan concern.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#47)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, what are the Chinese government's primary objectives domestically, in the Indo-Pacific region, and globally? How would you describe its primary political, economic, military, and technological objectives?

Answer:

China's government is engaged in conduct that hurts U.S. workers, blunts our technological edge, misappropriates technology to support military modernization, threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations, and is designed to make the United States and its allies more dependent on China, and China less dependent on the United States and our allies. In the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, China's conduct presents a significant challenge to U.S. interests and values.

Technology is at the center of U.S.-China competition around the globe. We have to play a better defense, which must include holding China accountable for its unfair and illegal practices and making sure that U.S. technologies are not facilitating China's military buildup or human rights abuses. I look forward to staying closely engaged with Congress on this matter of bipartisan concern.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#49b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Will Mr. Kerry have authority to raise with China issues other than climate that are relevant to either the bilateral relationship or as regards U.S. policy in the Indo-Pacific region?

Answer:

The Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge, including in discussions with China. Our core interests will not be traded off in climate discussions with China or any other country.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#49e)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If a climate agreement is negotiated in such a way that does not keep broader interests in mind, what will you do to remedy this situation?

Answer:

The broader interests of the United States will always be at the forefront in climate discussions with China and other countries. As a former Secretary of State, there are few better suited than Secretary Kerry to ensure that climate diplomacy is closely coordinated with the Department's and our administration's broader diplomatic engagement and to ensure it is in line with U.S. interests and values.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#49f)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to keeping this committee informed of developments in any climate negotiations with China? Will President Biden make Mr. Kerry available to the committee to answer questions on his discussions with China?

Answer:

We value the Senate's perspectives on our relationship with China, including with regard to climate change. Secretary Kerry will engage with the Senate on this matter.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#56)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Department of State possesses a wellspring of expertise among economic officers who will continue to play a critical role in fostering a more level playing field for U.S. companies, helping them compete with Chinese companies and succeed despite anti-competitive economic practices employed by China.

a. Do you commit to fostering a strong corps of economic officers within the Department, including through providing tools and training they need to succeed in addressing issues related to China's unfair economic practices?
b. Do you commit, through issuing All Diplomatic and Consular Posts (ALDAC) cables and via other means, to making sure economic officers prioritize among their various duties active economic and commercial diplomacy, including providing tangible support to U.S. companies as appropriate, tracking China's anti-competitive economic policies, and developing associated recommendations?
c. Do you commit to ensuring that economic diplomacy is a top priority of every U.S. ambassador, and that performance of ambassadors will be evaluated in part on their commitment to advancing economic and commercial diplomacy?

Answer:

The economic dimension of U.S.-China competition is crucial. If confirmed, I will ensure that economic diplomacy is a top priority across the Department and take on the challenge of China's abusive, unfair, and illegal practices. Monitoring Chinese activities that have the potential to impact U.S. interests is already an important part of the Department's work. The State Department has also recently realigned several Foreign Service positions assigned overseas and is strengthening its expertise in critical areas of competition and commercial opportunity through a program of Regional Technology Officers. The Foreign Service Institute provides training on China's economic practices and will continue to ensure economic officers have the skills to appropriately address this challenge.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#57)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

China's biggest export is not a particular product, but rather corruption. A 2018 study in the Journal of Public Economic Studies found that local corruption was higher around known development finance projects in Africa being overseen by Chinese actors. If confirmed, will you commit to highlighting corrupt Chinese practices and prioritize assistance to help counter corruption, including corruption caused or exacerbated by the Chinese government or Chinese companies?

Answer:

Increased corruption in countries with major Chinese development projects, such as those in the One Belt One Road Initiative, is a serious problem, eroding economic benefits for local economies and populations, undermining the rule of law, failing to adhere to international environmental and social best practices, and at times preventing U.S. firms from competing. Corruption serves as a gateway to other criminality, such as money laundering, labor abuses, bribery, and trafficking in wildlife, timber, minerals, precious metals, and gemstones back to the People's Republic of China. If confirmed, combating corrupt Chinese practices in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere will be a top priority, and I commit to prioritizing foreign assistance in support.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#59)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have also been concerns about Chinese-Russian coordination, particularly in the military sphere in terms of arms sales and joint exercises.

a. How would you characterize the China-Russia relationship? What areas of the China-Russia relationship are you most concerned about?
b. How do these concerns fit into your broader policy goals to prevent an erosion of U.S. military advantage?
c. How do we effectively compete against China and Russia without driving them together?

Answer:

The growing alignment between Russia and China amplifies the challenges that both countries pose to the United States. China and Russia cooperate in certain areas, touting their relationship as a strategic partnership, but remain competitors in others. This is especially true in the way Russia is amplifying the China challenge, particularly in the defense and democracy and human rights realms. Beijing is working with Moscow to fill gaps in its military capabilities, accelerate its technological innovation, and complement its efforts to undermine U.S. leadership. For example, Russia is China's largest arms supplier, but only in recent years has Moscow begun selling its more advanced military equipment to Beijing. The United States will increasingly need to be mindful of this partnership and where possible, take steps to create headwinds to their alignment.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#63a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The PLA has established its first overseas military base in Djibouti. The Department of Defense assesses that the Chinese government is considering other locations on the African continent for future military bases and logistics facilities.

How will the State Department under the Biden Administration ensure the PLA does not gain a foothold in strategic nodes in Africa, including through diplomatic engagement with our partners?

Answer:

Diplomatic and security engagement with U.S. partners in Africa can advance our interests and values, while highlighting the dangers associated with dealing with China.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#63b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What support or initiatives can the United States offer to African nations to make such agreements less attractive?

Answer:

Enhancing our alliances and partnerships in Africa through diplomatic, development, and security initiatives will better protect and secure U.S. interests in Africa.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#64)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Last year, Beijing implemented the "National Security Law" in Hong Kong, which effectively put Hong Kong's legal system and law enforcement under Beijing's control and severely undermined China's international treaty obligations to respect Hong Kong's autonomy and the rights protected in the Basic Law.

a. How will the Biden Administration address these violations of international law?
b. Will you commit to continue imposing costs on Beijing for its actions in Hong Kong?

Answer:

We are deeply concerned about China's continuing crackdown on Hong Kong – not only the imposition of the National Security Law, but also the arrests and imprisonment of pro-democracy activists and the postponement of legislative elections. Hong Kong's democracy movement is a beacon to the world. We must stand united with our allies and partners against China's assault on Hong Kong's freedoms. President Biden has denounced these moves to undermine Hong Kong's freedoms of speech, assembly, and press as guaranteed in the Basic Law and the high degree of autonomy that set Hong Kong apart from the rest of China. We have been heartened by bipartisan Congressional action on Hong Kong and commit to continuing to implement the Hong Kong Autonomy Act and the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. We look forward to working with Congress and with our international partners to respond to Beijing's repressive actions and to support the fundamental freedoms and human rights of people in Hong Kong. We will also continue to explore all avenues to deter actors who seek to undermine Hong Kong's autonomy and stifle its pro-democracy movement.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#67)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The major rivers of Asia that flow from the Tibetan Plateau are subject to current and potential dam and diversion projects by China. This has severe environmental, economic, and societal consequences for Tibet. These projects are planned and implemented without the proper involvement of all stakeholders, including the Tibetan people. India and other governments in Asia are increasingly worried about China damming rivers originating in Tibet which serve over a billion people downstream.

a. Would you commit to raising with Chinese officials the need to fully involve all stakeholders in the preservation of Tibet's fragile watershed?
b. Would you call on the Chinese authorities to engage China's neighbors for the development of a regional framework on water security?

Answer:

Water security is an issue in many regions around the world. This issue, when properly managed, can reinforce regional ties and when poorly managed, can exacerbate tensions. Water is not only essential for survival; it also shapes the development of economies and cultures. If confirmed, I will press China to manage water resources soundly and in consultation with all affected stakeholders and governments. I will also support a sustainable approach to water security issues tied to the Tibetan Plateau that involves and reflects input from Tibetans.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#72)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Chinese influence in Europe continues to grow. It has invested billions across Europe and has sought to acquire strategic infrastructure and companies in Europe. European countries are starting to take a much more robust approach to China across the board, including on investment and human rights.

a. What is your assessment of China's objectives in Europe and with regard to the transatlantic alliance?
b. How should the United States respond to growing Chinese influence in Europe?
c. What are the areas you think are most ripe for cooperation between the United States and Europe when it comes to China?

Answer:

China poses challenges to our security, prosperity, and values. The most effective way to address the pressing global challenges we face -- including China -- is alongside partners who share our values and interests. That is why strengthening and revitalizing the transatlantic alliance will be a key priority for the Biden-Harris administration. We look forward to deepening U.S.-Europe cooperation and developing a common agenda on the full range of challenges that China poses, including to democracy, and in the technology, trade, and investment realms.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#73)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

After years of negotiations, on December 30th, 2020—nearly the final day of the German Council presidency—the European Union (EU) announced it had reached an agreement with China on an investment deal. I am very concerned that this agreement will slow momentum on cooperation among the United States, Europe, and other democracies on our shared challenges related to China.

a. What is your view of the EU's decision to conclude this agreement at this moment?
b. What are the economic and geopolitical implications of this agreement? Please be specific. Will it affect the EU's willingness to push back on China for its malign behavior, such as using the EU's new human rights sanctions regime? Do you believe that this agreement with affect, negatively or positively, U.S. attempts to hold China accountable for its malign trade and investment practices?
c. The deal is not yet final, as the European Parliament must ratify it. Will you engage the European Parliament on the investment agreement and, if so, what will be your main messages to them?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to early consultations with our EU and European partners on shared concerns about China, including those related to trade and investment. If China has made new pledges on issues such as forced labor, state-owned enterprises, and subsidies in this agreement with the EU, the onus will be on China to upholds its commitments. We will also continue to engage with European counterparts, including members of the European Parliament, on how to advance our shared economic interests and counter China's aggressive and coercive actions, as well as on China's failures to uphold its past international commitments.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#74)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Last year, I published a report on how the United States and Europe can cooperate on shared challenges related to China, including a chapter on contending with China's anti-competitive economic practices. I argued that the United States and Europe should revitalize trade negotiations, continue important initiatives at the World Trade Organizations such U.S.-EU-Japan efforts on subsidies, fix current sticking points like ongoing disputes between Boeing and Airbus, coordinate on export controls, and strengthen supply chain resilience. How would you advance these goals? What additional areas would you prioritize?

Answer:

We will take on the challenge of China's abusive, unfair, and illegal practices. China is undercutting American companies by dumping products, erecting barriers, and giving illegal subsidies to corporations. It is stealing intellectual property and engaging in other practices to give it an unfair technological advantage, including forced technology transfer. China's low labor and environmental standards – including instances of forced labor – create an unfair cost advantage at the expense of its own people. In short, Beijing seeks to get a leg up on dominating the technologies and industries of the future, at America's expense. The Biden-Harris administration will make use of the full array of tools at its disposal and build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to counter China's abusive economic practices and hold Beijing accountable.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#77b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are concrete priorities and issue areas those allies and partners from outside of the Indo-Pacific can work with the United States to address in this region?

Answer:

The Department of State is committed to working with likeminded partners from around the world to address the most pressing issues facing the Indo-Pacific region. Priorities include human rights and democratic resilience, economic growth, new technology, climate change, COVID-19, and countering threats to the rules-based order that has maintained peace and stability in the region for decades. The Department welcomes partners like France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU taking a more strategic look at the Indo-Pacific. NATO's partnerships with Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand are also an important means for us to strengthen our deterrence and defense interests in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will consult with allies and partners from outside the region on how to advance shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#81)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Xi Jinping has emphasized the desire to ensure that Hollywood filmmakers use their position to "tell China's story well". This translates into Beijing's overreach into and censorship of Hollywood films through explicit censorship requirements for the Chinese market, boycotts and economic pressure, and acquisitions of industry corporations by Chinese companies. As Hollywood director Judd Apatow recently said, "Instead of us doing business with China and that leading to China being more free, what has happened is that China has bought our silence with their money."

a. Will the Biden Administration, including yourself and other senior State Department officials, engage the film industry regarding the pernicious impact of censorship by the Chinese government and other authoritarian governments on freedom of expression and other principles that are fundamental to the political system of United States?
b. What steps will the Biden Administration take to monitor and stop efforts by Beijing to censor film narratives about China and put pressure on the U.S. film industry and other U.S.-based media?
c. What are your views on the implications and consequences of Beijing's tactics in Hollywood for the PRC's overall strategy to exercise malign influence across various types of U.S. media? What other types of media in the United States are at risk of being subjected to tactics we are seeing used by Beijing to influence Hollywood?

Answer:

Beijing's use of information operations to undermine and interfere in democracies is a concern for the United States and countries around the world. The PRC matches a propaganda apparatus with extensive monitoring and suppression of voices Beijing deems politically objectionable and is also increasingly willing to pursue disinformation campaigns. The Biden-Harris administration will work closely with allies, partners, and other stakeholders to ensure people can engage in commerce and speak without fear of foreign surveillance or pressure to change business practices in fundamental ways to conform to the political diktats of authoritarian foreign governments. We will always speak out on behalf of our values and our way of life.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#82)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, the Chinese government executed a significant pressure campaign on the National Basketball Association (NBA) over a personal tweet by the Houston Rockets manager supporting democracy advocates in Hong Kong. While certainly not the first, this incident captured the attention of the U.S. public and shed light on the lengths to which the Chinese government is willing to go to silence its critics and shape a favorable environment for the continuation of its repressive policies.

Answer:

China's use of information operations and other coercive and corrupting efforts to undermine and interfere in democracies are a concern for the United States and countries around the world. The Biden-Harris administration will work closely with allies, partners, and other stakeholders – including U.S. companies – to ensure that people can engage in commerce and speak freely without fear of foreign surveillance or pressure to change business practices in fundamental ways to conform to the political diktats or authoritarian foreign governments. We will always speak out on behalf of our values and our way of life.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#83)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, what are the implications of China being able to pressure and punish U.S. persons and companies into accepting or at least not pushing back on the political positions of the Chinese government, even when those positions undermine the fundamental political principles and values of the United States?

Answer:

China's use of information operations and other coercive and corrupting efforts to undermine and interfere in democracies and the activities of the private sector are a concern for the United States and our partners. The Biden-Harris administration will engage all relevant stakeholders to ensure that people and companies can engage in commerce; speak freely without worry about surveillance by foreign authoritarian governments; or worry that the businesses that they invest in, work for, or purchase from, are having to change their practices in fundamental ways to conform to the authoritarian tendencies and demands of other governments. We will always be willing to speak out to protect our values, abide by U.S. law, and respect our way of life.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#84)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What can and should private sector actors do about this challenge? What about the U.S. government's role, and how will the Biden Administration address this issue?

Answer:

China's use of information operations and other coercive and corrupting efforts to undermine and interfere in democracies and the activities of the private sector are a concern for the United States and our partners. The Biden-Harris administration will engage all relevant stakeholders to ensure that people and companies can engage in commerce; speak freely without worry about surveillance by foreign authoritarian governments; or worry that the businesses that they invest in, work for, or purchase from, are having to change their practices in fundamental ways to conform to the authoritarian tendencies and demands of other governments. We will always be willing to speak out to protect our values, abide by U.S. law, and respect our way of life.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#85)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There has been much written about how China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative (OBOR) as a means by which to increase the economic influence of state-owned Chinese firms in global markets, engender undue PRC political leverage with governments around the world, create a China-centric technology regime, secure dependence on supply chains centered on Chinese companies, export corrupt business practices, and provide greater access to strategic nodes for the People's Liberation Army.

a. In your view, what are the goals of the OBOR?
b. If confirmed, what actions would you take and what partnerships would you seek to execute concrete economic projects to compete with or reduce the influence of OBOR?

Answer:

Competition with China is one of the central challenges of the 21st century – and we also need to compete with China's often-coercive economic statecraft, including the Belt and Road, or One Belt One Road, Initiative. This initiative is Beijing's ambitious program for linking markets across Eurasia, Africa, and beyond, seeking to create new markets for Chinese exports, new sources of energy and other raw materials for the PRC's factories and power plants, and new avenues for rewriting international rules and standards to serve Beijing's own interests. The Biden-Harris administration will work with allies and partners to provide an alternative vision that promotes democratic governance and transparency in our global health and development work. From this position of strength, we will distinguish ourselves from China's approach to development by ensuring that social and economic safeguards are built into the projects we support. We will focus on partnerships and on strengthening local capacity. In addition, we will work with allies and partners to advocate for the highest environmental, social, and labor standards to promote development investments that are both beneficial and sustainable over the long term.

1106

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#87)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration undertook a major push to keep products from China's Huawei out of 5G networks in countries across the world, especially in allied nations in Europe. Despite criticisms of the style of the approach, multiple countries have chosen to exclude Huawei from their emerging 5G networks, including the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, Estonia, Romania, Denmark, and Latvia.

a. Is your approach to keeping 5G networks clean from Chinese equipment and the consequent security hazards going to be different from that of the Trump Administration? How so?
b. Looking beyond 5G, what other emerging technologies do you think would create risks for the United States and its allies if we have an undue reliance on untrusted vendors? Are there areas that you will prioritize, and how so?
c. The previous Administration began to advance a Clean Networks initiative to "address long-term threats to data privacy, security, human rights and principled collaboration posed to the free world from authoritarian malign actors, including the Chinese Communist Party." What is your view of this initiative?

Answer:

Technology is at the center of U.S.-China competition. China has been willing to do whatever it takes to gain a technological advantage – stealing intellectual property, engaging in industrial espionage, and forcing technology transfer. We need a comprehensive strategy to address the full range of these issues. 5G network security will remain a top priority under the Biden-Harris administration. Telecommunications equipment made by high-risk vendors, including Huawei and ZTE, poses a threat to the security of the United States and our allies. To address this threat, we will work with our partners and allies to secure their telecommunications networks and invest in a diverse and resilient supply chain of trustworthy vendors. If confirmed, I will be engaged in reviewing these issues carefully and will be committed to protecting U.S. data and America's technological edge.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#89c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you commit to maintaining the policy that any armed attack on Philippine forces, aircraft, or public vessels in the South China Sea will trigger our mutual defense obligations?

Answer:

Yes. The U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty is important for the security of both nations, and it applies to armed attacks against the Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the Pacific, which includes the South China Sea.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#90)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

ASEAN countries and China are negotiating a South China Sea Code of Conduct. China is pushing ASEAN countries to disallow the presence of outside countries in the South China Sea, and to commit to not conducting certain types of military exercises with its partners. Making such demands are a clear infringement on the sovereignty of our Southeast Asian partners and contrary to U.S. interests.

a. What are your views on the effort to conclude a code of conduct?
b. Do you believe that China has any intent to negotiate a code of conduct in good faith?

Answer:

Recent statements by ASEAN Leaders assert that a meaningful PRC-ASEAN Code of Conduct should accord with international law, including the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea. If confirmed, I will consult with ASEAN partners on the negotiation of this code of conduct to ensure increased transparency of the process and that any eventual code advances shared interests, including freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#91)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have been widespread concerns over China building military bases on artificially constructed islands in the South China Sea. In the coming months or years, China could build a similar military base on Scarborough Reef is currently an unoccupied feature. If confirmed, you could face a renewed crisis with a strategic competitor in the South China Sea, one of the most important waterways in the world.

a. To what degree do you view the Chinese construction of a military base on Scarborough Reef as a national security challenge for the United States?
b. How would you attempt to deter such an action and what would be your approach to addressing a Chinese fait accompli? What would be your broader strategy?

Answer:

We can and should push back on China's coercion and illegal claims in the South China Sea – including its illegal militarization of features. The United States pledges to stand with Southeast Asian claimants in the face of PRC pressure. Countering China's gray zone tactics in the South China Sea is not simply a military problem. It will require a government-wide effort that leads with diplomacy, development, and economic engagement.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#92a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

For any potential escalation in the South China Sea, the United States at a disadvantage because our basing in the Indo-Pacific is heavily concentrated in Northeast Asia.

How can the State Department, through its diplomatic efforts, help to ensure we are appropriately postured for a potential South China Sea contingency?

Answer:

We can and do push back on China's coercion and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea and its dangerous and provocative militarization of disputed features. Countering China's gray zone tactics in the South China Sea is not simply a military problem. It requires a government-wide effort that leads with diplomacy, development, and economic engagement. We will reestablish ourselves as regional diplomatic leaders and stand prepared to rally partners around international law and freedom of navigation. We will continue to work closely with the Department of Defense to ensure our diplomatic and military postures, working together, maintain and strengthen a free and open Indo-Pacific that advances U.S. interests.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#94)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The incoming Administration has stated that global health cooperation with China will be a major priority. The United States invested a lot of resources and personnel over many years to pursue health cooperation with China. That included a close relationship between the U.S. CDC and China's CDC, including co-location arrangements where they worked side-by-side for many years. While co-location arrangements ceased because of concerns about the physical security of U.S. diplomats, cooperation still continued. However, in the world's hour of need at the beginning of a serious pandemic originating in China, the Chinese government's response proved that global health cooperation would always take a back seat to the standing and reputation of the CCP.

a. While some level of cooperation may be necessary, how can we have confidence in these initiatives without reciprocal good faith efforts by Chinese government interlocutors?
b. How will you overcome this fundamental challenge, and why should the American people trust that use of taxpayer dollars and other resources will bear fruit?
c. What areas of health cooperation will the incoming Administration prioritize with China? What will be the role of the State Department in this regard?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will test whether China is willing to play a constructive role on certain issues where we may share interests, including on global health, but will be clear-eyed about advancing the interests of the American people. The Department of State will engage Congress and seek the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's input on potential areas of cooperation.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#99)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States military currently cooperates with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on counterterrorism and maritime security. Multiple members of Congress have proposed limiting or cutting off U.S. security assistance to the Philippine military because of concerns over human rights abuses.

a. Do you believe that taking such a step is in U.S. interests?
b. Do you believe that taking such a step would improve human rights conditions in the Philippines?

Answer:

As allies, friends, and partners, it is incumbent upon us to address with the Philippines those areas of the relationship in which we have concerns, including human rights, such as undue restrictions on freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and reports of extrajudicial killings that have been conducted as part of Manila's drug war. Sustained constructive engagement with all levels of the Philippine government, military, and society is essential for promoting both respect for human rights and U.S. security interests. The United States provides human rights training to Armed Forces of the Philippines counterparts as part of our ongoing military-to-military cooperation, and we regularly raise particular human rights issues and cases of concern with our Philippine counterparts. We appreciate Congress's close attention to these issues and look forward to continuing close consultations on this important relationship.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#101)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Cooperation between the United States and Japan on technology development and regulations is crucial to adapting to, in the words of Hirokazu Hokazono, the chief defense scientist at Japan's Ministry of Defense's Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency, a "security environment [that] is changing at extremely high speed." To counter threats posed by this security environment, the U.S. and Japan will need to adapt quickly to defense technologies such as robotics that originate in the commercial sector.

a. How can the U.S. and Japan further cooperation between its militaries, private technology industries, and academia to better integrate its civilian and defense technology development?
b. How will the Biden administration work with its Japanese counterparts to expand such technology cooperation with other democratic allies, such as Australia and the EU?

Answer:

I fully support working with Japan to enhance security cooperation, including by expanding ties with Japan and other democratic allies and partners on developing new technologies and the regulations that govern them. Additionally, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Japan and other democratic allies and partners on technology security using the full array of tools available to us, including export controls. The Biden administration will work closely with democratic partners and allies around the world in this area to keep the Indo-Pacific region open and dynamic.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#102b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Would you advise the President to send high-level visitors to Taiwan, boost defense ties, explore negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement, strengthen the economic partnership set up by the Trump Administration, and advocate for Taiwan in international organizations?

Answer:

The U.S. commitment to Taiwan remains rock solid. Taiwan is a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner – its future matters to the United States for all of these reasons. We will continue to strengthen U.S. economic ties with Taiwan, assist Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability, and support Taiwan's membership or meaningful participation in international organizations as important policy priorities.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#103)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The previous Administration authorized many critical capabilities via arms sales to Taiwan over the last several years, including fighters to replace and augment those being worn out from Chinese Air Force incursions, ground-launched anti-ship missiles, mobile artillery rocket systems, and surveillance drones.

a. Do you commit to fulfilling these arms sales with speed and urgency so that the capabilities get to Taiwan in a timely manner?
b. Do you commit to ensuring that the Department of State adheres to a regularized process with regard to Taiwan arms sales, including avoiding the practice of bundling?

Answer:

Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and our one China policy, the United States continues to make available to Taiwan the defense articles and services necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. This longstanding policy contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Arms transfers are reviewed, and where appropriate, approved as they are received consistent with U.S. law. We will continue to assist Taiwan's efforts to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. Doing so increases stability both across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#104)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Last year, Assistant Secretary of State David Stilwell gave a speech called, "The United States, Taiwan, and the World: Partners for Peace and Prosperity."

a. Do you agree with and reaffirm the statements made in this speech? Please explain your position.
b. Do you commit to engaging with allies in the Indo-Pacific and Europe to develop support for the U.S. position that Taiwan's future should be determined peacefully and without coercion?

Answer:

Our commitment to Taiwan is rock solid. Taiwan is a leading democracy, a major economy, a security partner, and a technology powerhouse. U.S. support for Taiwan will remain strong and principled, in line with the One China Policy and guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three U.S.-China Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances to Taipei. We will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will engage with allies and partners worldwide to build broad support for this position.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#106d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If the Department of State creates a new "Guidelines of Relations with Taiwan" memorandum, do you commit to sharing that document with appropriate congressional committees as required by the Taiwan Assurance Act?

Answer:

The Biden administration's support for Taiwan is rock-solid. Consistent with the Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020, we will complete a full review. After the review is concluded, we will report to the appropriate congressional committees consistent with the Act.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#107)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Indo-Pacific Strategy enshrined the principle of ASEAN centrality in pursuing U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia. ASEAN also published an "Indo-Pacific Outlook" that aligns with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy.

a. Do you agree that ASEAN should be a central element to U.S. strategy in the region?
b. What will be your top priorities for strengthening U.S. partnerships with ASEAN member states and institutions?
c. Will you continue initiatives with ASEAN started by the previous Administration, such as the U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership and U.S.-ASEAN Health Futures, as well as cooperation with ASEAN on human capital development objectives?
d. Do you agree that it is in our national interest to strengthen our security cooperation with Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand? If so, please elaborate specifically on the U.S. interests it serves. If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to advance security partnerships with these nations, including your views on continuing arms sales, engaging in capacity-building, and cooperating on advanced technology with South and Southeast Asian partner countries facing China's coercion and growing military power?

Answer:

Yes. The United States remains committed to ASEAN centrality. ASEAN plays an important role at the center of the region's political and security architecture, setting the agenda for the region and serving as the convener for a number of regional fora involving external partners, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus, and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. We hope to work bilaterally and multilaterally to strengthen these critical partnerships.

ASEAN is a vital partner of the United States in our efforts to combat COVID-19 and climate change; to face down foreign coercion and interference; to strengthen our defenses in cyber space and to produce and secure the technologies of the future; and to ensure freedom of navigation and the lawful unimpeded flow of commerce. This year, we look forward to working with Brunei, who is serving as the 2021 ASEAN chair.

We continue to work with ASEAN to implement our Strategic Partnership Plan of Action for 2021-2025 across a broad range of cooperation.

As President Biden has said, one of our top priorities is to revitalize our relationships with partners and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Indo-Pacific. For instance, Singapore supports many U.S. initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, including counter-proliferation, cybersecurity, smart cities, and human capital development, and provides the U.S. military with access to its bases, ports, and runways. The U.S. defense alliance with Thailand supports peace and prosperity, and defense sales foster interoperability and security cooperation. The U.S.-Philippine Alliance is foundational to the U.S. role in the Indo-Pacific and the Philippines is the largest recipient of U.S. security assistance in the region. Capacity building initiatives with Vietnam support its maritime domain awareness, disaster response, humanitarian demining, and military professionalization. We are Indonesia's largest security partner in terms of number of annual exercises, helping the world's fourth-largest nation defend its territorial waters. U.S. security assistance programs also enable Malaysia respond to transnational threats and allow unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#114b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the coming year especially, what will be the Biden Administration's priorities for the Quad?

Answer:

The Quad is an example of a broader phenomenon we hope to help catalyze in the Indo-Pacific – increased networking among the United States' capable allies and partners, like Japan, Australia, and India, whose closer cooperation acts as a force multiplier. We hope to build on its progress and cooperate on post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, humanitarian assistance, maritime security, counterterrorism, and countering foreign disinformation.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#115)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2016, the Obama Administration labeled India a "major defense partner," a designation supported by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. Some have called for an amendment to the Arms Export Control Act to facilitate more defense sales to India and help solidify it as a Major Defense Partner. Does the Biden Administration support such a step?

Answer:

The security relationship between the United States and India has undergone rapid, positive transformation since India was designated a Major Defense Partner, and India now enjoys a number of defense-related benefits, from designation as a Strategic Trade Authorization Tier-1 country in 2018 to the 2020 signing of the Basic Exchange Cooperation Agreement.

President Biden has a long history in advancing the U.S.-India relationship from his time in the Senate and as Vice President. The Biden-Harris administration will prioritize strengthening and deepening our strategic partnership with India, including in defense and security collaboration. President Biden sees India as a critical strategic partner in tackling a range of global challenges, from developing an international response to COVID, to fighting climate change, and working toward a global economic recovery. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues its efforts to enhance the security relationship between the United States and India.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#116)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Obama Administration launched the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative with India promote joint co-development and production of defense systems. Thus far, that objective has not been realized.

a. To what do you attribute this?
b. Will the Biden Administration pursue greater cooperation under DTTI with India? If so, what will be the Administration's key priorities?
c. Will the Biden Administration advocate for India's membership in the UN Security Council and in the Nuclear Suppliers Group?
d. How will the Biden Administration cooperate with India on 5G, digital security, and other emerging technology issues? Please be specific.

Answer:

Since DTTI was launched by former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in 2012, the United States and India have explored several projects under DTTI, including Light Small Arms Technologies (LSAT), aircraft carrier design, and most recently air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles. The Biden administration will prioritize working with India to identify additional projects that can help to meet India's evolving defense needs.

The Biden administration welcomes India's increasingly prominent role on the global stage and in international institutions.

The Biden administration will prioritize cooperating with India bilaterally, including through mechanisms such as the U.S.-India Cyber Dialogue and Information and Communications Technology Working Group, as well as through multilateral forums like the Quad, to encourage adoption of secure 5G standards and technology and to discourage the use of untrusted vendors or technologies that pose a threat to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of critical data. The

Administration will also reinvigorate U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation that includes U.S. advanced reactor technologies and invest in and expand upon existing U.S.-India S&T cooperation to deploy our world-leading technology sectors and innovators against new and evolving challenges in areas such as cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#118)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What role do the Pacific Islands play in broader U.S. strategy goals in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer:

The Pacific Islands will play an important role in the broader U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific, including in efforts to counter Chinese influence. Under the Biden-Harris administration, the United States will restore itself as a Pacific power – a regional leader who helps to keep Asia open, secure, and prosperous. With our allies and partners in the region, we will work to confront some of the defining issues of our time – including for the Pacific Island region. The Biden-Harris administration will prioritize negotiations with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau related to our Compacts of Free Association.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#120)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Pacific Islands region has become an increasingly contested area between the United States and China. In your assessment, what are the implications for U.S. interests of more pronounced presence and influence by China in the Pacific Islands? What forms of influence are we seeing from China that could have a negative impact on U.S. interests?

Answer:

The Pacific Islands are strategically important to the U.S. role and presence in the Indo-Pacific region. China's use of coercive and corrupting tools of malign influence to undermine and interfere in democracies is a concern for the United States and our partners around the world. This is also true in the Pacific Islands, where the PRC seeks to extend its influence through infrastructure projects, loans, people-to-people exchanges, disaster relief, and COVID-19 assistance. The PRC also attempts to constrain Taiwan's international operating space in the region, especially through economic and investment engagement with Taiwan's remaining diplomatic partners.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#122)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please answer the following with respect to North Korea's nuclear program and U.S. policy on denuclearization.

a. Do you see dismantlement of the fissile material production facilities at Yongbyon as the right first step in a denuclearization process?
b. Do you see the dismantlement of any other sites, including currently undisclosed sites, as important to continuing the denuclearization process?
c. How important is a full Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) declaration of its nuclear facilities and stockpiles? Do you believe that should be part of any agreement with North Korea?
d. Do you see disclosure of all missile sites as an essential component of an agreement with North Korea on its weapons programs?
e. In your view, what are the essential elements of any verification and enforcement mechanisms on an agreement with North Korea regarding its nuclear program? How will the Biden Administration overcome previous obstacles to verification and enforcement of the North's commitments?

Answer:

North Korea's nuclear, ballistic missile, and other proliferation-related activities constitute a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global nonproliferation regime. The administration, working in close consultation with our allies, will pursue the complete denuclearization of North Korea. I look forward to consulting with Congress as we do.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#123)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Iran deal included sunset provisions on Iran's conventional arms embargo (in 2020) and nuclear-related ballistic missile activity (in 2023). The Iran deal also had no 'end use monitoring' scheme in place to ensure sanctions relief did not lead to support for the Iranian nuclear program.

a. Would you advocate for or pursue a deal with North Korea that included similar sunsets? Why or why not? Please explain your position.
b. Would you advocate for or pursue a deal with North Korea that did not include robust 'end-use monitoring' for sanctions relief? What, in your view, are the essential elements of a robust 'end use monitoring' program?

Answer:

North Korea's nuclear, ballistic missile, and other proliferation-related activities constitute a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global nonproliferation regime. We plan to conduct a thorough policy review, in consultation with our allies, of the state of play on North Korea. We remain committed over the long term to the complete denuclearization of North Korea, while also focusing in the near term on limiting the threat to the United States and our allies. I look forward to consulting with Congress as we do.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#124)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Calling for denuclearization is one thing, but it is quite another to verify that steps towards denuclearization have been taken. An effective verification and enforcement regime for an agreement with North Korea would likely require an unprecedented level of time and resources from the United States, its allies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in one of the most secretive and restrictive environments in the world.

a. Will there be a primary role for U.S. inspectors in any verification agreements with North Korea?
b. How do you plan to include IAEA inspectors for verification, and for what functions?

Answer:

North Korea's nuclear, ballistic missile, and other proliferation-related activities constitute a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global nonproliferation regime. The administration, working in consultation with our allies, will pursue the complete denuclearization of North Korea. I look forward to consulting with Congress as we do.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#125)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In his 2019 New Year's speech, Kim Jong-un spoke of developing the DPRK's civilian atomic energy capabilities. Do you support a civilian nuclear program or a civilian space launch program in North Korea? Why or why not? Please explain your position.

Answer:

Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains a top national security priority for the United States. This administration, in consultation with our allies, will evaluate and adopt a strategy that takes into account pressure options and the potential for future diplomacy with North Korea to keep the American people and our allies safe.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#128)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Despite ample evidence that North Korea continues to develop its weapons programs, China and Russia have called for sanctions relief and increased economic ties. Though the U.S. has supported improved inter-Korean ties, South Korean requests for sanctions relief also caused concern among U.S. officials.

a. What are the goals of the United States' and the United Nations' sanctions regimes on North Korea? Please describe your understanding.
b. In your view, should the United States and the United Nations lift any sanctions on North Korea at this time? Why or why not? Please explain your position in detail.
c. If confirmed, under what circumstances would you consider lifting sanctions on North Korea, either in whole or in part?
d. If confirmed, under what circumstances would you consider pursuing an incremental easing of sanctions over time?
e. Do you think that providing sanctions relief to North Korea to get them back to the negotiating table is an effective strategy? Why or why not? Please explain your position.

Answer:

North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities have advanced significantly in the last four years. When effectively implemented, U.S. and UN sanctions make it harder for the DPRK to acquire the technology, know-how, and funds to develop its UN-prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The United States has consistently promoted the full implementation of all UN Security Council sanctions resolutions concerning North Korea.

Like all UN Member States, China and Russia must fully implement the DPRK UN Security Council resolutions – all of which they voted to adopt. We stand ready to assess sanctions options if Pyongyang carries out additional provocative activity.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#129)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please answer the following with respect to the impact of sanctions on North Korea.

a. What evidence, if any, is there that sanctions are having a significant impact on North Korea's domestic economy?
b. What measures, if any, would enable sanctions to cause North Korean leaders to agree to abandon its nuclear and missile programs?

Answer:

When effectively implemented, sanctions make it harder for the DPRK to acquire the technology, know-how, and funds to develop its UN-prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile programs. They play an important role in applying pressure to the DPRK, compelling it to return to the negotiating table, with the objective of ending its prohibited programs. The Biden administration will review the current sanctions regime, in consultation with our allies, and align its sanctions approach with its broader strategy for North Korea.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#130)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Obama Administration failed to secure congressional support for the Iran deal.

a. If confirmed, and if the Biden Administration pursues an agreement with North Korea regarding its weapons programs, do you commit to regular briefings at both the Member and staff levels in advance of and following negotiations with North Korea?
b. If confirmed, and if the Biden Administration pursues an agreement with North Korea regarding its weapons programs, do you personally commit to appear before this committee prior to the completion of any such agreement for public hearings on the matter?
c. Do you believe that an agreement with North Korea regarding its weapons programs should be submitted to the Senate as a treaty for the Senate's consent to ratification? If no, please explain in detail.

Answer:

I look forward to consulting with Congress on any efforts to limit the dangers posed by North Korea's dangerous and illegal programs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#134)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2017, you wrote that China was the "most visible component" of the Obama Administration's efforts to put pressure on North Korea, and that this was because China had finally demonstrated some willingness to uphold UN sanctions and curb its exports to the North. However, China is at best an inconsistent partner, and it is once again evading sanctions and pushing for their removal.

a. How will the Biden Administration engage with China on the North Korea issue, generally? Is China a reliable partner on North Korea? Please explain your position in detail.
b. Should U.S. strategy really depend on China's willingness to put pressure on the North given its track record of sanctions evasion?

Answer:

The effectiveness of UN Security Council sanctions regimes ultimately depends on UN member states' commitment to implement their obligations. We will continue to call on all UN member states, including China and Russia, both of which voted for the relevant UN Security Council resolutions relating to the DPRK, to fully implement them.

China is North Korea's primary licit and illicit trade partner. Unfortunately, Chinese implementation of sanctions measures has waned in recent years. This administration, working in consultation with our allies, will review all options to enhance Beijing's commitment to implementing and enforcing its UN sanctions obligations.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#136)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

For years, both Republicans and Democrats alike pushed NATO allies to increase their defense spending for their own protection and for the well-being of the alliance. During President Trump's tenure, NATO allies increased their defense spending by more than $100 billion, and nine allies meet the spending benchmarks, up from only three in 2014. This re-investment demonstrates a strong commitment to NATO and is a win for the United States and the alliance.

a. Will you continue to press our allies to prioritize their own defense and our mutual security, including by ensuring allies are spending on equipment and not just personnel?
b. There has been a lot of focus on the NATO Wales Summit pledge that all allies would spend 2% of their GDP on defense and 20% of that amount on equipment. How useful is the two percent spending pledge as a metric of an ally's defense readiness and commitment to NATO?
c. Should NATO re-negotiate a better metric? What other metrics would you suggest?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to rebuilding U.S. alliances, particularly with our NATO Allies. We will work to ensure NATO has the capabilities it needs to deter and defend against new and existing threats to our collective security. While we will continue to ensure Allies are doing their fair share and appeal to them to do more, we will also reframe the burden sharing conversation to increase focus on capabilities, especially the importance of meeting NATO capability targets, and consider steps to widen the aperture on contributions that count as defense spending. We look forward to consulting with NATO Allies, as well as with Congress, on the best strategy to ensure NATO has the capabilities it needs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#139)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration sought to re-evaluate the number of U.S. service members in the European theater, as well as the location of EUCOM and AFRICOM headquarters. While this final decision will be taken by the Department of Defense, the decision to move troops to or from an allied country has foreign policy implications both for our allies and our adversaries.

a. Do you believe that the decision to decrease troop levels in Europe is a good decision for overall U.S. foreign policy? What role should the State Department and diplomacy have in making future decisions about troop posture?
b. Countries in NATO's south and east have stated that they would be interested in additional U.S. troops. What is your view on placing additional troops in these regions? Would the Administration consider allies that border the Black Sea, such as Romania?

Answer:

As a candidate, President Biden pledged that he will "task the Secretary of Defense to conduct a comprehensive review of our posture relative to the threats we face and to recommend how that posture should change over time." I publicly stated that the Biden-Harris administration should review President Trump's decision to withdraw some U.S. troops from Germany. Ultimately, I would support a global force posture review that considers whether posture adjustments are required to ensure alignment with defense priorities, U.S. national and Allied security interests, and our diplomatic and political interests.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#140)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Europe has begun to wake up to the threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Last fall, I published a report recommending strong engagement with our European allies on China. The EU High Representative for Foreign Policy proposed a U.S.-EU dialogue on China, and Secretary Pompeo wisely accepted. However, this is just the start, and many challenges remain.

a. How will the Biden Administration maintain this momentum on cooperation with our European allies?
b. If confirmed, on what China-focused issues do you intend to initially engage Europe? Which do you see as most ripe for potential success?
c. It is not just greater military presence, investment in ports, 5G telecommunications networks, and other critical infrastructure that pose mutual security risks to the United States and Europe. It is also CCP political influence in our education systems, media, and local and national politics. What is the Biden Administration's plan to work with the Europeans to protect our societies from this malign influence? How will the Biden Administration work to ensure we share the same threat assessments with our European and other democratic allies? Is additional diplomatic engagement or intelligence sharing necessary?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will put alliances and partnerships, including with the EU and NATO, at the center of our foreign policy. We will consult with European partners on a coordinated approach to the PRC's abusive economic practices, human rights violations, influence operations, and other key challenges. There are competitive, cooperative, and adversarial aspects to the U.S.-China relationship, and the EU has said the same about its relations with China. We will work with allies and partners in Europe to secure the technologies of the future, re-engage robustly in the UN system, and restore our vital security partnerships, and we will support those who speak up against the CCP's malign actions and attempts to undermine the international rules-based system.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#141)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The U.S. relationship with Russia is at its lowest point in decades. Many of the traditional channels of dialogue have been slowly severed. At the same time, Russia has positioned itself, at the center of many of the world's current conflicts: Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, and Libya.

a. What is the most productive way to demonstrate U.S. objections to Russia's bad behavior?
b. What role should sanctions play in pushing back on Russia? How effective has our sanctions regime been in curtailing Russian malign behavior? Have they inadvertently helped Russia? And how can we design sanctions to ensure we have a deterrent effect without helping Putin accomplish other goals?
c. It is very important that we implement a comprehensive Russia strategy, in which we have multiple tracks, including dialogues. What will be the Biden Administration's comprehensive Russia strategy? What will you emphasize?
d. The past several U.S. Administrations have tried to "reset" the U.S. relationship with Russia, and each has failed. French President Macron is currently attempting a reset with Russia to the dismay of Europe and NATO's eastern allies who are beefing up their defenses with an eye toward Russia. Will this Administration attempt a "reset" with Russia?
e. How will you work with the Europeans, who have differing perspectives on Russia, to ensure that NATO and the EU maintain a united view of the Russian threat and a united response?
f. What is your stance on disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks against the U.S. and the Central and Eastern European nations from sources within Russia and elsewhere? What role, if any, do you see for the U.S. in stemming Kremlin misinformation flowing to the Russian people about the U.S. and its allies? In this vein, what do you see as the role of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty?
g. Do you support more dialogues between the Russian and American people? How do you propose we strengthen U.S.-Russia people-to-people ties? Is that possible at the current moment or in the near future?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will, in coordination with our Allies and partners, work to hold Russia to account for its illegal and aggressive actions. Russia has used military force and other forms of coercion and intimidation to pursue a geopolitical agenda that is inimical to the rule of law and U.S. national interests. The administration will work with Allies and partners to deter and disrupt Moscow's threats and enhance democracies' collective resilience to Kremlin tactics. Sanctions are one of many tools at our disposal.

Sanctions are one of many tools that increase the costs the Kremlin faces for its hostile actions, particularly when they are executed in coordination with our Allies. Sanctions deprive Russia of the resources to carry out its malign activities around the world. I believe that sanctions are an important tool to help achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives, and I appreciate the emphasis Congress has put on the State Department's resources in this area. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Congress on sanctions policy and the implementation of the provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021."

The Biden-Harris administration is prepared to meet the Kremlin's aggression with renewed resolve and strengthened Alliances. We will work to increase the pressure on Moscow, while also focusing on U.S. resilience and the resilience of our Allies to mitigate the effects of Moscow's actions. The administration is prepared to engage Moscow, both to increase the lines of communication that mitigate the risk of miscalculation between us and to advance U.S. interests, such as the extension of the New START agreement.

There will be no reset with Russia. We see the Putin regime as it is: an increasingly paranoid and repressive system that has grown more aggressive in its efforts to undermine the United States and other liberal democracies.

I will work in coordination with Allies and partners, including NATO and the EU, on the shared challenge of Russia. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to rebuilding U.S. alliances, particularly with our NATO Allies. We will work to ensure NATO has the capabilities it needs to deter and defend against new and existing threats to our collective security, while ensuring that Allies are doing their fair share. We look forward to consulting with NATO Allies, as well as with Congress, on the best strategy to ensure NATO has the capabilities it needs. The administration is committed to strengthening and revitalizing the U.S.-EU partnership.

The United States will counter state-sponsored disinformation delivered by traditional or cyber means by exposing it and countering it with the truth. A key element of our overall cyber strategy is to create a sustainable framework for responding to malicious cyber activity that sets norms and employs threats of punishment and denial. We will make it clear the United States will respond swiftly and proportionately to cyberattacks against ourselves and our Allies and to cyber-enabled disinformation campaigns, via cyber and non-cyber means. Credible sources like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty provide vital, real news to the Russian people and are key to these efforts.

People-to-people relationships form the bedrock on which we build lasting cooperation between nations. Our exchange programs celebrate the longstanding bonds of friendship and mutual respect that unite the Russian and American people. Exchanges benefit the United States by creating space to promote peaceful and productive relations, building local capacity by imparting knowledge and skills in key fields of expertise and establishing valuable contacts with established and emerging leaders and influencers. We are exploring strategies to mitigate Russian government attempts to impede the operations and effectiveness of our exchange programs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#142)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On January 17, 2021, Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny returned home to Russia from Germany, where he had spent the last five months being treated for poisoning with a nerve agent from the Novichok family. This poisoning was almost certainly organized and perpetrated by the Russian government under the leadership of Vladimir Putin. Immediately upon his return to Russia, Mr. Navalny was arrested and has been put into prison for at least 30 days after a rushed, sham trial.

a. After his arrest, Mr. Navalny's team released a list of eight people close to Vladimir Putin that they would like to see sanctioned. Do you believe that the United States and its allies should take up Mr. Navalny's request? Would doing so set a negative or positive precedent for the future use of sanctions?
b. How much support, and of what kind, do you believe that the United States should give to Mr. Navalny and other Russian opposition figures?

Answer:

The U.S. government's commitment to democracy and civil society in Russia remains firm. We are concerned about the Kremlin's attacks against Mr. Navalny and other opposition figures, just as we are concerned about the sustained crackdown on the freedoms of all Russians. Mr. Navalny, like all Russian citizens, deserves a government that supports his ability to exercise his rights, including to free of expression, without fear of retribution. We will continue to promote accountability for those responsible for corruption and human rights abuses, including those responsible for the attacks against Mr. Navalny, and stand with all of those advocating for democracy and universal rights – whether in Russia or elsewhere around the world.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#146)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will the Department interact with the Three Seas Initiative? Do you see it as an economic initiative, or a geopolitical one?

Answer:

The Three Seas Initiative has an important role to play in supporting the completion of European integration by advancing north-south interconnectivity in the energy, transport, and digital sectors. Three Seas also offers Western alternatives to financing infrastructure in these sectors, in which Russia and China in particular have attempted to spread malign influence. The Three Seas region of Central and Eastern Europe remains a region of intense geopolitical competition. I look forward to seeing the initiative move forward with further investment and concrete projects that benefit the citizens of its member states, as well as to working with Three Seas member states and the EU more broadly to support the region's development and Euro-Atlantic orientation. The Initiative's public-private nature can also help marshal additional financial and other resources to assist with the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#147)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Hungary, an EU member and NATO ally known in part for its 1956 revolution against its Soviet occupation, has grown increasingly autocratic under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his political party, Fidesz. In what Orbán calls an "illiberal democracy," he and his affiliates have captured and consolidated the media, pressured civil society, forced one of the country's top universities to leave the country, cozied up to Russia and China, and increased corruption by Orbán-linked companies and Hungarians. The pressure on independent media has gotten so bad that RFE/RL re-opened its Hungarian service last year to ensure that citizens had at least one independent news outlet.

a. The Obama Administration policy of shunning Hungary did not and will not solve the problem of the country's democratic backsliding. Neither did the Trump Administration's policy of hugging Hungary closer. What do you believe is the right balance between carrots and sticks for Hungary?
b. What should be the U.S. role in ensuring Hungary remains a democracy and how should the U.S. work with the EU on this issue?
c. Will the United States put diplomatic support behind the EU's efforts to tie the rule of law to disbursement of EU funding?
d. If confirmed, will you ensure the President appoints an Ambassador to Hungary that will have the backing from Washington that is necessary to stand up to Orbán and Fidesz?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to democratic renewal at home and abroad, and it is important for allies to hold one other accountable to our democratic commitments. The Biden administration looks forward to working with all of our allies on the basis of our shared values and commitments. Where allies fall short of those commitments, we will voice our concerns. We are concerned about developments in Hungary that have curtailed the rights of LGBTI people, eroded space for civil society and media freedom, led to the spread of corruption, made elections less fair, and undermined judicial independence. If confirmed, I will ensure that we have an ambassador who will have the backing from Washington to engage with our Hungarian counterparts on these issues as an important part of our bilateral agenda.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#148)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December, Bulgaria vetoed the opening of EU accession talks with North Macedonia over a bilateral language and cultural dispute. While the dispute is bilateral, this veto has wider geopolitical impacts for the region, the EU, and the United States. It is in the interest of the United States for the Balkan countries, especially North Macedonia which has made many difficult reforms and changes to reach this point, to be rewarded for these reforms and given what it was promised. It is also in the interest of the EU and the United States to have Balkan countries join the West rather than rely on Russia, China, and other malign actors for economic and political support.

How involved should the United States be in this process? If confirmed, what will you do to push Bulgaria and North Macedonia to resolve their disputes outside of the EU process?

Answer:

I strongly support the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the countries of the Western Balkans as a key step toward realizing the long-held vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Our administration will work with the EU and the countries of the region to support the region's democratic and economic development and to advance its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. North Macedonia has completed the reforms necessary to begin EU accession negotiations. Its accession, alongside its Western Balkan neighbors, is in the U.S. interest. The State Department is engaged in encouraging Bulgaria and North Macedonia to resolve their bilateral differences outside the EU accession process, and if confirmed, I ensure that it continue to do so.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#149)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Resolving the Kosovo-Serbia dispute would go a long way toward advancing stability and security in the Western Balkans. In an effort to support this, the Trump Administration appointed two Special Envoys, one for Serbia-Kosovo Dialogue and another for the Western Balkans. An EU-led Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue is also underway, led by EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák. U.S. and EU efforts to reconcile Kosovo and Serbia have recently seemed at odds with each other, not complimentary. The Trump Administration was able to secure an economic agreement between the two, but a full compromise agreement has yet to be secured.

a. How does the Biden Administration plan to engage in the current Kosovo-Serbia dialogue?
b. If confirmed, would your State Department appoint a Special Envoy to this dispute? If so, how will you assign that work? Will you look to an outside envoy or to someone within the Foreign Service? If a Foreign Service Officer, how will he or she be politically empowered to take on this role?
c. If you do intend to appoint a Special Envoy to Kosovo-Serbia, how would you instruct him or her to interact with EU Special Representative Lajčák?
d. What support, political or otherwise, does the Biden Administration plan to give to the process? What carrots and sticks can be used to incentivize each side to compromise?

Answer:

The United States remains committed to working with the EU to support negotiations toward a comprehensive settlement agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on full normalization of relations, centered on the basis of mutual recognition, which remains essential for durable stability in the Western Balkans as well as both countries' European integration. We are working with our European partners and the EU, including EU Special Representative Lajcak, to advance this shared objective, closely engaging with both parties to encourage their flexibility and willingness to compromise. If confirmed, I will consider whether a Special Envoy would help with that work and continually evaluate how best to incentivize a normalization agreement.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#150)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Last year marked the 25th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, which brought peace to Bosnia in 1995. The Accords currently serve as the basis for the country's constitution, and scholars and policy-makers—including President-elect Biden—agreed in a statement released on Dayton's 25th anniversary that reforms in Bosnia are incomplete, and that the process is no longer working for the country and its people. Its leaders are corrupt and under sanction, its youth are migrating to Europe for a better life, and global malign actors are using Bosnia as a gateway to Europe. President Biden's statements about Bosnia during the 2020 presidential campaign and throughout the transition (as President-elect) seem to indicate that the country will be a priority of his Administration.

a. What are President Biden's and your plans to help bring stability and good governance to Bosnia and its people?
b. Will the Biden Administration, alongside the EU, put political efforts into securing a more permanent constitution for Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Answer:

As the President has said, 25 years after the signing of the Dayton Accords, it is clear that the work to promote justice, reconciliation, and fully functional Bosnia and Herzegovina remains incomplete. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the international community and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to finally achieve the promise contained in the Dayton Accords — a prosperous, just, and democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina in the heart of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

A stable, fully democratic, and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is in the interest of the United States, the international community, and the citizens of BiH themselves. If confirmed, I will support BiH's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions, improved rule of law, and greater economic openness and opportunity.

1147

With the EU, we will promote reforms that strengthen democratic governance, improve cooperation between the many tiers of government, move BiH towards achieving EU candidate status, and ensure free and fair elections, including support to civic and issue-based political parties.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#151)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Since the August 9th presidential election, Belarusians have peacefully protested in unprecedented numbers to contest the official results, which fraudulently awarded Alexander Lukashenka another term. The government has responded to these peaceful protests with violence, initiating a campaign of disappearances, arrests, torture, and violence against the protestors and journalists.

a. At the end of 2020, the Senate confirmed Julie Fisher to be U.S. Ambassador to Belarus—our first ambassador in the country in 12 years. What will you instruct her to prioritize during her time in Minsk? How do we ensure that her presence in country is not used as a signal of support for the Lukashenka regime?
b. Since the protests began, the United States has increased its support of civil society in Belarus. What more can the United States, along with European allies, do to assist Belarusian advocates of democracy?
c. Are U.S., EU, UK, and Canadian sanctions having an effect on the regime? If not, what are our other options?

Answer:

People around the world have been inspired by the Belarusian people, especially Belarusian women, peacefully demonstrating for the right to choose their own leadership. President Biden has strongly condemned the Lukashenka regime for its violent crackdown on the Belarusian people and called for dialogue between representatives of Belarusian society, the immediate release of all political prisoners, new elections, and the peaceful transfer of power. We will continue to evaluate the situation on the ground and consult with our allies and partners to determine appropriate next steps to support the Belarusian people and their right to choose their own leaders via free and fair elections.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#152)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Since its independence, Georgia has generally made good progress toward democracy and implementing market-based economic reforms. Georgia has also been a strong U.S. partner with ambitions to join the Euro-Atlantic community through the EU and NATO. However, over the past few years, the country has suffered democratic backsliding and oligarchic capture of the judiciary, media, and the ruling political party.

a. What levers can be used to push Georgians, including and especially the ruling party Georgian Dream, to reform Georgia's judiciary and complete electoral reforms?
b. Has the political and governance situation in Georgia reached the point at which we should re-evaluate our relationship with the country, including by conditioning certain aid to Georgia?
c. Would a revival of the U.S.-Georgia FTA discussions incentivize Georgia and its political elites to relinquish power and support reforms, or would it reward bad behavior?
d. Should the United States work to revive the Anaklia port project? How much should security and geopolitics factor in to projects like the Anaklia port?
e. What mechanisms does the United States have to encourage the opposition to reform and consolidate itself in an effort to serve as a more effective check on the pro-Russian ruling party?
f. How will the United States engage the Europeans and the EU to present a united front in Georgia and jointly apply pressure towards the reforms?

Answer:

The United States and Georgia have continued to deepen bilateral relations, particularly in the wake of Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia and 2014 invasion of Ukraine. I want to see Georgia achieve its goal of closer integration with the West by becoming more democratic, more capable of countering Russian and other malign influence from countries of concern, more able to defend the rights of its citizens throughout its internationally recognized territory, and more economically prosperous. Important work remains to strengthen Georgia's democratic institutions and processes, which U.S. foreign assistance helps to advance. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and European allies to identify opportunities to support Georgia's democratic development. The United States is urging Georgia to prioritize the key electoral and judicial reforms that are necessary to help Georgia achieve its aspirations of closer integration with the West, stimulate

foreign investment in Georgia, and increase trade with the United States. The United States will also continue to enhance our people-to-people ties through professional and educational exchanges, cultural programs, and support for economic development to further integrate the Georgian people into the Euro-Atlantic family of nations.

I will continue to support the Georgian people's choice to pursue closer ties with the EU and NATO and as Congress has done, voice strong U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. I also look forward to working with Congress to identify opportunities to support Georgia's anti-corruption and pro-business reforms.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#153)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

During the two month war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, both sides were documented committing human rights violations. Verified videos showed the decapitation of captives, the desecration of bodies, and extrajudicial executions. While Russia brokered a ceasefire, a long-term peace agreement was not reached.

a. If confirmed, how will you engage with both Armenia, Azerbaijan, and regional stakeholders such as Russia and Turkey to ensure that these crimes are subject to accountability?
b. As a co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, what should the United States do differently to push the two countries to agree to a resolution of this conflict?

Answer:

As President Biden has said, the United States should be leading a diplomatic effort to find a lasting resolution to the conflict working together with our European partners. I plan to reinvigorate U.S. engagement to find a comprehensive settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that brings lasting peace to the people of the region. This includes stepping up our engagement via the Minsk Group, of which the United States is a co-chair, and additional diplomatic work to prevent malign interference by third parties. The Biden-Harris administration is deeply committed to human rights and will highlight allegations of human rights violations, encourage thorough, impartial investigations, and urge officials to bring to justice those responsible.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#154)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

You served in the Obama Administration during Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine.
a. What lessons did you take from that experience?
b. Was the U.S. response in the initial days of Russia's invasion of Crimea adequate? In retrospect, what steps, if any should have been taken to move convincingly convince Putin to reverse course, early in that crisis and before Russia invaded eastern Ukraine?

Answer:

We will continue to oppose Russia's brutal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea, which is sovereign Ukrainian territory, and support the implementation of the Minsk agreements to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We will support Ukraine's chosen European path by pushing for progress on reforms and building resilience in the face of Russia's ongoing efforts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sanctions on Russia as a result of its aggression in Crimea and eastern Ukraine should remain in place until Russia reverses course. We will work with Congress to provide robust security assistance to Ukraine, including lethal defensive weapons.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#155)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Ukraine continues to fight two wars: one with the Kremlin and its various attempts to undermine Ukraine's freedom and independence; and the other with its own demons, particularly the entrenched corruption that has so often undermined Ukraine's democratic transition and Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

a. If confirmed, will your State Department support the continued provision of lethal and non-lethal military equipment to the Government of Ukraine to support the defense of their territory against Russian-orchestrated fighters in the east of the country? Do you believe the current level of U.S.-provided training for Ukraine's military should increase, decrease, or remain the same?
b. What pressure and leverage do we have on the Ukrainian government to ensure they continue their anti-corruption reforms?
c. Should the United States continue to condition certain types of assistance on continued economic and anti-corruption reforms? Should existing conditions for aid be expanded? What further incentives does the United States, along with our European partners, have to encourage Ukraine to complete its land reform, decentralization, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and creation of an independent and responsive judiciary?

Answer:

I will continue to oppose Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea and support diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Sanctions on Russia because of its aggression in Crimea and eastern Ukraine should remain in place unless and until Russia reverses course. We will work with Congress to continue providing security assistance, including lethal defensive weapons, that Ukraine needs to defend itself against Russia's aggression based on the needs of its armed forces. We will support Ukraine's chosen Euro-Atlantic path, including by pushing for progress on rule of law and economic reforms that strengthen Ukraine's institutions and lead to a brighter future for all Ukrainians.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#158)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Turkey—once thought to be a secular democratic example to its neighbors in the Middle East—has become increasingly authoritarian and belligerent. Our NATO allies are growing increasingly worried that Turkey is no longer a good and reliable member that will work together within NATO for a common defense. Its dalliances with Russia, support for the authoritarian regime in Azerbaijan, dishonest actions on refugees, drilling for oil in Cypriot waters, behavior in Libya, and constant violations of the airspace of its neighbor and fellow ally, Greece, all seem to confirm this fear.

a. How should NATO deal with a member nation who no longer wants to play by the rules, be it Turkey today or another ally in the future? How will you instruct your ambassador to NATO to address this problem?
b. Do you agree with Congress on the necessity for the United States to sanction Turkey for their purchase of the Russian-made S-400 air defense system? If not, what steps would you have preferred to see in response to this purchase?
c. What concerns do you have about the emerging nexus between Turkey and Russia? Should the U.S. actively work to undermine that relationship? If so, how? Should this relationship and alliance flourish, what risks would that condominium pose for the U.S. and its interests in the region and around the world? In such an instance, do you believe that actions should be taken to remove Turkey from NATO?
d. If confirmed, would your State Department commit to continuing to support the cases of the three locally-hired U.S. embassy and consulate employees who have been accused, detained, and in some cases convicted, of involvement in the attempted presidential coup in 2016?
e. In addition to jailing U.S. embassy employees, Turkey is the second worst jailer of journalists in the world, falling behind only China. How does the Biden Administration plan to make clear to Turkey that these violations of democratic freedoms are fundamentally incompatible with the Euro-Atlantic community of which Turkey purports to be a member? What consequences should Turkey face if it does not change course?
f. Turkey's arrests and abuses of academics, political opponents, and religious and ethnic minorities have also become increasingly common and concerning. What steps would you take to ensure Turkey fully meets its obligations under international human rights and religious freedom laws? How will your State Department confront the various issues faced by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, which is based in Istanbul?

Answer:

Turkey is a challenging ally. President Biden has promised to call out Turkish behavior that is inconsistent with its commitments as a NATO Ally. This administration will return human rights and rule of law to the bilateral agenda, and we will continue to advocate for three local staff convicted on spurious charges based on their work on behalf of the U.S. government. At the same

time, we have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, deterring Russia, and ensuring regional stability. We will seek cooperation with Turkey on common priorities and engage in dialogue to address disagreements, such as limitations placed upon the rights of religious minorities and recent detentions of Christian practitioners. More broadly, it is important to keep Turkey anchored to the West rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia and other adversaries. We can uphold our values and protect our interests while keeping Turkey aligned with the Transatlantic Alliance on critical issues. The S-400 air defense system is incompatible with NATO equipment and poses a threat to NATO systems. A top priority will be urging Turkey not to retain the S-400 and to refrain from additional Russian arms purchases. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to review the impact of the CAATSA sanctions imposed by the previous administration in response to the S-400 acquisition and to determine whether additional measures are required or warranted.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#159)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The five post-Soviet Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, or C5, have often not been prioritized in U.S. foreign policy. During the past twenty years, the United States has largely seen these nations exclusively through a counter-terrorism or Afghanistan lens, despite their general lack of terroristic activities. The Defense Department has lumped them in with the Middle Eastern nations in CENTCOM, while the State Department's South and Central Asia grouping separates the five countries from China and Russia.

a. If confirmed, what elements will be the focus of your Central Asia policy?
b. In a world that is shifting from the earlier focus on counterterrorism to a focus on great power competition, how do you believe the State Department should interact with the C5?
c. The C5 countries have poor human rights records. However, as Russia and China jockey for influence in the region, some worry that a singular focus by the United States on human rights would likely alienate the C5, as it has in the past. In your assessment, what is the proper balance between human rights, economics, and security in U.S. engagement with the C5?

Answer:

I will continue efforts bilaterally and in regional fora to advance our Central Asia objectives and to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of these states. U.S. engagement helps Central Asian states advance their economic, security, and political development free of other malign influences, while furthering our goals for democratic reforms. I support our sustained engagement in the region, including efforts to promote rule of law reform and respect for human rights, reduce terrorist threats and support stability and security in Afghanistan, and build economic opportunities. I will raise human rights concerns in bilateral and multilateral dialogues with Central Asian governments, both publicly and privately.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#160)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The U.S.-Germany relationship has been increasingly strained over the past years. Among our points of disagreement are the NordStream II pipeline, military spending, attitudes towards China, and questions of the use of nuclear weapons.

a. What steps will you hope to take to improve the U.S. relationship with Germany? Would you recommend that the U.S. return its troops to Germany and maintain its combatant commands for Europe and Africa in Germany?
b. Under German leadership, the European Union just concluded an investment deal with China. How do you view the German government's attitudes towards China, doing business with China, and their recently published Indo-Pacific Strategy?
c. Do you believe that the NordStream II pipeline should be completed? Do you commit to following the law and implementing the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act and the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Clarification Act?

Answer:

Repairing relations with U.S. Allies, including Germany, will be among my highest priorities. We look forward to further strengthening the U.S.-Germany relationship, consulting closely on our common security priorities, and partnering on shared challenges. We will work jointly with Germany, NATO, the EU, and other partners to address China's problematic economic practices, the challenges China poses to our collective security, and its human rights abuses. We will not always agree, but we will look to manage those differences constructively as Allies. As President Biden has made clear, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a bad idea. We will monitor for activity to complete or certify the pipeline and, if such activity takes place, make a determination on the applicability of sanctions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#161)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The U.S.-Greece relationship is currently as strong as it has ever been. Greece resides in a tumultuous and tense Eastern Mediterranean neighborhood, with daily Turkish violations of its airspace, thousands of migrants arriving on Greek territory, and increased Russian and Chinese activity in the region's waters and on land. In response to this growing pressure, an Eastern Mediterranean alliance is emerging between Greece, Israel, and Cyprus on defense and energy. Egypt has even joined the Mediterranean Gas Group.

a. What will the Biden Administration do to continue to strengthen our relationship with Greece? Will the Administration give support to the emerging Eastern Mediterranean alliance?
b. Greece has expressed strong interest in purchasing F-35s, but it may not be able to outright afford them. Should Greece have these planes and what mechanisms should the United States use to assist with this purchase?
c. Even before COVID-19, but especially after, Greece needs foreign direct investment (FDI) in several sectoral areas. They would prefer investment from the West rather than China. How will the Biden Administration encourage American companies to invest in Greece to support our strong bilateral relationship, benefit both of our economies, and prevent additional malign investment in such an important partner?

Answer:

Our relationship with Greece is at an all-time high, and I am committed to further strengthening these ties. The U.S.-Greece security relationship is critical to our interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and has grown significantly as bilateral ties have improved, beginning in the Obama administration. I look forward to working with Congress and my colleagues at the Department of Defense to determine any appropriate support for Foreign Military Sales to Greece. I will work to continue to deepen ties between the United States and Greece, including facilitating foreign investment and stronger commercial ties. The growing partnership among Greece, Israel, and the Republic of Cyprus promotes regional stability, peace, and security.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#162)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December, the United Kingdom and the European Union agreed to a free trade deal that would prevent the UK from crashing out of the bloc. While the agreement prevented the worst economic and geopolitical outcomes, there are likely to be disagreements and problems with the deal's implementation in the coming years.

a. What opportunities does the UK's new relationship with the EU present for the United States? What risks and obstacles does the new arrangement present for the U.S.' relationships with both the EU and UK? Opportunities and risks for NATO and the transatlantic relationship?
b. The UK recently increased its defense spending and is due to publish its Integrated Security and Defense Review in the near future. How will you engage the UK on the future of their foreign and defense policy? What are your priorities for the future of the U.S.-UK defense relationship?
c. If confirmed, how will you and the Administration engage the UK and Ireland to ensure the Good Friday Agreement remains upheld and the government of Northern Ireland remains functioning?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will support a strong UK and a strong EU. We look forward to working with both partners to address the range of global challenges facing all of our countries. I welcomed the UK's announcement that it will increase its defense spending and look forward to working with the UK and other allies to ensure NATO has the capabilities it needs to deter and defend against the threats we face. President Biden has been unequivocal in his support for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. As the UK and EU begin implementing Brexit-related provisions, the Biden administration will encourage them to prioritize political and economic stability in Northern Ireland. If confirmed, I will also ensure the State Department continues to support civil society and public diplomacy efforts that further the peace process.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#163)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

While the UK has been negotiating its divorce from the EU, it has simultaneously been negotiating a free trade agreement with the U.S. It has already concluded trade agreements with Japan and Singapore.

a. Do you support concluding a free trade agreement with the UK? What role will you play in the process?
b. How will a U.S.-UK FTA affect the United States strategically and geopolitically?

Answer:

President Biden has been clear that he will make significant new investments in the United States and for American workers before he signs any new trade deals. We look forward to engaging with the British government on strengthening our ties across a wide range of economic issues where our interests align. We will review the progress made during bilateral trade negotiations by the previous administration and work with Congress on the best way forward.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#164)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I support the Biden Administration's efforts to re-engage and coordinate with our European allies, but while the tone of the United States towards Europe has changed, difficulties and disagreements in the transatlantic relationship remain.

a. The dispute between Boeing and Airbus must be resolved as soon as possible. How will the State Department work with other U.S. departments and agencies to solve the dispute and remove a huge irritant from the transatlantic relationship?
b. Will the Biden Administration lift the Section 232 tariffs from our allied partners? How will the Biden Administration use this tool to confront shared national security threats, such as China, in the future?

Answer:

Rebuilding relationships with our allies and partners, including the EU, will be among my highest priorities. Where feasible, I will look to resolve or de-escalate difficult bilateral issues with the EU and other partners in order to facilitate deeper cooperation in our mutual interest on priorities such as COVID-19, climate change, and meeting the China challenge. Where differences remain, I will consult with allies and partners in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. I will work with my colleagues in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, and other agencies to ensure a whole-of-government approach to these challenges.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#165)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The EU and certain members within it have been pushing for "strategic autonomy" and "digital sovereignty," that would give Europe much more power to decide how tech companies – most of which are American and Chinese – are allowed to operate in that hugely important region. The EU also aims to bolster a European tech sector that has lagged behind. However, initial proposals would seem to create barriers to entry for U.S. companies in the form of taxes, tariffs, fines, and anti-trust legislation, which, in effect, creates a decoupling from the United States. This outcome would be damaging both for the EU and the United States, and would severely hinder our joint ability to compete with the PRC as it seeks to become a scientific and technological superpower.

a. What can the United States and the EU do to stay on the same page regarding tech policy? Is there room for a compromise between the two?
b. If confirmed, will you prioritize convincing the Europeans that it is both of our interests to align our digital policies and strategies to compete with China? How so?
c. If confirmed, what areas of potential cooperation would you prioritize?

Answer:

Together, the United States and the EU have the power to set the global rules of the road on issues we care about, including with respect to technology. We will seek to resolve difficult issues with the EU while safeguarding U.S. interests, including developing an enhanced EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework and a comprehensive multi-national agreement to update global tax rules in ways that prevent global profit-shifting while ensuring a level global playing field for U.S. companies. There are competitive, adversarial, and cooperative aspects to the U.S.-China relationship, and we will work with allies and partners in Europe to secure the technologies of the future based on our shared values and interests, which stand in sharp contrast to those of authoritarian regimes such as the PRC.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#166)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

A free trade agreement between the EU and the United States could be an economic and strategic win for both sides of the Atlantic if negotiated carefully. However, the abandoned Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) demonstrated the difficulties of this effort. Given China's coercive and dishonest economic practices, a carefully considered trade agreement between our two sides could potentially bolster market-based economics practices and help set global standards.

a. If confirmed, as a senior member of President Biden's foreign policy team, what are your views regarding a Biden Administration attempt to revive EU-U.S. trade agreement negotiations? If the U.S. were to pursue such a course, what areas should be prioritized?
b. Many barriers to trade include non-tariff barriers, such as differing regulations and standards. These differences don't just have economic consequences they may give rise to strategic challenge, as well. How can we work to resolve differences in standards and regulations with the EU, UK, and other democratic, market-oriented partners in goods trade and also in the digital and services sectors?

Answer:

The President has made clear that his test for trade policies is whether they deliver for the American worker and the middle class. The President does not want a return to business as usual on trade and has said he will not sign any new trade deals until his administration has made significant investments in American workers and infrastructure. He has also been clear that the way to tackle the biggest current trade issues, including Chinese unfair trade practices, human rights and labor issues, and the environment, is to work with allies to develop high standards and punish countries that violate them. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other leaders in Congress to shape international economic policy that serves American workers at home and our interests and values around the world.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#167)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act, the U.S. Congress passed significant beneficial ownership legislation. The EU has also been working on a rule-of-law mechanism to link EU funds to good governance, as well as cracking down on "golden visas." European countries have found themselves at both ends of this corruption cycle.

a. Will collaborating with our democratic allies to tackle corruption in our financial systems be a priority for the Biden Administration? How does the Biden Administration plan to fulfill President Biden's proposal of a "Summit of Democracies?" What are the immediate priorities for that Summit?
b. What concrete actions will you take as Secretary of State to push countries to reform their systems and crackdown on corruption?
c. The Department of Justice, through its Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training (OPDAT) and International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) initiatives, plays a significant role in helping partner countries to promote the rule of law and combat corruption. Will you prioritize coordinating with the Department of Justice and supporting these programs?
d. How important is it that the United States and its European allies take steps to make our own systems less friendly to kleptocracy and less penetrable by dirty money?

Answer:

A coordinated effort to address corruption and maintain the integrity of international financial systems and harden them against dirty money will be a priority for the Biden administration. If confirmed, I will lead the Department of State in providing input to the White House on the priorities for the summit, consistent with ongoing efforts to promote prevention of corruption and the enforcement and implementation of international standards. The United States will use its leadership in multilateral fora, and regional and bilateral relationships, to press countries to implement and enforce the global anticorruption standards and obligations to which countries have committed.

I will support the Department's active role in promoting the rule of law and integrity through diplomatic engagements, sanctions, and targeted foreign assistance, including in cooperation with interagency partners such as the Department of Justice.

1165

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#168)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Several members of the EU's eastern bloc have experienced a rise in corruption, a decline in rule of law, and a strain on democratic institutions. Free and independent media in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria has been reduced and persecuted. Ruling parties have consolidated power in important industries and in the government. This past year, Bulgaria saw large anti-corruption protests sweep the country. The EU has implemented rule-of-law conditionality to disbursement of EU funding as a means to combat this trend.

a. Does the United States have a role to place in EU and EU member states' anti-corruption efforts? If yes, what is that role?
b. As an EU member and a NATO ally, what will you do to push anti-corruption efforts in Bulgaria to ensure stability and security in the country and prevent malign actors from gaining footholds in the country and hence in the EU and NATO?

Answer:

Yes, the United States plays an important supporting role in the EU's efforts to combat corruption. The State Department promotes capacity building activities in several EU member states and with aspiring members to help them combat complex crimes related to corruption, including money laundering and financial crimes. We work hand-in-hand with the EU in international fora to prevent corruption and coordinate sanctions on corrupt actors and institutions when prevention fails.

We are working closely with Bulgaria to build political will, strengthen its anticorruption institutions, and improve investigations and prosecutions of corruption-related crimes. We have employed targeted visa restrictions for some corrupt officials in Bulgaria, but our focus is on helping allies best combat corruption and its effects.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#170)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In recent years, many European countries, including several in the EU, have seen elements of their democracies eroded. One major theme of this erosion is the shrinking space for media freedom in countries like Malta, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Belarus, Georgia, and Bulgaria. Independent media has been taken over by the state, purchased by pro-government oligarchs, and journalists have been threatened, harassed, and jailed by law enforcement or government agencies. Horrifically, several journalists have been killed in recent years. Chinese companies are quietly acquiring stakes in European media. And Turkey, a member of NATO that is ostensibly applying for EU membership, is the second worst jailer of journalists in the world. In reaction to this backsliding, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) recently reopened offices in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The EU adopted a mechanism to tie funding to upholding the rule of law.

a. How important is this issue to the Biden Administration? What will the U.S. do to support the EU's efforts to uphold rule of law, the independent journalists' efforts to report the news, and the remaining media outlets continued operations?
b. Under your leadership, how will the State Department work together with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to further the cause of free speech and free media in Europe and Central Asia?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will restore democracy and human rights to the center of U.S. foreign policy. In addition to ensuring proper focus on media freedom and freedom of expression in our own programming and diplomatic engagement, we will work with international partners in support of our conviction that a free press is a cornerstone of democracy. For example, with our partner Sweden having just assumed the OSCE chairmanship, we can work together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in defense of free expression. We are committed to our productive relationships with the USAGM and USAID in order to advance our shared objectives of promoting democratic values, access to information, and media freedom. Through USAID, we will continue to work with local independent media to strengthen information integrity and our partners' ability to provide fact-based, high-quality reporting. I support the ongoing independent journalistic work of RFE/RL, whose reporters provide indispensable, objective reporting

in the region, especially where the free flow of information is restricted by governments. The United States will continue to advance freedom of the press around the world.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#171)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If development, diplomacy, and defense are co-equal legs of the U.S. national security stool, pursuing "development for development's sake" is not a viable policy. The recent merger of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to "unite [their] aid with [their] diplomacy", suggests that our British allies would agree.

a. Should U.S. international development efforts be linked to U.S. national security interests? If not, why not?
b. If confirmed, how will you structurally address development issues within the interagency and ensure that U.S. development, diplomacy, and defense priorities are, in fact, effectively aligned and coordinated?
c. In addition to elevating the Administrator of USAID to a cabinet-level position, do you support calls to elevate USAID to a Cabinet-level agency and to create a development directorate on the National Security Council? If so, how would that change the current arrangement, whereby USAID serves under the foreign policy direction of the State Department?
d. If confirmed, you will sit on the boards of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Development Finance Corporation. How do these agencies fit into the national security architecture? How do you intend to balance their development mandates with U.S. national security priorities?

Answer:

One of the most pressing challenges facing our nation is restoring and strengthening U.S. global leadership as a champion of democracy, human rights, and the dignity of all people. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to restoring credible U.S. leadership on global development and diplomacy, and, to that end, President Biden has stated his intention to elevate the Administrator of USAID to a cabinet-level position. If confirmed, I will work closely with the USAID Administrator, as well as the Secretary of Defense and the rest of my interagency colleagues, to ensure that we are all effectively advancing common objectives. Additionally, I look forward to serving on the Board of Directors for both MCC and DFC. Both institutions bring unique and important tools in advancing development and foreign policy priorities. U.S. leadership in the world

is strongest when all parts of the U.S. government are working together to advance our objectives with other countries and in multilateral organizations.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#172)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Initially fueled by non-transparency and unchecked travel, then exacerbated by deliberate disinformation, a deadly novel coronavirus that should have been contained at its source in China instead has been allowed to spread across international borders, sicken over 70 million people, claim over 1.6 million lives, shutter schools and businesses, and wreak havoc upon the global economy. The impact of this pandemic will be felt for generations to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare two critical truths: (1) infectious diseases do not respect borders and a threat anywhere can quickly become a threat everywhere; and (2) the global architecture for global health security is woefully ill-equipped and underprepared.

I requested information from the Trump Administration about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will share with you the contents of that request. If confirmed, will you commit to fully investigating the origins of the pandemic, including with regard to the safety protocols at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and associated research facilities, and to sharing that information with this committee in a timely manner?

Answer:

I support a robust and clear investigation into the origins of the pandemic. An impartial public health investigation into the origins of any novel outbreak is vital to protecting against future re-emergence events. The Biden-Harris administration will comprehensively review all information available to us about the origins of SARS-COV-2 and will fully support the ongoing origins investigation being conducted under the auspices of the World Health Organization. It is imperative to have transparency on the early days of the pandemic, including to identify important lessons about how future pandemic emergence events can be averted.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#180)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is the single most generous provider of humanitarian assistance in the world, both financial and in-kind, thus saving hundreds of millions of lives and promoting the growth of healthier, more stable societies. Yet today, an estimated 690 million people are food insecure, of which 270 million are facing starvation. As needs outpace the ability of donors to respond, it is imperative that the Department and USAID be enabled to stretch U.S. humanitarian resources farther, including by modernizing U.S. international food aid.

Historically, the flagship U.S. food aid program – Food for Peace – required that 100 percent of the food provided under the Act be purchased in the United States, of which 50% must be shipped on U.S. flagged vessels. According to the GAO, the shipping requirement, in particular, has added significant time and cost to emergency food aid, even while failing to fulfil its statutory purpose. Three consecutive administrations have thus proposed changes– ranging from setting aside 20 percent of the budget for local and regional procurement to eliminating Food for Peace entirely. The Global Food Security Act (as re- authorized through FY2023) and the 2018 Farm Bill did include modest reforms, but more needs to be done.

a. Do you agree that agricultural cargo preference requirements have outlived their statutory purpose and thus add unnecessary time and expense to U.S. food aid?
b. Should U.S. cargo preference requirements continue to be applied to international food aid, or should humanitarian assistance in all forms be exempted while the Department of Defense continues, refines, or expands its own efforts to maintain sealift capacity?
c. If confirmed, will you carry forward the food aid reform efforts of your predecessors, including under the Obama Administration?

Answer:

I will work with relevant counterparts within the Biden-Harris administration to review the status of agricultural cargo preference requirements.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#183)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should humanitarian assistance be branded? If not, why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and consult with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#184)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should all U.S. foreign assistance be branded? If not, why not?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and consult with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#185)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, will you uphold President Trump's Executive Order on branding U.S. foreign assistance and the USAID Branding Modernization Act (P.L. 116-334)? Would you delegate authority to brand assistance implemented by USAID to the Administrator, consistent with the P.L. 116-334? If not, why not?

Answer:

Beneficiaries of U.S. aid receive billions of dollars of foreign assistance annually, often with little awareness that the American people provided the assistance. If confirmed, I will work with USAID to review the current status of branding on U.S. foreign assistance and work with Congress on the appropriate way forward on this issue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#186)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Siljander, Helms, and Kemp-Kasten Amendments, in addition to the Mexico City Policy, have been instrumental in defending life in U.S. foreign assistance. What are your views on these abortion-related restrictions in U.S. foreign assistance?

Answer:

Sexual and reproductive health care services are essential to women's health and well-being. President Biden intends to rescind the Mexico City policy, which undermines our efforts to advance gender equality globally by restricting our ability to support women's health and gender-based violence prevention and response programs.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#189)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Former USAID Administrator Mark Green spearheaded the agency's "Journey to Self-Reliance" initiative in an effort to provide strategic focus to U.S. foreign assistance, including by taking a data-based approached toward building partner country capacity to achieve and sustain development results. In contrast with China's development model, which creates dependence, Administrator Green argued that America should seek to foster self-reliance and responsibility among its friends.

a. While distinct from "diplomatic" assistance, do you agree that the purpose of development assistance is to end the need for its existence? Is USAID's mission to deliver assistance, or to help countries stand on their own two feet?
b. Do you intend to work with USAID to continue the "Journey to Self-Reliance" initiative, whether in name or in spirit?

Answer:

USAID promotes democratic values abroad and advances a free, peaceful, and prosperous world, with an aim to help partners become self-reliant and capable of leading their own development journeys. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator of USAID to review the strategy and initiatives for development assistance so that USAID continues to achieve its goals.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#190)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, the FY2020 State & Foreign Operations appropriations bill created the Countering Chinese Influence Fund (CCIF) to counter malign Chinese influence around the world and increase transparency and accountability associated with the Belt and Road Initiative.

a. Do you support the goals and objectives of the CCIF?
b. Are there particular regions or sectors that you believe the CCIF should prioritize?
c. Do you commit to directing an official at the Assistant Secretary level or above to oversee the obligation of these funds, to ensure that they are obligated strategically and in a manner that advances U.S. interests?

Answer:

China's use of coercive and corrupting tools of malign influence to undermine and interfere in democracies are a concern for the United States and our partners around the world. I support the overall goals and objectives of the CCIF. It is a key source of additional funding for frontline Indo-Pacific countries and our efforts to counter malign Chinese influence globally, especially in the economic sector. This includes efforts to increase transparency and accountability associated with the Belt and Road Initiative. As part of my planning efforts, I look forward to engaging in a full review of the CCIF with my team and Congress to identify priority regions and sectors to ensure the funds are obligated strategically in a manner that advances U.S. interests.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#191)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The BUILD Act of 2018 significantly restructured U.S. assistance for development finance, transforming the Overseas Private Investment Corporation into the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and incorporating the development finance activities of USAID. The DFC's primary mission is to harness the power of the American private sector to foster inclusive, market-based economic growth in low- and middle-income countries.

a. What is the DFC's role in our strategic competition with China?
b. Are there particular countries, regions, or sectors that the DFC should focus on?
c. Should the DFC be authorized to establish offices and operate in high-income countries if doing so would "counter Chinese influence," beyond what is currently authorized by law? Or should the DFC remain focused on its core mission of promoting economic growth in low- and middle-income countries while the CCIF is tapped for this form of strategic assistance in higher-income areas?

Answer:

The DFC created by Congress is an important tool for improving our ability to facilitate private-sector participation in economic development primarily in low and lower-middle income countries and to help counter Chinese influence. The Biden-Harris administration will use our economic diplomacy and the tools of the DFC, USAID, MCC, and Treasury to work with the U.S. private sector and governments to counter Chinese malign influence in Africa, the Western Hemisphere, and across the developing world to increase trade and investment and promote U.S. businesses. DFC should continue to prioritize investments in high development impact sectors like energy, telecommunications, and infrastructure. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the DFC Board of Directors to ensure effective utilization of the DFC.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#193)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The U.S. approach to promoting energy in emerging markets has been technology-inclusive. Power Africa has supported diverse types of energy investments, and the DFC recently lifted a prohibition on nuclear power. This flexible approach has enabled countries to find their own cost-effective path to an energy solution that supports their development goals. Additionally, U.S. flexibility has helped to level the playing field for American firms against Chinese and Russian competitors. Unfortunately, some European countries are now restricting overseas investments in natural gas on climate grounds. If confirmed, would you support Power Africa and DFC continuing to be able to support and invest in a flexible range of technologies, including natural gas?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on ensuring that Power Africa and the Development Finance Corporation are advancing our energy and climate goals. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to ensuring developing countries can meet their energy needs, while also reducing their emissions and building resilience against the destabilizing impacts of climate change.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#194)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Around the world, political dissidents, activists, journalists, and human rights advocates have been victims of repression, torture, detention, abuse, and arbitrary killing, for solely exercising their right to freedom of expression.

a. If confirmed, what would you do to bolster and reiterate the U.S. Government's commitment to protecting and advocating for those on the frontlines, including civil society organizations?
b. How would you direct the State Department to enhance global protections for freedom of expression and the press?
c. How would you prioritize a "whole-of-government" approach to human rights policy and its application in regional and functional diplomatic relationships?
d. There is serious concern about the state of press freedom around the world. If confirmed as Secretary of State, what actions will you take to curb suppression of press freedom and support independent journalists around the world?

Answer:

I share the concern that freedom of expression, press freedom, and civil society – key pillars of resilient democracies – are under increasing threat globally. This situation is worsened by the pandemic, which some use as a pretext to abuse executive powers to suspend or severely curtail the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. I will direct the State Department – and work with Congress and executive branch counterparts – to continue ongoing efforts to promote and protect freedom of expression globally. This includes bilateral diplomacy; public messaging; initiatives in the UN and regional multilateral organizations, as well as in multi-stakeholder fora such as the Media Freedom Coalition; and foreign assistance programs to support civil society, including rapid response resources that support journalists, activists, and human rights defenders under threat.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#196)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) defines Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) as countries where the government engages in or tolerates "particularly severe" violations of religious freedom. The statute, as amended by the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016 (Frank Wolf Act), also defines the State Department's Special Watch List (SWL) for countries where the government engages in or tolerates "severe" violations of religious freedom.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a report in mid-2020 that outlined their recommendations for CPC and SWL designations. Of note, USCIRF recommended that Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—as well as five others—India, Nigeria, Russia, Syria, and Vietnam be designated as CPCs. In December, only Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, the DPRK, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan were re-designated.

a. Do you believe this list encompasses all of the violators of religious freedom globally? Do others deserve to be placed on the CPC list?
b. Do you pledge to not allow political concerns to interfere with the CPC designations?

Answer:

I am committed to faithfully implementing the IRFA and the Frank Wolf Act, and to using the fact-based standards set forth by Congress to guide designations under the law. I will carefully review the evidence provided by State Department experts, as well as the recommendations of USCIRF and any other available evidence in making these determinations. I look forward to continuing to engage with you, and with other members of the Committee, on how we can not only identify where violations of religious freedom are occurring, but also how we can work constructively to end them.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#200)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Internet freedom around the globe is waning as authoritarian states continue to suppress dissent, silence critics, and oppress populations through online censorship and repeated or prolonged internet shutdowns. Current programmatic efforts in Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East aim to combat this issue.

a. How will you prioritize Internet Freedom within the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor bureau and across the Department?
b. Do you believe that internet shutdowns are a threat to human rights?

Answer:

With the support of Congress, the State Department has built a range of programmatic activities and policy initiatives that promote the ability of individuals to exercise their internationally recognized human rights online. We are deeply concerned by the growing use of government-imposed internet shutdowns, among other censorship tactics, that restrict the rights of individuals online. The Department, led by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, will continue to ensure that internet freedom is a policy priority through bilateral and multilateral channels, including via the Freedom Online Coalition, and providing grants to leading technologists and NGOs for programs to support the exercise of human rights.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#203)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Does the UN play a role in determining U.S. participation in military conflicts? Do you believe that a UN resolution creates a legal obligation for U.S. military involvement in resolving a foreign conflict, including under UN doctrine relating to the responsibility to protect civilians? Does a UN resolution serve as a substitute for an authorization of the use of force from the U.S. Congress?

Answer:

The UN does not play a role in determining U.S. participation in military conflicts. While a UN Security Council resolution may authorize states to use military force on the territory of a foreign state as a matter of international law, such resolutions would not obligate any state, including the United States, to do so and would not provide a basis under domestic U.S. law for such a use of force, which must still either be authorized by the U.S. Congress or by the President under the President's Constitutional authority under Article II. The "responsibility to protect" does not create a legal obligation to protect civilians in a foreign conflict.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#206)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There have been a number of proposals to increase the size of the UN Security Council, to include the expansion of the number of permanent members of the Council.

a. How do you believe U.S. interests would be affected by the expansion of the Council's size or by the addition of more permanent members?
b. Changes in the composition of the Security Council would require an amendment to the UN Charter, which in turn would require the advice and consent of the Senate. Do you commit to consulting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in advance of pursuing any proposals to change the composition of the Council?

Answer:

A reformed Security Council that is representative, effective, and relevant is in the best interest of the United States and of all UN member states. Such a Security Council would be well-positioned to address some of the greatest threats to international peace and security today. I support a modest enlargement of the Security Council for both permanent and non-permanent members, provided it does not diminish its effectiveness or its efficiency, and does not alter or expand the veto.

If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress in advance of any changes to the composition of the Council.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#209)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How will you measure success in implementing management reforms at the UN?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states. This means doing all we can to ensure that the UN is using resources efficiently and effectively -- eliminating waste, demanding zero tolerance for any corruption, strengthening whistleblower protections and transparency and accountability, and ensuring other countries pay their fair share – in a transparent manner. We will share information on a regular basis about where we see the UN making satisfactory progress in these areas and where additional efforts are needed.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#210)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What policies need to be implemented to maintain fiscal responsibility and accountability within the UN system?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that international organizations within the UN System are accountable and responsible for the U.S. taxpayer resources that they receive. This includes continuing the long-standing U.S. policy of promoting budget discipline. I will also work to ensure that international organizations in the UN System adhere to best management and oversight practices in the areas of protecting whistleblowers, addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, promoting zero tolerance for corruption, and ensuring financial and managerial transparency.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#213)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

213. The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has been unfairly targeted by the Court. The Trump Administration took a harder line on US involvement in the ICC after the Prosecutor opened an investigation into U.S. service members.

a. Does the Biden Administration support the United States becoming a party to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court?
b. Under what circumstances should the United States cooperate with the ICC?
c. Do you believe that the ICC should be investigating alleged actions of US service members and officials in Afghanistan? If yes, please explain.
d. Do you believe that the ICC has jurisdiction to investigate or bring to trial United States service members, officials, or other United States citizens? If yes, please explain.
e. Do you believe that the ICC should be investigating a case involving alleged Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories? If yes, please explain.
f. Do you believe that the ICC has jurisdiction to investigate or bring to trial Israeli service members, officials, or other Israeli citizens? If yes, please explain.
g. Do you believe the ICC's reputation has been diminished by recent attempts to prosecute United States and Israeli nationals? If no, please explain.
h. Do you believe that an ICC prosecution of United States services members and public servants would deny those U.S. citizens fundamental due process protections to which all Americans are guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, such as a right to trial by jury? If no, please explain.
i. Do you believe the United States has an obligation to protect U.S. citizens who have served or are currently serving in Afghanistan against criminal prosecution by the ICC? If yes, as Secretary of State, what specific actions would you take to ensure that US service members, officials, and citizens are not subject to ICC prosecutions? If no, please explain.
j. Beyond the ICC, what international accountability mechanisms do you support? Please provide examples of special courts or tribunals which have worked well as well as examples of special court or tribunals which did not work well.
k. What is your vision for the Office of Criminal Global Justice's role in the Department of State?

Answer:

The United States shares the goals of the ICC in promoting accountability for the worst crimes known to humanity. At the same time, the United States has always objected to any attempt by the ICC to investigate U.S. personnel. We are following the court's work on Afghanistan closely and will vigorously protect U.S. personnel from the ICC. We are also following the court's work on the Israeli/Palestinian situation. While we have disagreements with the ICC's actions relating to the

Afghanistan and Israeli/Palestinian situations, we do not think imposing financial sanctions and visa restrictions on officers of the court was an appropriate or effective strategy. We understand that the ICC has recently undergone an independent review, and that member states may be considering various reforms to help the court better achieve its core mission of punishing and deterring atrocity crimes. We think this is a worthwhile effort. Our priority will be to protect U.S. personnel with respect to the ICC, but there may be exceptional cases where we consider cooperating with the court as we sometimes have in the past. We will have to weigh the interests at stake on a case-by-case basis.

Since World War II, the United States has played a leading role in promoting accountability for atrocities. The ICC is part of an array of efforts, including regional and domestic efforts, to provide accountability. The best prospects for accountability rest with the strengthening of domestic institutions and political will. I will ensure that the U.S. government continues to pursue international accountability through the full range of available and effective mechanisms.

The Office of Global Criminal Justice plays a critical role in supporting the U.S. government's efforts to ensure accountability and justice for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. I will work to ensure the office is appropriately staffed to play this vital role.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#215)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As of submittal of these questions, there are approximately 26 million refugees globally, including "5 million refugees under the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA)." To address this challenge in 2020, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) employed 17,324 staff across 135 countries, and UNWRA employed 27,841 staff.

a. Why does UNWRA require 10,000 more staff to advocate its regional mission than UNHCR to advance its global mission?
b. Do you believe UNWRA should be absorbed by UNHCR, given UNHCR's efficiency and infrastructure?
c. If confirmed, will you commit to working with the appropriate Congressional committees prior to any consultations for resumption of U.S. contributions to UNRWA?

Answer:

President Biden has pledged to restore U.S. economic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. UNRWA's mandate is set by the UN General Assembly and is to provide essential services directly to Palestinian refugees in the five regions it covers. Unlike UNHCR, which works to deliver most services to refugees through sub-partners and those partners' many employees in the field, UNRWA and its employees provide the services directly to beneficiaries. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress, including prior to resumption of U.S. funding to UNRWA. We look forward to engaging with UNRWA on meaningful and sustainable reforms to their operations.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#218)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States is the single largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

a. Do you believe that any country, including the United States, should pay more than 25% of the peacekeeping budget?
b. What is your position on repayment of current U.S. peacekeeping arrears?
c. Are there any specific steps you believe the UN should take to reduce the overall size of the UN peacekeeping budget? If so, what are they?
d. Are there any specific UN peacekeeping missions you would support reducing or terminating? If so, what missions do you believe should be reduced or terminated?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to take the steps necessary to allow the United States to meet our financial obligations, including addressing the substantial level of arrears that have accumulated over the past four years and the 25% cap on peacekeeping funding. I will also ensure the United States continues to evaluate each mission with a view to making missions as efficient and effective as possible, while also providing them with the necessary resources to fully implement their mandates. I am committed to reviewing peacekeeping policies and reforms in annual budget negotiations, increasing the efficiency of missions, and assessing the possibility of reducing or closing missions when conditions allow.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#220)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, the Palestinians threatened action to circumvent ascension protocols and seek a change in their status at the UN.

a. Do you believe this action promotes the Middle East peace process and serves the needs of the Palestinian people?
b. In your view, what consequences should the Palestinians face if they continue to attempt to gain membership in UN agencies?

Answer:

I believe that efforts by the Palestinians to join international entities are premature and counterproductive. There are no shortcuts to Palestinian statehood outside direct negotiations with Israel.

If confirmed, I will continue to make clear, both with the parties and with international partners, that the only realistic path forward to end this conflict is through direct negotiations aimed at achieving a two-state solution.

If confirmed, I will support the implementation of Congressional provisions related to this matter regarding Palestinian attempts to gain membership as a state in UN bodies.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#224)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I introduced the STRATEGIC Act to advance a comprehensive U.S. policy for competition with China. The legislation authorizes the Office of UN Integrity that the Trump Administration stood up within the Bureau of International Organizations.

a. If confirmed, would you support the sustainment and authorization of such an office?
b. Additionally the STRATEGIC Act establishes a Special Envoy for Integrity within the UN System. If confirmed, will you appoint a Special Envoy for UN Integrity to examine malign influence in UN elections and UN bodies? If not, why not?

Answer:

We have seen that when America walks away from the UN, others fill the void. When we forfeit our seat at UN bodies and agencies, we lose influence and leadership and others will seek to occupy the space. We will use our re-engagement in the UN system to push back against efforts by China and others to influence and reshape international norms and systems, including at the UN. I am currently reviewing policies and resources across the Department, including within the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, to ensure we are postured to restore American leadership and partnerships in multilateral and international organizations as well as to meet the challenges that China poses to the international norms and the UN system. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#227)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the Peace Corps evacuated roughly 7,000 American citizens from posts abroad. Mission China was scheduled to close in 2021, but due to the uncertain nature of the virus, was closed early.

a. Do you believe that the Peace Corps should re-enter China?
b. Do you believe China meets the criteria for a country to establish or maintain such a mission?
c. The Peace Corps began deploying small cohorts of volunteers to countries that had begun to open in early 2021. How will you work with the Director of the Peace Corps to ensure a safe re-entry for American Citizens as they return to service?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration will ensure that the State Department thoughtfully reviews this question with Peace Corps leadership, ensuring that our top priority remains the health and safety of U.S. volunteers. The administration will ensure that the Peace Corps maintains rigorous and careful criteria for opening and maintaining country missions. Our embassies will work closely with Peace Corps country programs to review local conditions, assess potential risks to volunteers, and enact appropriate measures to minimize COVID-19 risk. We will take an evidence-based approach to determining when and how volunteers can return to service.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#231)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Turkish government is currently targeting three U.S. Consulate employees with a variety of baseless charges. How will you work to ensure that these charges are dropped against these U.S. government employees?

Answer:

The Department of State continues to press the Government of Turkey on behalf of Mission Turkey's three wrongfully accused locally employed (LE) staff, including by supporting their legal cases and by calling for their releases and exonerations. Senior Department and Mission Turkey officials have publicly and privately condemned the unjust prosecution and conviction of these employees in discussions with senior Turkish officials and continue to call for the swift release of the employee who remains in detention, including during joint bilateral U.S.-Turkey working groups on judicial issues. We continue to consult with our wrongfully detained LE staff and their families, who remain appreciative of private USG advocacy for these cases. We have been respecting their concerns that public USG statements are more likely to damage than assist their pursuit of exoneration and release.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#233)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Recently, due to a vacancy, the Special Coordinator for Tibet was filled by the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. In past practice, the Special Coordinator was filled by the Under-Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights. If confirmed, do you pledge to fill the Special Coordinator position at the level of Under-Secretary? Do you pledge to fill the position in a timely manner once a confirmed Under Secretary is in place?

Answer:

I am fully committed to appointing a United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in a timely manner and at the level which will most effectively advance the objectives of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019. If confirmed, I will work with the Special Coordinator to promote Tibetans' human rights and fundamental freedoms and to preserve Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic identity.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#249)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Countries that receive a Tier 3 rating in the TIP Report are subject to non-humanitarian, non-trade related foreign aid restrictions. The President has the option of exercising a national security waiver for countries who receive Tier 3 status. Since 2004, successive presidents have used the waiver, either partial or full, for a host of countries.

a. How effective do you believe these aid restrictions are in influencing countries to improve their human trafficking policies?
b. What is the impact of granting national security waivers on the effectiveness of the aid restrictions and the fight against human trafficking?

Answer:

Presidents have imposed these restrictions to motivate governments of Tier 3 countries to make more significant efforts to meet the TVPA's minimum standards for combating human trafficking. I see this powerful tool working: many governments who have faced restrictions take the issue more seriously. I also believe the United States must balance the need to hold these governments accountable to combat human trafficking against other critical foreign policy priorities, where waiving restrictions to allow for the continuation of assistance promotes the purposes of the TVPA or is otherwise in our national interest. These restrictions are one of many tools Congress has provided us to press governments to improve their efforts to combat trafficking in persons. I will make recommendations to the President on the Tier 3 restrictions and waivers based on the facts on the ground in each country and what would most effectively lead to improvements.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#250c and #250d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:
The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (PL 114-17) ("INARA") requires the President to provide to Congress the text and related materials of any agreement with Iran relating to the nuclear program of Iran within five days of reaching the agreement. Additionally, INARA stipulates that the administration certify that such an agreement is not "inimical to or constitute an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security."

c. What is your definition of "an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security"?
d. Would a resurgent Iranian ballistic missile program constitute "an unreasonable risk to common defense and security"?

Answer:

Whether any new agreement related to Iran's nuclear program "does not jeopardize the common defense and security, [and] provides an adequate framework to ensure that Iran's nuclear activities permitted thereunder will not be inimical to or constitute an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security," would need to be assessed based on the facts and circumstances of that particular agreement. Working to address Iran's continued development and proliferation of ballistic missiles remains a significant national security priority. In close coordination with our allies and partners, the Biden administration will deter and counter Iran's destabilizing activities and vigorously pursue talks on these critical issues.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#251)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In recent years, China has become Iran's preeminent oil and trading partner, providing Iran with crucial technological support to help develop its energy resources and other forms of infrastructure. In June 2020, China and Iran allegedly entered into a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', which includes a maximum investment of $400 billion to improve Iran's oil, gas, and transportation infrastructure.

a. What impact does Chinese economic investment have on the efficacy of the international sanction regimes against Iran? What gains does China receive from such investment?
b. How would the Chinese government, or Chinese-based companies, benefit from the lifting of U.S. sanctions against Iran?
c. How does the United States drive a wedge between or shape CCP-Iranian relations?
d. Beyond economic considerations, China and Iran have also furthered their strategic and defense cooperation. China, and Chinese-based entities, are known to have supplied Iran's missile, nuclear, and conventional weapons programs. How does Chinese support to the development of Iran's nuclear program impact U.S. interests and objectives with respect to Iran?
e. The People's Liberation Army's presence in Djibouti, coupled with Chinese investments across the Red Sea region, have prompted growing concern about malign Chinese influence in the Middle East and North African region. How do you plan to contend with the growth of Chinese commercial and strategic expansion, including its coercive economic statecraft?
f. Is there a strategy for engagement when it comes to Chinese cooperation with U.S. partners and allies in the region? What messages do you plan to send them? What tools do you see as being at your disposal to thwart nefarious Chinese ambitions in the region, and in what context would you be willing to deploy them?

Answer:

The President is committed to ensuring as broad a multilateral coalition as possible to address Iran's nuclear program and destabilizing activities. That will mean seeking to work with China, which has close ties to Iran, and whose companies continue to transact with Iran notwithstanding U.S. sanctions. Competition defines our relationship with China. In the past, however, China has been cooperative in efforts to constrain Iran's nuclear program as it should have no interest in seeing Iran develop a nuclear weapon and in the profoundly destabilizing impact that would have in a region upon which China depends for its oil imports. On the economic front, the last few years have seen decreased trade between China and Iran due to U.S. sanctions. The China-Iran Comprehensive

Strategic Partnership appears substantial on paper, but there are doubts about how concretely the proposed 25-year agreement will be implemented. Working with our allies and partners, using sanctions and other means at our disposal, the administration will seek to pressure China and other countries not to take steps vis-a-vis Iran that threaten our interests.

Enhancing our alliances and partnerships through diplomatic, development, and security initiatives is vital as some countries in the region expand their cooperation with China. I look forward to reviewing and advancing our strategies to protect and secure U.S. interests in the region and will use all tools at our disposal to outcompete China.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#258)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

At great cost, the United States has worked to support a sovereign independent Iraq, reframe the US-Iraq bilateral relationship, and foster regional stability.

a. How do you plan to continue to further U.S. interests in Iraq?
b. What are your priority lines of effort linked to U.S. national security interests?
c. What role will institutional reform and anti-corruption efforts play in this strategy?
d. What role will countering Iranian influence play in this strategy?
e. How do you plan to address the presence of Iranian-backed militias?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration supports a strategic partnership with a stable, democratic Iraq. The administration will be a steady, reliable partner that supports Iraq's anti-corruption and economic reform efforts, helps it improve regional relationships, provides humanitarian assistance, backs efforts to control militias and counter Iran's malicious activities, and advises and assists Iraqi counterterrorism forces.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#259)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Critics point to President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 as one of the biggest errors of his presidency. The Obama Administration departed without securing a Status of Forces Agreement, allowed the Iraqi Security Forces to atrophy, did not adequately address the abuses of the Maliki government, and failed to address Sunni disenfranchisement that ultimately set conditions for the Islamic State's unchecked movement across the Iraqi border in 2014.

a. Please provide your perspectives on the root causes of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq as they related to U.S. policies, views on current troop levels as they relate to State Department objectives, and recommendations on key State Department initiatives for preventing an Islamic State resurgence.
b. How appropriate are current bilateral diplomatic agreements (exchange of notes) for a sustained diplomatic and security cooperation mission?

Answer:

There were many factors that led to ISIS' rise. The Syrian Civil War opened a battleground that attracted terrorists from across the world to Iraq's doorstep. ISIS has roots in Iraq, but it was in Syria that it became a conventional force, capable of attacking a sovereign state. At the same time, Iraq's government did not adequately address the concerns of minority communities, which created a permissive environment for ISIS' brutal offensive that captured significant Iraqi territory in 2014-15.

The United States will continue to lead the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS to ensure that ISIS cannot reconstitute its strength. The 2014 exchange of diplomatic notes is an adequate basis for our continued support to Iraq.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

U.S. Syria policy is broadly governed by UNSCR 2254 and associated sanctions regimes. Does Bashar al Assad's expanded military control alter the prospects of a political settlement under UNSCR 2254? Do we need a new construct for Syria policy?

Answer:

A political settlement must address the underlying causes that led to nearly a decade of civil war. The Biden-Harris administration will use the tools at its disposal, including economic pressure, to push for meaningful reform and accountability, and will continue to support the UN's role in negotiating a political settlement.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#263c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is the linkage between U.S. troop levels in Syria, countering the Islamic State, blunting Iranian designs, influencing Turkish and Russian Syria calculus, and associated impacts on political UNSCR 2254 discussions?

Answer:

While the Assad regime controls most of Syria, its authority is weak, and some of the most economically productive territory – namely the northeast – remains outside of its control. The Biden-Harris administration will renew U.S. efforts to promote a political settlement to end Syria's terrible civil war, in close consultation with our allies, partners, and the UN and by making sure U.S. diplomats are back at the table. We will use the tools at our disposal, including economic pressure, to push for meaningful reform and accountability, and will continue to support the UN's role in negotiating a political settlement pursuant to UNSCR 2254. A political settlement must address the underlying causes that led to nearly a decade of civil war.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Nominee Antony J Blinken by
Senator Jim Risch (#263d)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What relative effect would a U.S. troop withdrawal have on U.S. influence over future negotiations?

Answer:

There is no military solution to end the war in Syria in a sustainable manner. The only path forward is a negotiated political settlement.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#264)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act is intended to prevent rehabilitation of the Assad regime, seek accountability for the regime's atrocities, and advance a political solution to the conflict. Please provide your views on the role of this legislation in furthering U.S. objectives in Syria.

Answer:

The Caesar Act has been a powerful tool reinforcing the regime's exclusion from the international community and denying Assad the resources he and his regime use to commit mass atrocities against the Syrian people. The Biden-Harris administration will continue to use the tools at our disposal, including the Caesar Act, to push for meaningful reform and promote accountability in Syria, and will continue to support the UN's role in negotiating a political settlement. There is no military solution to end the war in Syria. However, a premature withdrawal of U.S. troops in the Coalition to Defeat ISIS would undercut our goal of the enduring defeat of ISIS and contribute further to instability in Syria counter to our overall political objectives.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#272)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

How have the Obama Administration's decisions to place various holds on military aid to Egypt affected Egypt's relationship with Russia and the United States? More broadly, is FMS or FMF an effective lever to modify conduct?

Answer:

While Egypt regularly cites previous and current holds on FMF as a driving factor in its diversification strategy, it is not the sole reason. Egypt has a discreet policy of diversifying sourcing for its defense articles, including procurements not just from Russia, but also European partners, and to a lesser extent China and India. Egypt is a valuable partner in our counterterrorism and regional security efforts, and FMF directly supports these efforts. We seek a cooperative relationship with Egypt, but Egypt must meaningfully address our concerns, as well as those of Congress, over Russian arms procurements, and specific cases of alleged human rights violations.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#278)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The United States provides very limited support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC) in Yemen primarily focused on countering the threats from Houthi ballistic missiles and drones. A Biden Administration has telegraphed that it would end U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

a. How would limiting support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen impact regional security?
b. How would a reduction in U.S. support impact U.S. efforts to curb SLC civilian casualty rates?
c. How do you anticipate such a move would affect UN-led peace efforts in Yemen and U.S. ability to influence the prospects for a lasting, and inclusive settlement in Yemen?

Answer:

Ending U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition, as President Biden has promised to do, must be part of a larger effort to end the Yemen war itself. We will help Saudi Arabia defend itself against Houthi attacks, but its military campaign has failed to improve regional security while Iran has further entrenched itself in Yemen. We recognize the efforts the U.S. military has made to help Saudi Arabia reduce civilian casualties and will consider how best to advance this goal as U.S. support changes, while pursuing the ultimate goal of reducing civilian casualties by ending the fighting through a negotiated solution. As for the UN process, we look forward to redoubling U.S. efforts to support UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in his work. It is too early to say how this necessary policy change will affect UN peace efforts. Our hope is that an end to U.S. military support, coupled with a renewed commitment to U.S. diplomacy and expanded humanitarian access, can help create conditions for the parties to reach a compromise that has so far eluded them.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#286)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In October 2020, then-candidate Biden suggested that, "under a Biden-Harris Administration, we will reassess our relationship with the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia], end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen." How do you anticipate ending U.S. support to the Saudi-led coalition will affect U.S. efforts to reach a comprehensive and inclusive settlement in Yemen?

Answer:

Ending U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition will be a critical component of the Biden administration's objective of seeing the war in Yemen end in a comprehensive and inclusive settlement. Convincing all sides to return to negotiations will require using our leverage with those parties, including the coalition. The conflict has devolved into a humanitarian disaster, the resolution of which demands revitalized diplomatic efforts in place of support for military campaigns. Mindful of regional threats and an escalation of attacks, we will continue to support our Saudi partner to defend its own territory.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#287)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the U.S. interests in ending the conflict in Yemen? Can you ensure U.S. equities will be taken into account in a final settlement if the United States reduces, restricts, or cuts off support to the Saudi-led coalition (SLC)?

Answer:

The United States' national interest will guide our policy in Yemen. A unified, stable Yemen free from foreign influence – especially that of Iran is in our national interest. President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. military support for the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen, where the conflict has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, the war has caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war. We will work to ensure counterterrorism efforts in Yemen continue, as we end support for Coalition efforts in Yemen.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#288)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe UNSCR 2216 properly reflects the current context in Yemen? Will the new Administration seek to modify this UNSCR?

Answer:

I commit to working with allies in the region, UN Security Council members, the UN Special Envoy, and Congress to see how we can best re-energize the peace process. UNSCR 2216 is an important starting point, passed by unanimous consent in 2015 with only the Russian Federation abstaining. UNSCR 2216 reminds us that the Houthis are the aggressor in the war, established a targeted UNSC arms embargo for Yemen, and points to President Hadi as the head of the legitimate government of Yemen.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#296)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What means can the United States employ to get the Houthis to engage in peace talks in good faith and reduce interference in aid operations?

Answer:

The Biden administration will not hesitate to pressure the Houthis to curb their abuses and negotiate to end the war. We are currently exploring all options we and others have to push the Houthis to engage constructively with UNSE Griffiths, in conjunction with Griffiths' team and our partners in the region. The Houthis are violent actors, whose leadership should be held accountable for their actions. They violently seized control of Yemen's capital, continue to attack nonmilitary targets inside Saudi Arabia, abuse the human rights of Yemenis under their control, thwart the provision of humanitarian aid, accept illicit support from Iran, and have held Americans against their will, with one dying while unjustly held.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#304)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Despite efforts to the pivot to the Pacific, competition with China must also occur outside the Indo-Pacific region and on a global scale. China's Belt and Road initiatives are prospering in Africa, South Asia, and are making lasting inroads in the Middle East.

a. Given a likely diminished U.S. commitment to the Middle East under a Biden administration, how do you plan to contend with the growth of Chinese strategic expansion?
b. How does the United States remain the partner of choice in the Middle East given CCP encroachment and lack of Chinese focus on human rights issues?

Answer:

China seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and drive wedges between the United States and our longtime partners. Chinese economic activity and technology transfers – coupled with a corresponding but still smaller-scale expansion of its military footprint and collection capabilities – strengthen Chinese influence across the region. These actions put U.S. influence – military, diplomatic, and economic – at risk. I will work with the Department of Defense, other key national security agencies, and Congress to develop a balanced set of tools to address China's involvement in the Middle East and demonstrate that the United States can outcompete China and remain the partner of choice in the region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#308)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

As Secretary of State, you would have purview over the Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation (SRAR). On February 29 of 2019, SRAR brokered an agreement with the Taliban to reduce U.S. forces in exchange for Taliban counterterrorism commitments, agreements to reduce violence, and enter into an intra-Afghan dialogue. In November, the Trump Administration reduced troop levels to approximately 2,500.

a. What is your understanding of the Taliban's compliance with their commitments?
b. Does the Taliban's record of compliance warrant further troop withdrawals below 2,500?
c. Ongoing intra-Afghan negotiations will likely determine whether Afghanistan remains an Islamic republic or is turned into an Islamic emirate. What are the risks to U.S. interests linked to the outcomes of the intra-Afghan negotiations?
d. Troop withdrawals have reduced the Afghan government's leverage in negotiations with the Taliban. How can the State Department and Biden Administration provide additional leverage to the Afghan government in its ongoing negotiations?
e. What are your views on the UN delisting the Taliban?

Answer:

The United States will support the Afghanistan peace process with a robust and regional diplomatic effort, which will aim to help the two sides achieve a durable and just political settlement and permanent and comprehensive ceasefire – the best way to protect our counterterrorism interests. To this end, we are closely reviewing what the United States has negotiated regarding Afghanistan, including U.S. and Taliban commitments under the February 29, 2020, U.S.-Taliban Agreement, and especially whether the Taliban is living up to their commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan, and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders. No outcome is sustainable without protecting the gains that have been made by the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls, over the last 20 years. Throughout this process, we will consult closely with the Government of Afghanistan, NATO Allies and partners, and regional and international partners regarding a collective strategy to support a stable, sovereign, democratic, and secure future for Afghanistan.

1215

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#309)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

United States diplomatic presence and ability to move freely throughout Afghanistan is linked to Department of Defense presence and assets.

a. Given further troop reductions, how does the State Department maintain critical oversight of the millions of taxpayer funded assistance dollars that remain in the Afghanistan pipeline?
b. What conditions would a Biden Administration place on future assistance to Afghanistan?

Answer:

The Department continues to monitor U.S. Embassy Kabul's staffing to ensure the necessary flexibility and sufficient resources to advance U.S. interests, including supporting efforts to reach a political settlement, adjusting to the impact of troop withdrawals, and supporting Afghanistan's stability. Maintaining an appropriate diplomatic presence is essential to ensure that we can support our Afghan partners and that we have the staff to monitor our assistance and programming. We are closely reviewing our assistance to Afghanistan as it moves to more sustainable levels to ensure it meets the goals of promoting a stable, sovereign, democratic, and secure future for Afghanistan.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#313)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

More than half of our NATO allies have expressed concern over the growth of China's nuclear arsenal, and its unwillingness to join arms control talks. Do you share the concerns of these allies?

Answer:

China should exercise greater responsibility, transparency, and restraint with regard to its nuclear weapons arsenal. The United States will continue to work with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific to protect our security and interests while urging China to engage on nuclear risk reduction and arms control. The United States will also consult with NATO Allies about their concerns over the growth of China's nuclear arsenal and other activities that impact Transatlantic security.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#323a)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2019, NATO strongly supported the finding of the United States that Russia was in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty, and said that it was up to Russia to preserve the INF Treaty.

Do you agree with NATO's assessment that Russia violated the INF Treaty, and was responsible for its termination?

Answer:

I agree with NATO's August 2, 2019, statement that "Russia bears sole responsibility for the demise of the Treaty." The United States announced in 2014 that Russia was in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty. Despite six years of high-level U.S. and Allied engagement to persuade Russia to return to compliance with the treaty, Russia instead chose to deploy multiple battalions of its noncompliant SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missile. This was unacceptable. The United States will continue to work closely with our NATO Allies to deter and defend against the full spectrum of Russian military capabilities.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#323b)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I do not believe that it is possible to return to the INF Treaty without a new ratification by the Senate. Do you agree? Please explain. If you do not, do you commit to consulting with Congress before attempting to return to the treaty?

Answer:

As the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty and the agreement is no longer in force, it is not possible to return to it. I look forward to working with Congress and relevant agencies and departments on ways to create new arms control agreements that serve U.S. interests.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#323c)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Given the massive growth in numbers and capability of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces, I do not believe that any future treaty covering intermediate-range missiles is in the interests of the United States if it does not include China. Do you agree?

Answer:

China's large stockpile of intermediate-range missiles and growing nuclear arsenal threaten the United States and our allies and partners. Russia's deployment of multiple battalions of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in violation of the INF Treaty, leading to its demise, also threatens the United States and our allies and partners. I will consult with Congress, the relevant department and agencies, and U.S. allies and partners on how best to address those threats.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#324)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

I do not believe that it is possible to return to the Open Skies Treaty without a new ratification by the Senate. Do you agree? Please explain. If not, do you commit to consulting with Congress before attempting to return to the treaty?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would intend to consult with Congress about arms control efforts generally and efforts related to the Open Skies Treaty in particular.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#326)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons? Why or why not?

Answer:

The United States has joined with our NATO Allies in reaffirming "our commitment to the preservation and strengthening of arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation." NATO Allies also collectively reiterated their "opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as it does not reflect the increasingly challenging international security environment and is at odds with the existing nonproliferation and disarmament architecture."

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#327)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international non-proliferation and arms control agreements and arrangements. The United States signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 and is one of the most active member states in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's Preparatory Commission, as well as its largest financial contributor. We will continue to review the United States' posture with respect to the CTBT and engage with Congress on this matter.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#328)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to strengthening international nonproliferation and arms control agreements and regimes. We support the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), so long as key states participate and negotiations are conducted on the basis of consensus.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#329)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you support the United States joining the Arms Trade Treaty? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Obama administration transmitted the Arms Trade Treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification on December 24, 2016. The Trump administration informed the Treaty Depositary on July 15, 2019, that the United States did not intend to become a State Party to the Treaty and that the United States had no legal obligations arising from its signature. I support reviewing what the proper relationship of the United States should be to this Treaty.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#330)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Rafael Grossi, Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), recently stated that reviving the Iran nuclear deal would require a new agreement setting out how Iran's breaches of the deal should be reversed. I agree with Director Grossi's assessment. Do you?

Answer:

I agree with DG Grossi that Iran should reverse course and meet its JCPOA commitments. Iran is a long way from returning to full performance of its commitments under the JCPOA, and there are many steps in the process to getting there that the Biden administration will need to evaluate. The United States is therefore a long way from returning to the JCPOA. If Iran returns to full performance of its commitments, the United States would do the same in order to provide a diplomatic foundation for follow-on discussions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#337)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Trump Administration has pushed our allies to contribute more to host nation support activities, expanding the scale of their expected contribution and the scope of activities that are expected to be covered. Some of these allies apparently believe the Biden Administration will not seek any additional contributions, and will return to status quo ante discussions of such topics.

Should Korea, Japan, Germany and others discard those considerations now? Are they off the hook for contributing more to support the deployment of U.S. forces?

Answer:

We intend to take a constructive approach to allied burden sharing, treating these as issues among friends with shared vital interests. As security costs more in the complexity of today's challenges, allies and partners can expect to be called on to invest more in our shared security. Mutually determining appropriate levels of host nation support is one element of modernizing and strengthening our alliances.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#354)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy be empowered to create and execute Department-wide public diplomacy strategies? If yes, how would you do so?

Answer:

We must restore the State Department's role as the leader of U.S. government public diplomacy and communications overseas. Public diplomacy is an essential tool for U.S. global leadership. We must continue to strengthen, modernize, and coordinate our public diplomacy resources to respond to an increasingly complex global information environment and to aggressive disinformation campaigns by malign actors such as China and Russia, who are dedicating significantly more resources than we are to public outreach and influence campaigns. In 2020, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy developed a Congressionally mandated Department-wide public diplomacy strategy that focuses on employing public diplomacy tools to achieve current foreign policy objectives, building long-term communities of allies and partners, and strengthening public diplomacy tools, skills, and capabilities. This strategy, which will continue to be updated annually, will align with and be informed by the upcoming 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#362)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

One troubling trend my staff and I have identified during our travels during the previous congress is that many of our diplomats are not getting out from behind embassy walls and meeting with the local population or even other diplomats. Frequently, we are told that the security requirements are too tight and sacrifice advancing U.S. interests for airtight security.

a. Does the inability of State Department diplomats to leave the embassies at which they are currently stationed put the Department at a strategic disadvantage?
b. Do Chinese, Russian, and Iranian diplomats face similar restrictions to those placed on U.S. diplomats?
c. Do you support getting our diplomats back outside posts? If yes, how so?
d. Do you intend to emphasize to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security your desire to do so?
e. Should security concerns always take precedence over the ability of our diplomats to operate abroad?
f. How should diplomacy be weighed in relation to security concerns, particularly regarding embassy security?

Answer:

Consistent in-person outreach remains essential to advancing U.S. foreign policy goals. While creative and effective pivots to virtual public diplomacy by our missions throughout the world have allowed us to continue to promote U.S. priorities abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to prioritize people-to-people engagement and relationships while taking into account a wide range of threats, the unique local circumstances at each post, and COVID-19 public health guidance. Advancement of U.S. strategic objectives inherently involves diverse types of risk, and taking well-considered risks is essential to our foreign policy. I am committed to reviewing the Department's current overseas operating posture and consulting with Congress and internal Department stakeholders such as Diplomatic Security to determine if current laws and our policies to mitigate operational risk should be modified.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#367)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Many of the Department's employees work in dangerous settings abroad, and their health and safety should be protected. However, diplomacy is an inherently dangerous profession and a "risk nothing" approach does not make for an effective foreign policy.

a. Do you believe that the Department has allowed too much of a "bunker mentality" to set in?
b. Do you believe that the Department should encourage, not discourage, personnel to get outside of the embassy walls and be more proactive diplomats?
c. Do you believe that the Department needs to adopt a culture of risk management as opposed to risk avoidance?

Answer:

Department personnel work around the world to promote American interests and advance U.S. foreign policy objectives, including in dangerous locations. People-to-people engagement and relationships are essential to our work, and we prioritize these interactions while taking into account a wide range of threats, the unique local circumstances at each post, and COVID-19 public health guidance. Advancement of U.S. strategic objectives inherently involves diverse types of risk, and taking well-considered risks is essential to our foreign policy.

If confirmed, I will review the current operating posture of Department personnel overseas and assess whether a "bunker mentality" is widespread and requires action to address. I would also want to consult with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security on how to strike the appropriate balance between enabling U.S. diplomats to engage outside of posts while ensuring their safety. Finally, I look forward to engaging with Department employees serving at all levels and in all capacities to determine whether any appropriate changes to the culture involving risk would help enhance our ability to carry out the mission of leading U.S. diplomacy and foreign policymaking to advance the interests of the American people.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#371)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you believe that the Global Engagement Center (GEC) has a vital role to play in our great power competition with Russia and China, and in countering our adversaries in Iran and North Korea?

Answer:

Authoritarian regimes continue to use disinformation campaigns, strategic corruption, and other coercive and corrupting tools to enhance their malign influence and to undermine and interfere in democracies. The GEC coordinates across the State Department with international partners, NGOs, and the private sector to identify, expose, and develop programs to defeat disinformation and propaganda by foreign states and terrorist organizations. The GEC's efforts are an important part of the work we must undertake with allies to define an affirmative, democratic global information space. If confirmed, I commit to meet with GEC leadership to identify any needs or resource requests that would enable it to grow within the Department and provide the GEC with the resources and authority it needs to succeed.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#392)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will you organize and mobilize the resources of the State Department to counter malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. Russia's involvement in the region is primarily through disinformation, military and equipment sales, and energy deals. The Department works with allies and partners and employs all available tools to compete with Russia in the hemisphere, including diplomatic engagement, technical exchanges, foreign assistance, and public diplomacy. Many foreign assistance programs promote the United States as the partner of choice. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#393)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, how will you organize and mobilize the resources of the State Department to counter malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Chinese government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. China's malign activities threaten hemispheric prosperity, security, and democracy. The Department works with allies and partners and employs a diverse range of tools to compete with China, including diplomatic engagement, technical exchanges, leveraging private investment, the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), public diplomacy, and U.S. security assistance that promotes the United States as the partner of choice. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#394)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Are China's growing commercial ties and investments in Latin America a security threat to the United States?

Answer:

The reality is that China is our most serious competitor, and competition with China is one of the central challenges that will define the 21st century. In Latin America, we will meet this challenge by working to ensure that American companies can compete on an even playing field, providing a meaningful alternative to China's economic approach, promoting entrepreneurship and fair practices. As the region recovers from COVID-19, we will look to build a resilient hemisphere that is less reliant on China or other extra-hemispheric actors.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#395)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

If confirmed, your responsibilities will include overseeing the activities of the Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Several ballot measures in the November 2020 elections involved the legalization of illicit narcotics in the United States, including a measure in Oregon legalizing the personal possession of cocaine, heroin, oxycodone and methamphetamine. Please explain your views on the impact these measures have on United States efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations.

Answer:

These ballot measures do not affect the United States' ability to fulfill its obligations under the relevant UN drug control and anticrime conventions, or to combat transnational criminal organizations (TCOs); however, they are concerning because they may reflect a trend that could be perceived as inconsistent with the treaty aims. Irrespective of these state-level initiatives, these drugs continue to be controlled at the federal level allowing federal authorities to pursue cases involving interstate or cross-border trafficking of illicit narcotics and cooperate internationally.

I will continue to support the Department of State's efforts to enhance our foreign partners' capacity to disrupt and dismantle TCOs and abate the flow of illicit narcotics into the United States. I will also continue to prioritize international cooperation against TCOs through the frameworks and tools provided by the relevant UN conventions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#396)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What are the implications of sanctions relief tied to JCPOA re-entry for Iran's malign activities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

I am aware of Iran's activity in the Western Hemisphere. I am committed to countering the threat posed by Iran, using the various tools at our disposal, including sanctions, and working in close coordination with our allies and partners. We are aware that the previous administration expanded sanctions significantly and will be carefully studying those sanctions, including in connection with a potential return to the JCPOA.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#397)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your assessment of the strategic threat China presents in the Arctic? If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to strengthen bilateral efforts with Canada to deter and compete with China in the Arctic region?

Answer:

Over the past decade, the PRC has pursued greater influence in the Arctic by increasing its soft power. It leverages investments in scientific research and critical infrastructure as it attempts to secure a foothold in the region. The Department of State takes declared PRC ambitions in the Arctic region seriously and is committed to working with Canada and other Arctic states on an effective strategy with respect to the Arctic region. We will review the current policy and determine if any adjustments are needed. We look forward to consulting with Congress.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#398)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What is your assessment of the strategic threat Russia presents in the Arctic? If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to strengthen bilateral efforts with Canada to deter and compete with Russia in the Arctic region?

Answer:

Russia's assertiveness poses a strategic challenge in the Arctic and requires the United States to strengthen engagement with Arctic allies and partners for our mutual security. Over the past decade, Russia has rebuilt Cold War-era bases, deployed novel missile systems, increased its icebreaker fleet, conducted provocative exercises to demonstrate Arctic power-projection, and established unlawful restrictions on navigation rights and freedoms along the Northern Sea Route. This has implications for both homeland and NATO defense. I will coordinate closely with Canada and other Arctic states to encourage shared assessments of threats and opportunities. The Department will also support efforts to modernize NORAD.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#400)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2008, Mexico enacted landmark judicial reforms moving from a closed inquisitorial system to an adversarial model, yet continues to face some challenges in implementation.

How can the United States best tailor support within the Merida initiative to ensure our assistance for the judicial sector is most effective in addressing U.S. interests?

Answer:

Bolstering Mexico's criminal justice system is an essential component of combating the transnational criminal organizations that threaten both of our countries and the region as a whole. U.S. support for Mexico's efforts to raise its federal and state institutions and personnel up to professional standards is increasingly guided by diagnostics and evaluations to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. assistance. The State Department is also coordinating closely with the U.S. interagency community to ensure that assistance efforts complement our law enforcement interest and efforts in Mexico. The Department is committed to working with Mexico on a range of issues in our mutual interest, including citizen security, rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#403)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the 2019 National Drug Threat Assessment, fentanyl and other highly potent synthetic opioids continue to be the most lethal category of illicit substances in the United States. The 2020 DEA report on fentanyl flows to the United States highlights that China remains the primary source of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances trafficked into the United States, increasingly through Mexico. Mexican transnational criminal organizations are producing increased quantities of fentanyl and cartels such as the Sinaloa and the New Generation Jalisco cartel are the primary trafficking groups responsible for smuggling fentanyl into the United States from Mexico.

a. If confirmed, how do you intend to communicate these concerns about fentanyl production and trafficking to the Mexican government?
b. What specific actions would you encourage Mexico to meaningfully tackle transitional criminal activities through its territory, including trafficking of illicit narcotics?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will raise with the Mexican government and any other relevant government the United States' deep concerns regarding the illicit trafficking and production of fentanyl as well as other drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin.

I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican government to ensure our law enforcement cooperation deepens across the board and works for the benefit of the United States and Mexico. Counternarcotics, particularly fentanyl production and trafficking, will be among the top priorities for these conversations.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#404)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In September 2019, then-(Acting) Assist. Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Michael Kozak described to this Committee how, despite years of programmatic successes, the U.S.-Central America Strategy had failed to muster the political will necessary for aid-recipient countries to effectively combat endemic corruption, economic protectionism, and rampant criminality that have generated wave after wave of illegal migration from the region.

a. Do you agree with his assessment?
b. Please explain how the Biden Administration will build sustained political will in Central America to tackle the push factors of illegal migration.

Answer:

Corruption is endemic in the region and stymies efforts at serious reforms. We recognize the ultimate solution for sustainably reducing irregular migration in and from the region is to work with civil society, the private sector, governments, and international partners to catalyze structural change to root out corruption, improve security, and increase economic opportunity in the region.

We will use all available tools, including visa restrictions to hold corrupt actors accountable and coordinating with the Department of Treasury on financial sanctions to send a strong message that governments must take anti-corruption efforts seriously. Just as we are committed to address governance issues at home, we will press for action from governments in the region. Increased political will is critical to achieving sustainable change in these countries, and we will use the tools at our disposal so that programmatic successes can lead to the outcomes we all seek in each of these countries.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#405)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Strategy for Engagement in Central America was designed to promote economic prosperity, security, and good governance in order to deter illegal migration from the region. Pursuant to that strategy, Congress has placed multiple conditions on aid to these countries.

a. To what extent have legislative conditions contributed to policy changes in the recipient nations?
b. How do you plan to incentivize needed reforms if the recipient countries fail to meet conditions set by Congress, and those failures prompt restrictions on assistance?

Answer:

Congress is an important partner in the State Department's foreign policy agenda. Regional leaders are attuned to Congressional attention to corruption and legislative conditions for the region, though their political will to carry out reforms has not always been strong enough. We will use the annual certification process later this year to encourage, and then review, policy changes in recipient countries and look forward to discussing our findings with Congress. I commit to working with Congress to ensure we utilize all available Congressional tools to maximum effect, ideally by working with these governments to improve and meet the conditions, and – simultaneously – to assure adequate flexibility for the Department to implement policies with the speed and agility that the challenges require.

If the countries are unable to meet the Congressional conditions, however, we will comply with Congressional requirements and use our full tool kit, including financial sanctions – in coordination with the Department of the Treasury – and visa restrictions to promote reform.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#406)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

President-elect Biden has proposed a four-year $4 billion strategy for Central America.

a. Can you describe the importance of concrete and verifiable benchmarks in any strategy toward the region and what these benchmarks would look like?
b. Can you describe the type of investment and specific reforms you are seeking from individual governments for this strategy to reduce illegal migration from the region? What is the off-ramp for this strategy?

Answer:

Concrete and verifiable benchmarks will be important to any strategy and should reflect both U.S. policy priorities and the needed reforms to address the root causes of irregular migration in Central America. Benchmarks must illustrate what is possible in the short-, medium-, and long-term. We will set clear milestones reflecting key U.S. priorities in the region and require data collection to demonstrate progress towards those goals. We will draw on that data to demonstrate the efficacy of approaches in use and make course adjustments as necessary. As we begin to consistently meet benchmarks, we can look to possible off-ramps.

We will invest – and ask our regional partners to invest – in programs to strengthen democratic governance, expand access to markets, improve education and productivity, and provide alternatives for youth as we catalyze structural change to root out corruption, improve security, and increase economic opportunity in the region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#407)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party have taken aggressive measures to silence and punish independent organizations and dissent. These measures include a "foreign agents law" and a special law on cybercrimes, among others. Can you describe what these repressive laws stipulate and how they violate fundamental freedoms essential for preserving democracy?

Answer:

The Nicaraguan National Assembly passed at least four repressive legal measures between October 2020 and January 2021. These measures are designed to prevent independent political parties and civil society groups, especially those speaking out against President Ortega, from receiving foreign funding (civil society); exercising their right to freedom of expression online, including on the topic of Nicaragua-related sanctions (the limited free press and much of the opposition); and those attempting to exercise their right to participate in democratic processes (barring from public office those deemed guilty of acts of "terror" by non-independent Nicaraguan courts). The measures impose severe penalties, including the possibility of life in prison and we see them as a direct affront to fundamental freedoms and democracy in Nicaragua.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#408)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Nicaraguan exports to the United States have increased by approximately 70 percent since the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) went into effect in 2006. DR-CAFTA requires important reforms of the domestic legal and business environment that encourage competitive business development and investment, protect intellectual property rights, and promote transparency and the rule-of-law in the trade partners.

a. Is it your assessment that Nicaragua has instituted reforms that promote transparency and the rule-of-law over the last 15 years since the trade deal has gone into effect?
b. Is Nicaragua abiding by its commitments to DR-CAFTA?
c. How has DR-CAFTA benefitted the government of Nicaragua?

Answer:

The President made three commitments to the American people on trade: re-orienting U.S. trade policy to put U.S. workers at the center; rebuilding U.S. alliances and working with allies; and using trade tools, with allies and partners, to combat climate change.

As noted, the Nicaraguan government has benefited from significantly increased exports to the U.S. as a result of DR-CAFTA. We will work with the Office of the United States Trade Representative to review whether the Government of Nicaragua is abiding by its commitments to the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), and work to ensure the Ortega regime respects those commitments or faces consequences. We are committed to anti-corruption efforts, challenging authoritarian governance, and standing up for the rights of all people, including the people of Nicaragua.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#409)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (PL 115-335) requires the United States to oppose any loan or financial or technical assistance by international financial institutions to the government of Nicaragua for a project in Nicaragua, except those provided to address basic human needs or to promote democracy in Nicaragua. In exercising that discretion, the Trump administration ensured that COVID assistance provided to Nicaragua in July 2020 did not flow to the government of Nicaragua, but rather to trusted non-governmental organizations. Do you commit to continue this practice as the Biden administration manages United States participation in international financial institutions?

Answer:

The Department will continue to comply with the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (PL 115-335) and ensure that any assistance helps the people of Nicaragua directly and not the central government.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#410)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the 2019 State Department's Report on Human Rights in Nicaragua, "there were numerous reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings" in response to the April 2018 pro-democracy protests, where the government's violent crackdown left at least 325 people dead, over 2,000 injured, hundreds illegally detained, tortured, and disappeared, and more than 80,000 exiled in neighboring countries. An Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) team concluded in July 2018 that the Nicaraguan security forces' actions could be considered crimes against humanity. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights describes Nicaragua as suffering from a "climate of widespread terror." If confirmed, would you support an investigation into serious human rights abuses and crimes against humanity committed by the Ortega regime?

Answer:

I condemn the ongoing campaign of repression and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Ortega regime. We are committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights and holding authoritarian regimes accountable throughout the hemisphere, including in Nicaragua. If confirmed, I would use the broad set of foreign policy tools available to advance the Department's human rights work.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#411)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In November 2019, the Organization of American States (OAS) High Level Commission on Nicaragua concluded that the government's actions "make the democratic functioning of the country impossible," in violation of Nicaragua's obligations under Article 1 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

a. If confirmed, what instructions would you give the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS to encourage greater international pressure on the situation in Nicaragua?
b. Should Nicaragua be suspended from the OAS?

Answer:

Given the worsening crisis in Nicaragua, we can do no less than keep all Inter-American options open. The Biden administration will continue to promote accountability for the regime's corruption and human rights abuses as well as advocate for free and fair elections. If confirmed, I would instruct our U.S. ambassador to the OAS to engage with member states across the hemisphere to apply stronger diplomatic pressure to ensure that democracy does not continue to falter in Nicaragua.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#412)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What direct role do foreign powers—particularly Russia and Cuba—play in Nicaragua? What are Russia's and Cuba's strategic objectives in Nicaragua?

Answer:

Russia and Cuba continue to build their influence and ties in Nicaragua, countering U.S. interests and priorities in the country, particularly related to democracy and the rights of Nicaraguans. If confirmed, I am committed to consulting with the intelligence community to assess further the role and strategic objectives of Russia and Cuba in Nicaragua. On that basis, we will determine what adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy to counter their influence. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#413)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

What strategies would you employ to improve the capacity of the democratic forces to coalesce and become a credible challenge to Ortega ahead of the November 2021 general elections?

Answer:

I will stand with the Nicaraguan people and for democracy. Our embassy in Managua and our staff in Washington will continue to work with civil society and the international community to support opposition voices in Nicaragua. A fractious opposition is a boon to the Ortega regime: we will encourage ongoing dialogue among all parties to find common ground in the interest of the Nicaraguan people and in support of democracy. It is past time for free and fair elections so the people of Nicaragua can turn the page on the corrupt and repressive Ortega regime.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#414)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

For decades, the Cuban government has harbored a number of U.S. fugitives of justice, including: Joanne Chesimard, on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey state trooper Werner Foerster in 1973; Ishmael LaBeet, convicted of killing eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972; and Charles Lee Hill, charged with killing New Mexico state policeman Robert Rosenbloom in 1971; among others. The government of Cuba continues to refuse Colombia's request to extradite members of the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) National Liberation Army (ELN) living in Cuba after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 60 others. These instances underscore how Cuban government support of the Maduro regime has created a permissive environment for international terrorists to live and thrive within Venezuela.

a. Does Cuban provision of food, housing, and medical care for these U.S. fugitives constitute support for international terrorism? If confirmed, do you commit to prioritizing the extradition of all fugitives from U.S. law enjoying safe harbor in Cuba? Should Cuba be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism (SST) while they continue to harbor U.S. fugitives? Would you advise establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba while it continues to provide safe harbor to fugitives from the U.S. justice system?
b. Does Cuba's refusal of Colombia's extradition request constitute support for international terrorism?
c. If confirmed, would you support Cuba's removal from the SST list without verifiable assurances that it would cease to foster a permissive environment for international terrorists in Venezuela?
d. Please describe your role in the State Department assessment that recommended the removal of Cuba from the SST list in April 2015.
e. Please list the specific assurances provided by the government of Cuba in relation to its removal from the list in 2015.

Answer:

If confirmed, I will carefully review the recent decision to designate Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, including the underlying rationale, and I will consult with the intelligence community and Congress on the way forward. Regarding diplomatic engagement, in the past, it has opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and discussions on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and the return of fugitives from justice. Cuba was removed from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list in 2015

following a thorough review. I look forward to engaging with Congress on this matter and welcome the input of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee members.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#415)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

During your last confirmation hearing before this Committee in November 2014, you testified that, "[a]t least in my judgment, unless Cuba is able to demonstrate that it is taking meaningful steps to move forward, I don't see how you move forward in the [bilateral] relationship." Within two weeks, President Obama announced a dramatic shift in U.S. policy towards Cuba.

a. Please provide a record of your guidance as Deputy Secretary of State in relation to the series of Cuba policy shifts that occurred between December 2014 and January 2017.
b. Please describe your involvement in the decision by President Obama to visit Cuba in March 2016.
c. Please explain your involvement in the September 2016 decision to name a United States Ambassador to Cuba.
d. Please describe the "meaningful steps" taken by the Cuban regime between November 2014 and March 2016 that merited President Obama's shift in Cuba policy.
e. Please describe the conditions under which you would recommend the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Answer:

Our Cuba policy will be governed by two principles. First, support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. Second, Americans – including Cuban-Americans – are the best ambassadors for freedom in Cuba. In 2015 and 2016, the United States made tremendous progress in advancing U.S. interests on the island, increasing support for civil society, and empowering a new class of Cuban entrepreneurs independent of the state. Most importantly, President Obama's policies of engagement strengthened family ties, increased cultural and educational exchanges, and empowered Cuba's private sector.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#416)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your November 2014 confirmation hearing, you said, "anything that might be done in the future on Cuba would be done in full consultation, with the real meaning of consultation, that I just alluded to, with this Committee." In a January 2015 hearing before this Committee, just three months later, you said that you "regret" not consulting members of the Committee during White House negotiations to normalize relations with Cuba. Specifically, you stated with regard to your confirmation hearing that, "I did not live up to the standard I set during that hearing," and that "I think that I could have done a better job in engaging with you and in consulting with you in advance, and I regret that."

If confirmed, do you commit to conduct meaningful consultations with me, my office, and the rest of the Committee before and during any negotiations with Cuba?

Answer:

We recognize there are many different views in Congress on what our approach to Cuba should be. We will consult with Congress on any potential actions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#417)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

There is well-documented evidence of Cuba's support for the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

a. Please describe the trajectory of Cuban involvement in Venezuela between November 2014 and January 2020.
b. Do you agree that Cuban military and intelligence support is the linchpin to Maduro's survival in Venezuela?
c. Please describe your views on the most effective approach to persuade the Cuban regime to play a more positive role in Venezuela.
d. If confirmed, how would you lead an international coalition of like-minded democracies to put pressure on Cuba regarding its involvement in Venezuela?
e. Is it in our nation's interests to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba before the Cuban government measurably and meaningfully reduces its presence in Venezuela?
f. Do you commit to the full and faithful implementation of the 1996 LIBERTAD Act?
g. Please describe your understanding of the conditions set by the LIBERTAD Act for the United States to normalize relations with Cuba.
h. Please describe your understanding of the role of military-controlled firms in the Cuban economy.
i. Is it in the national interest of the United States to facilitate or allow financial transactions that benefit military-controlled firms in Cuba? If so, how and why?
j. If confirmed, how will you work to ensure that U.S. public and private engagement in Cuba does not disproportionately benefit the Cuban military, intelligence, or security services or personnel at the expense of the Cuban people?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will work with the Department and the intelligence community to assess the role of Cuba in Venezuela and associated U.S. policies. With respect to resolving problems in Venezuela, I will work with likeminded allies to align our sanctions and diplomatic efforts toward those ends. We agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution for the situation in Venezuela. Our Cuba policy will be governed by two principles. First, support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. Second, Americans – including Cuban-Americans – are the best

ambassadors for freedom in Cuba. We recognize there are many different views in Congress on what our approach to Cuba should be. We will consult with Congress on any potential actions.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#418)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In February 2016, the United States Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) allowed the Cuban regime to register the Havana Club rum brand in the United States.

a. Please describe the economic windfall that this decision has had for the Cuban regime since 2016.
b. Should the U.S. Government rescind the 2016 OFAC license given to Havana Club rum?
c. What conditions and/or circumstances would need to be met before you would formally nominate a United States Ambassador to Cuba?

Answer:

I am committed to reviewing the current policy and associated Treasury Department policies with respect to Cuba. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this matter and others. I also welcome the input of Senate Foreign Relations Committee members.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#419)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

According to the State Department, in 2019, the government of Cuba maintained an estimated 50,000 medical personnel in more than 60 countries under conditions that represent forced labor. The United States, the United Nations, independent media outlets, and non-governmental organizations have all documented and called out the Cuban regime's exploitative and coercive practices toward its doctors participating in its overseas medical programs.

a. Can you describe your understanding of how Cuban doctors are forced to participate in the Cuban medical program, sent to a foreign country, and the conditions in which they are forced to live while participating?
b. Can you describe how these programs only serve to benefit the Cuban government at the expense of the Cuban people?
c. Do you consider the Cuban regime's overseas medical missions to be exploitative human trafficking efforts?
d. Do you commit to instructing United States embassies in countries that accept Cuban medical missions to communicate to host governments the realities of the forced labor practices employed by the Cuban regime?

Answer:

Support for human rights will be at the core of our efforts in Cuba. We will engage directly with the Cuban government to denounce abuses and call for reforms. Several countries and former Cuban medical professionals have publicly cited widespread abuse within the program, including passport confiscation by Cuban handlers, withholding of wages, restricting movement, and coercion, all of which violate and abuse internationally recognized worker rights. Most saliently, the host countries pay robust amounts for each doctor, while the doctors receive a small fraction. I am committed to reviewing our policy with respect to Cuban medical missions and to consulting Congress in that process.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#420)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In the Mais Medicos program, which ran from 2013-2018, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) facilitated the deployment of thousands of Cuban doctors to Brazil, some of whom subsequently alleged misconduct and abuse.

a. How should PAHO be held accountable for its role in this program?
b. If confirmed, do you commit to working to ensure PAHO implements necessary governance changes to ensure increased oversight of future projects or programs such as Mais Medicos?

Answer:

I commit to reviewing the issue and the U.S. government's current policy approach to determine if any adjustments are necessary. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this. The United States has engaged with PAHO leadership to increase PAHO's transparency and accountability and protect U.S. interests. The United States, with support from multilateral partners, proposed governance reforms for PAHO. PAHO's Directing Council approved the reform proposal in September 2020 by consensus. PAHO has been a key international partner in the fight against COVID-19, providing PCR tests, PPEs, and hundreds of trainings to the region. We look forward to continue engaging with PAHO to strengthen health care systems in the Americas and combat COVID-19.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#421)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The State Department's 2019 Human Rights Report for Cuba painted a dismal picture of human rights abuses by the Cuban regime, to include accounts of disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrests and detentions; denial of fair public trial; and political prisoners and detainees. The regime also has cracked down on freedom of expression, limited internet freedom, and restricted freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

a. Will you commit to calling out human rights violations by the Cuban government?
b. How will you work to support democratic activists and human rights defenders in Cuba?

Answer:

We are committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights throughout the hemisphere. Despite our shortcomings, human rights defenders around the globe continue to look to the United States for support against authoritarian regimes.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#422)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In President Obama's reversal of longstanding United States policy toward Cuba, the Castro regime released a U.S. intelligence agent in exchange for three Cuban agents which our United States agent helped to capture.

a. Do you believe this was a fair exchange?
b. Do you believe this man's sacrifice was served with the return of the agents he helped capture?

Answer:

Engagement opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce and on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and the return of fugitives from justice.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#423)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In 2014, when President Obama first announced his plans to normalize relations with the Castro regime, he said a presidential visit to Havana was "not in the cards." Then in December 2015, Obama expressed desire to visit Cuba but drew a "red line" declaring he would only visit Cuba if the government makes "progress on civil liberties," and that he was not "interested in validating the status quo."

a. Do you believe progress was made on civil liberties by the time of Obama's visit?
b. Do you believe the human rights situation in Cuba worsened during the period of normalization?

Answer:

The Obama administration's negotiations leading up to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations resulted in the Cuban government's release of 53 political prisoners and its commitment to expand Internet access. Today, nearly half of Cuba's population have cell phones and almost a quarter have internet access. Engagement opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and cooperation on law enforcement issues. During this period, we were effectively able to advance many U.S. interests on the island, including increasing support for civil society and empowering a new class of Cuban entrepreneurs independent of the state. Most importantly, President Obama's policies of engagement strengthened family ties between Cubans on the island and in the United States, increased cultural and educational exchanges for the Cuban and American people and strengthened Cuba's private sector.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#425)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Coca production in Colombia has been steadily increasing since 2013, reaching 212,000 hectares in 2019. In March 2020, the United States and Colombia announced a joint action plan to reduce coca cultivation and cocaine production by 50 percent by the end of 2023. The plan would make full use of all available tools, including rural development, interdiction, as well as manual and aerial eradication.

a. Would you agree that achieving this goal by 2023 would deliver significant health and security benefits for Americans here at home?
b. If confirmed, what tools and policies would you implement to ensure that our two nations meet this goal?
c. Please explain the level of prioritization you would give to the use of aerial eradication in order to achieve this goal by 2023.
d. Would you support the provision of United States technical assistance to Colombia for aerial eradication programs once Colombia has satisfied its domestic legal requirements to do so?

Answer:

Yes, I agree that achieving the 2023 goal will deliver significant health and security benefits for Americans by reducing the amount of cocaine flowing to the United States. We will continue to support an integrated security, counternarcotics, and rural development strategy in Colombia to combat illegal narcotics trafficking, provide licit alternatives to coca, and improve citizen security. I will stand with Colombian leaders to seek an end to drug violence, protect human rights, promote investment and trade, and support the fight against corruption. To meet our bilateral goal, Colombia must use all available tools, including a safe and effective targeted aerial eradication program.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#426)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Colombia is a critical United States ally in the Western Hemisphere. In 1997, the United States designated the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of displacements during the half century-long conflict, most of whom are still displaced today.

a. If confirmed, do you commit to keeping these entities listed as FTOs?
b. Please describe your understanding of the links between the Maduro regime and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN).
c. Please describe your understanding of the extent of Cuba's support for the ELN.

Answer:

In Colombia and elsewhere, the capacity to designate an entity as an FTO is an important tool of the United States. If confirmed, I will carefully review FTO designations, and I will consult with the intelligence community and Congress on the way forward. Maduro and his associates foster a permissive environment for the ELN and other terrorist groups to operate.

Members of the ELN traveled to Havana to conduct peace talks with the Colombian government in 2017. Citing peace negotiation protocols, Cuba has refused Colombia's requests to extradite 10 ELN leaders living in Havana after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 87 others.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#427)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, is the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela the result of political and security conditions in that country, or are they the cause of them?

a. Can the humanitarian crisis be resolved on Maduro's watch?
b. Please describe your understanding of Iran's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
c. Is it in the interests of Iran for the Maduro regime to end?
d. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Iranian influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

The corruption and repression of the illegitimate Maduro regime are responsible for the economic collapse of Venezuela and the resulting humanitarian crisis. As the economic and social conditions within Venezuela deteriorate due to Maduro's mismanagement, we have seen cooperation between Venezuela and Iran increase. Iran helps Maduro to evade sanctions and provides supplies to Venezuela on sanctioned Mahan aircraft. Instead of applying limited Venezuelan resources to respond to the humanitarian crisis, Maduro pillages state coffers to pay Iran for its alleged assistance and supplies. I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Iranian behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including in Venezuela, and determining if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#428)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of Russia's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
a. Is it in the interest of President Putin for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Russian influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

Russia aims to challenge close U.S.-Latin America ties through diplomatic, military, media, cyber, and commercial engagement. I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Russian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determining if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#429)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of Cuba's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime?
a. Is it in the interest of the Cuban regime for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Cuban influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

I will ensure the State Department works with the intelligence community to assess the role of Cuba in Venezuela and associated U.S. policies. As far as Cuba's interests, at a minimum, I understand Cuban military and intelligence services provide security, intelligence, and political support to Maduro and the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service and Special Action Forces. In turn, Cuba receives fuel and other resources from the Maduro regime. I intend to review within the Department and the interagency the next steps on this issue, in consultation with Congress.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#430)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your understanding of China's interests in the survival of the Maduro regime.
a. Is it in the interest of China for the Maduro regime to end?
b. If confirmed, what specific steps will you recommend as Secretary of State to diminish Chinese influence in Venezuela?

Answer:

China's use of coercive and corrupting tools of malign influence to undermine and interfere in countries, including Venezuela, is a concern for the United States and countries around the world. I am committed to reviewing the current policy and resources the Department has dedicated to address PRC behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including Venezuela. I will work with likeminded allies to align our efforts in Venezuela.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#431)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In a January 2019 editorial, you credited the Trump administration for isolating the Maduro regime, but criticized the alleged absence of a "comprehensive strategy" or a "Plan B if Mr. Maduro digs in or lashes out."

a. Please explain your comprehensive strategy to advance a peaceful transition in Venezuela.
b. Please explain your "Plan B if Mr. Maduro digs in or lashes out."
c. There have been more than a dozen failed attempts at negotiating with the Maduro regime. They have occurred in an environment of engagement during the Obama administration, and under the pressure of punitive measures implemented by the Trump administration.
d. Please describe the lessons learned from your tenure as Deputy Secretary of State in negotiating with the Maduro regime.
e. Please describe your views on the conditions under which there can be successful negotiations with the Maduro regime resulting in a peaceful transition to democratic rule in Venezuela.
f. Please explain how the United States could work more closely with the European Union—and specifically Spain—to increase economic pressure on Maduro.
g. If confirmed, do you commit to not supporting or promoting negotiations without previous and meaningful behavior change by the Maduro regime?
h. Do you commit to not settling for inadequate conditions under which free and fair presidential, legislative, and local elections would be conducted?

Answer:

I understand the pain the current crisis in Venezuela is inflicting on Venezuelans and their families. I am committed to: (1) supporting Temporary Protected Status as appropriate for Venezuelans already in the United States; (2) addressing the humanitarian situation affecting millions of Venezuelans; (3) targeting measures at illegitimate Maduro regime officials and their cronies involved in corruption and human rights abuses; and (4) restoring democracy in Venezuela through free and fair elections and aiding in the country's long-term recovery. I will seek to work with partners like the European Union and Spain to seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the unconditional release of political prisoners, and implement sanctions against Venezuelan officials credibly accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

Recent reports that the Biden-Harris administration would immediately open talks with the illegitimate Maduro regime are not correct. No such decision has been made. I agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution to the problems in Venezuela. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue. I will ensure that the overriding goal of the United States must be to press for a peaceful, stable, democratic outcome in Venezuela, through free and fair elections and to help the Venezuelan people rebuild their lives and their country.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#433)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, the General Secretariat of the OAS raised concerns about the failure by the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take swift action following a UN report documenting evidence that Nicolas Maduro and senior members of the regime ordered or contributed to what amounted to crimes against humanity.

Do you support the ICC opening a formal investigation into allegations that the government of Nicolas Maduro committed crimes against humanity?

Answer:

President Biden has been clear that he believes Maduro is a dictator. The reports of the OAS General Secretariat and the UN Fact Finding Mission documented human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture. The ICC Prosecutor stated on December 14, 2020, that there is a reasonable basis to believe that Maduro regime authorities committed crimes against humanity. The ICC Prosecutor expects to determine in 2021 whether to open a full investigation. The Biden administration will seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the release of political prisoners, promote accountability, and implement appropriate sanctions against Venezuelan officials credibly accused of corruption or human rights abuses.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#434)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In December 2020, U.S. Southern Command Commander, Navy Admiral Craig S. Faller stated that, "We are seeing growing Iranian influence in [Venezuela] to include the Quds force, which is alarming and concerning, and some weapons ties … It's not just oil shipments. It's arms shipments as well … We saw an uptick in that this year. We're watching the rate of change very carefully to see if it connects to any other Iranian malfeasance around the globe."

a. Please describe your understanding of Iranian influence in Venezuela?
b. To what extent are Iran and Venezuela working together, and what does each country have to gain from the partnership?
c. What security risks does Iranian presence in Venezuela present for the U.S. and the Western Hemisphere more broadly?
d. What are the intentions of Iran-backed Hezbollah in Venezuela?

Answer:

President Biden has been clear that he believes Maduro is a dictator, and we are under no illusions about the challenges the Iranian regime poses to U.S. security interests as well as to our friends and partners. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Iranian behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including Venezuela, and determining if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#435)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Foreign maritime operators continue to facilitate tanker travel to Venezuela despite U.S. sanctions and employ new strategies to avoid detection. At least 17 oil tankers have traveled to Venezuela in recent months, facilitating crude exports to Cuba, China, India, Malaysia, and Spain.

a. If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to prevent Venezuela from evading sanctions through Iranian operators?
b. Do you believe the Venezuela crisis poses the greatest national security threat in the Western Hemisphere? Where does Venezuela fall on your list of priorities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

Preventing sanctions evasion requires constant and well-coordinated vigilance. I will ensure all relevant bureaus and offices in the State Department work together and cooperate closely with interagency partners and like-minded countries to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps to prevent the illegitimate Maduro regime, and all those who enable the regime including Iran, from evading U.S. sanctions. I look forward to consulting with Congress on how we can do so most effectively. The illegitimate Maduro regime enables criminal and terrorist networks and openly cooperates with many malign actors. I believe this poses a serious threat to U.S. national security.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#436)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please explain your understanding of how the Maduro regime operates as a narco-terrorist regime. Can you describe the role of the Venezuelan military in narcotics trafficking? Can you explain the relationship between the Maduro regime and United States-designated foreign terrorist organizations, FARC and ELN? Do you believe the United States should negotiate with narco-terrorists?

Answer:

According to the Department of Justice indictments of Maduro and 14 other regime officials unsealed in March 2020, senior Venezuelan political, intelligence, and military officials have facilitated drug trafficking through the country since at least 1999. Colombian drug-trafficking organizations – including dissident FARC factions and the ELN – exploit the lack of rule of law created by the illegitimate Maduro regime to traffic narcotics. President Biden was clear throughout the campaign and during the transition that his administration will stand with the Venezuelan people and their call for a restoration of democracy through free and fair elections. We agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution to the problems in Venezuela.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#437)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please explain your understanding and view of the humanitarian exemptions outlined in United States sanctions toward Venezuela that allow for humanitarian support to the Venezuelan people. If confirmed, what instruction would you give to the United States ambassador to the OAS to encourage greater international pressure to promote a transition to democracy in Venezuela?

Answer:

The United States maintains broad exemptions and authorizations that allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance, including those related to COVID-19, and the commercial sale and export of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices to Venezuela. I will work to ensure that the provision of assistance to the Venezuelan people is not impeded by our sanctions program, which is intended to target the illegitimate Maduro regime. Within the Rio Treaty framework, the United States and regional partners have taken steps to restrict certain financial transactions and the travel of 29 individuals associated with the Maduro regime. If confirmed, I will ask our ambassador to the OAS to review additional pressure options on the Maduro regime, in partnership with our regional allies most affected by the Venezuela crisis.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#438)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The tri-border area (TBA) between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay has long been considered a hub for criminal activities including arms and drug trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, and terrorist financing, notably involving Iran-backed Hezbollah.

a. What is the extent of Hezbollah's presence in the TBA and what are its main objectives in the region?
b. What is the connection between terrorist groups and organized crime in the TBA?
c. How can the United States support and strengthen counterterrorism efforts with countries in the region that currently do not have the capacity to enforce a terrorist designation?
d. If confirmed, what strategies would you employ to put pressure on Iran to limit its support for Hezbollah's activities in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer:

Financial supporters, facilitators, and sympathizers of Hizballah operate throughout the tri-border area (TBA), raising funds in support of the organization through a variety of illicit activities, including money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and trade-based money laundering. Hizballah can then use these proceeds to advance its terrorist agenda. I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to countering malign Iranian government behavior and influence in the Western Hemisphere, including support for Hizballah's activities, and will determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#439)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In July 2020, more than 350 Chinese fishing boats were detected conducting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities off the coasts of Ecuador, Chile, and Peru in the Pacific Ocean. There are concerns about similar Chinese IUU activities in the South Atlantic Ocean off the coasts of the Falkland Islands.

a. Please describe your views about Chinese Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the waters of the Western Hemisphere?
b. If confirmed, what policy tools would you employ to support Western Hemisphere partners threaten by these malicious activities?

Answer:

The Department of State is committed to reviewing the current policy and funding the Department has dedicated to countering malign PRC practices and influence in the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful strategy. We look forward to consulting with Congress during this review process. We will continue to work closely with likeminded partners and allies.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#458)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On November 23, 2020, then-President-elect Joe Biden announced that he intended to appoint former Secretary of State John Kerry to be a "Special Presidential Envoy for Climate." The announcement stated that Secretary Kerry:

> will fight climate change full-time as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and will sit on the National Security Council. This marks the first time that the NSC will include an official dedicated to climate change, reflecting the president-elect's commitment to addressing climate change as an urgent national security issue.

a. What is the chain of command for this new position and to whom will the officeholder report?
b. What will the role of the Secretary of State be with respect to this position?
c. Will this position be located within the Department of State?
d. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create duplication of effort within the Department? If so, how would you avoid such duplication? If not, why not?
e. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create confusion within the Department in terms of overlapping authorities and unclear organizational charts? If so, how would you avoid such confusion? If not, why not?
f. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to create confusion within foreign governments about which official(s) have the lead on different issues? If so, how would you avoid such confusion? If not, why not?
g. Does the use of special envoys have the potential to undermine morale among State Department employees in offices where their work has been supplanted by a new special envoy?
h. Should the Department consult with this committee before the creation of any new special envoy or similar position at the Department? Why or why not?
i. Do you believe that the Department should first look to its extant workforce before creating special envoys?
j. Do you believe that an assistant secretary should have responsibility for every element of their bureau's portfolio?
k. In general, what circumstances would merit the creation of a special envoy?
l. How will Mr. Kerry's portfolio differ from the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science?
m. Will the OES assistant secretary report to Mr. Kerry?
n. How will OES and Mr. Kerry's team de-conflict any overlap in their portfolios?
o. Do you commit to ensuring that there is no duplication of effort among Mr. Kerry's staff and the rest of the Department?

Answer:

As Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, Secretary Kerry will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge.

The envoy's team, comprises Foreign Service, Civil Service, as well as experts on climate change from outside the government, will be housed at the State Department. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Kerry reports directly to President Biden and will sit on the National Security Council. His climate diplomacy work will be closely coordinated with the Department's and the Biden-Harris administration's broader diplomatic engagement. As part of his efforts to lead U.S. climate diplomacy, the envoy will also be coordinating with the administration's efforts on the domestic side. He will also engage in consultations with the Senate. I will work to ensure that the role of special envoys, which have long been used by administrations on a bipartisan basis to respond to focused and urgent priorities, does not lead to duplication of efforts or lack of organizational clarity, create confusion among foreign governments, or undermine morale at the State Department. I will consult with Congress on the appropriate roles and responsibilities of special envoys to advance foreign policy and national security priorities.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#459)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution provides that the President:

> shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

Under this provision, all "Officers of the United States" not otherwise provided for in the Constitution may only be appointed "with the Advice and Consent of the Senate." The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted the meaning of "Officers of the United States" to include "any appointee exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States." Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1, 125–26 (1976).

a. In your view, would Secretary Kerry, as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, be "exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States"? Please explain your answer.
b. Does President Biden intend to submit a nomination for Secretary Kerry to the Senate for its advice and consent regarding his appointment as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate?
c. Do you commit to advising President Biden that he should submit a nomination for Secretary Kerry's appointment to the Senate for its advice and consent before Secretary Kerry takes office?
d. Do you commit to advising President Biden that he should submit a nomination for any appointee who will be "exercising significant authority pursuant to the laws of the United States" to the Senate for its advice and consent before the appointee takes office?

Answer:

Special envoys have long been used by administrations on a bipartisan basis to respond to focused and urgent priorities. Consistent with past practice for special envoys appointed by administrations of both parties, such envoy positions are regularly appointed through existing appointment authorities and without advice and consent of the Senate, consistent with U.S. law. I will consult with Congress on the appropriate roles and responsibilities for special envoys. As Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, Secretary Kerry will lead our diplomatic efforts to reassert U.S. climate leadership and raise global ambition to meet the daunting climate challenge.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#460)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

On December 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. This legislation includes a provision that I supported which establishes an Office of Sanctions Coordinator within the State Department.

a. If confirmed, do you commit to give this new office the attention, support, and resources needed to ensure its success and the fulfillment of its statutory mandate?
b. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that this new office will fulfill its mandate vis-à-vis other offices and bureaus within the State Department to "serve as the coordinator for the development and implementation of sanctions policy" within the State Department?
c. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that the head of this new office will serve as the lead representative of the United States in diplomatic engagement on sanctions matters?
d. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that this new office will serve as the lead representative of the State Department in interagency discussions with respect to the development and implementation of sanctions policy?
e. 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?
f. If confirmed, do you commit to support the hiring of qualified sanctions professionals with expertise in the sanctions field to work in this office?
g. If confirmed, do you commit to work with my office and this committee to ensure that this office succeeds and fulfills its statutory mandate?
h. 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:

Sanctions are an important tool to help achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives, and I appreciate the resource and structural support Congress provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. As I stand up my leadership team and review the Department's organization, I commit to consult closely with the Congress on implementation of this provision of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#461)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Section 1263(d) of the Global Magnitsky Act requires that the President make a sanctions determination within 120 days after receipt of a joint request from the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (or other relevant committee leadership). If confirmed, will you commit to help ensure Congress receives a specific determination to any such request within 120 days of submission?

Answer:

I commit to respond to inquiries received from relevant committees regarding the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and its implementation. The Global Magnitsky sanctions program is central to U.S. government efforts to disrupt and deter serious human rights abuse and corruption on a global scale, through the imposition of tangible and significant consequences on those who engage in such behavior. The Department of State works closely with the Department of the Treasury, which holds the designation authority for this program in identifying appropriate and impactful uses of the authority based on credible information received from, among others, our partners in Congress. I would be happy to work with the Treasury Department to provide a briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the interagency process that takes place before any designation or decision related to the Global Magnitsky Act is reached.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#462)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under the Constitution, the President and the Senate share the treaty-making power. Over the last few decades, the President has increasingly claimed the authority to unilaterally withdraw from treaties with no further action by the Senate or Congress. Reserving the right to object to such a claim of authority to which the Senate has not consented, some have argued that, in recent cases, the President has failed to adequately notify the Senate in advance of such a unilateral withdrawal.

a. What is your view with respect to the Senate's role in treaty withdrawal? Should the President, acting through the Secretary of State, notify the Senate in advance of any presidential decision to suspend, terminate, or withdraw from any treaty that has received Senate consent to ratification?
b. Should the Secretary provide to the Senate, through the Foreign Relations Committee and with adequate advance notice, a detailed written justification for the withdrawal?
c. In your view, what does "advice and consent" mean? What is and should be the role of the Senate be with respect to entering into and terminating treaties?
d. What is the scope of the President's authority to abrogate a treaty or other international agreement? Is it unlimited? If not, what are the limitations?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters and treaties. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation involving treaties, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#463)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In your view, does the President have the authority to re-join a treaty without resubmitting that treaty to the Senate for advice and consent? Please explain.

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters and treaties. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation involving treaties, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#464)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expert legal witnesses have suggested that Congress consider requiring the reporting of significant non-binding political commitments to Congress. Should Congress be informed of these non-binding arrangements? If so, in what form?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#465)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The Case-Zablocki statute (22 U.S.C. 112b) requires the Secretary to provide to the Congress the text of international agreements to which the United States has agreed to become a party. The intent of the statute is to ensure Congress is fully informed of executive decisions to create international, legally binding obligations on the United States.

In recent years, presidents have made "political" or "oral" agreements with potentially binding commitments on the United States. Successive administrations appear to have taken the view that such agreements fall outside the scope of Case-Zablocki and therefore do not have to be provided to the Congress.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expert legal witnesses have suggested that Congress consider requiring the written reporting of significant binding political commitments that have not been reduced to writing to Congress.

a. What are your views regarding providing the Senate with the written text of any political or oral agreement intended to be binding on the United States under international law?
b. With respect to any oral international agreement or political commitment that creates or is intended to create a legally binding commitment for the United States under international law, will you commit, if confirmed, to working with Congress to establish a meaningful process for reducing such commitments or agreements to writing and transmitting to the Congress the text of such agreement?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#466)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Although the State Department's Circular 175 process calls for consultation with Congress on treaties and agreements, it does not provide much guidance on how such conversations should occur. As a practical matter, no established routine procedure for consultation with the Senate (formal or informal) currently appears to exist, at least from the perspective of the Senate side. In recent years, to the extent they occur, State Department briefings to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC) have been ad hoc and by affirmative request of the Committee.

The paucity of information has led some Senators to grow skeptical with respect to treaties presented to the Committee for advice and consent but completed without the opportunity for consultation. This problem is further complicated if the treaty requires implementing legislation on subject matter over which another Senate committee may have jurisdiction. As a result, some Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senators have expressed wariness with taking up such treaties. Avoidable misunderstanding and confusion can result, complicating or preventing required Senate action.

Alternatively, with a more regularized and institutionalized consultation process with SFRC, the Senate and Administration can develop a more dynamic approach to these agreements. Enhanced and meaningful consultation can build support for these agreements and prove valuable in increasing Senate understanding of administration policy objectives over time.

Will you commit to directing the Department to address this oversight and work with the Committee to establish a process under which the Department will, on a regular periodic basis, engage in meaningful, advance consultation with the SFRC regarding the Departments' intention to negotiate significant international agreements and treaties?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#467)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

In October 1999, the Senate voted to reject the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by a vote of 51-48.

a. Setting aside the fact that the United States Senate has not consented to ratification of the Vienna Convention on Treaties, please describe your views with respect to the scope of the "provisional application" doctrine.
b. What are your views with respect to the legal effect of a Senate vote to reject a treaty? If rejected, does the President have authority to subsequently implement the provisions of that treaty in spite of that vote? Does such a Senate vote place limits on a future claim of presidential authority to provisionally implement the rejected treaty?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#468)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Please describe your views with respect to the binding legal effect of the Senate's inclusion of conditions to consent to ratification of a treaty under constitutional advice and consent, such as reservations, understandings, and declarations (RUDs). If the President decides to ratify a treaty to which the Senate has consented but has also included such RUDs in its resolution of consent to ratification, is the President legally bound to implement such conditions as included by the Senate in its consent to ratification resolution?

Answer:

As a former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I understand the importance of working with the Senate on foreign policy matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that for any particular situation in this area, the Office of the Legal Adviser would be presented with the facts, and I would consult closely with that office and with Congress on any related issues. I understand that your staff has been in touch with the Department on this matter, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#469)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

The War Powers Resolution requires congressional notifications when United States Armed Forces are introduced into hostilities or into situations where there is imminent involvement in hostilities.

a. Based on your experience, what do you think the term "hostilities" means?
b. Separate from military action authorized under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), do you believe the United States has been or is engaged in ongoing hostilities in Yemen?

Answer:

President[-Elect] Biden campaigned on a promise to bring to a responsible end the "forever wars" that have continued since 9/11, while also protecting Americans from terrorist and other threats. This will mean rightsizing our counterterrorism operations, as well as restoring and enhancing safeguards to make those operations transparent and to protect civilians. We will also work with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. It has been almost twenty years since the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force became law. In the ensuing two decades, that law has been invoked for military actions in countries and against groups that are not named in the statute. For the sake of good governance and public accountability -- and consistent with Congress's role when it comes to critical decisions to use military force -- we think it is time for an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. Ifconfirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#470)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Under both the Obama and Trump Administrations, certain terrorist detainees held at Guantanamo Bay have not been released for good reason. Do you envision or support a shift in policy with respect to Guantanamo Bay detention?

Answer:

The Biden-Harris administration intends to continue the work of the Obama administration in finding a resolution to the issue of the Guantanamo Bay military detention facility that comports with our values as a country. I understand that there will be an NSC-led process to determine the best way to make progress toward closing the Guantanamo military detention facility. I don't want to get ahead of what this process may determine. I am committed to keeping the committee updated as that process gets underway,

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#471)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Do you agree with the Trump Administration's use of force pursuant to the 2001 AUMF? Why or why not?

a. Do you believe that the 2001 AUMF should be repealed or updated? Why or why not?
b. Is it possible for Congress to update the 2001 AUMF without negatively impacting current detention authority for terrorist detainees?
c. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should ensure that detention authority for terrorist detainees is not interrupted? Why or why not?
d. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should ensure that current military operations against terrorists around the world continue to be authorized?
e. Do you believe that the 2001 AUMF authorizes the use of military force against associated forces of Al Qaeda?
f. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should contain geographic constraints? Why or why not?
g. Do you believe that any legislative update to the 2001 AUMF should include a hard sunset? Why or why not?

Answer:

President[-Elect] Biden campaigned on a promise to bring to a responsible end the "forever wars" that have continued since 9/11, while also protecting Americans from terrorist and other threats. This will mean rightsizing our counterterrorism operations, as well as restoring and enhancing safeguards to make those operations transparent and to protect civilians. We will also work with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. It has been almost twenty years since the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force became law. In the ensuing two decades, that law has been invoked for military actions in countries and against groups that are not named in the statute. For the sake of good governance and public accountability -- and

consistent with Congress's role when it comes to critical decisions to use military force -- we

think it is time for an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress on this effort.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary-Nominee of State Antony J. Blinken by
Senator James Risch (#472)
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
January 19, 2021

Question:

Should the 2002 AUMF be repealed? Why or why not?
a. How would a repeal of the 2002 AUMF impact current detention operations?
b. Do you commit to working closely with this committee and directing your staff to brief the committee on any use of force undertaken pursuant to the 2001 AUMF, 2002 AUMF, or Article II of the United States Constitution?

Answer:

If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress to review and repeal outdated authorities and to put in place an up-to-date statute that sets out the agreed scope and limitations of our military activities. The President is also committed to working with Congress to update the relevant legal authorities so that they are more explicit about the scope and boundaries of the conflicts in which America is engaged. This includes the 2002 AUMF. If confirmed, I will work with the Committee to repeal unnecessary or outdated authorities while ensuring we have the necessary authorities to partner with the Iraqi government and protect U.S. personnel serving in Iraq.

While I would defer to the Department of Justice and the Department of Defense on the impact on current detention operations, I look forward to working closely with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and direct Department personnel to provide the appropriate briefings on the use of force.

Responses to Questions Submitted to

Hon. Antony Blinken by Other Members of the Committee

SENATORS MENENDEZ, RUBIO, CARDIN, ROMNEY, KAINE, YOUNG, MURPHY, BARRASSO, MARKEY, CRUZ, BOOKER, HAGERTY

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Senator Robert Menendez

Ethiopia

As you know, the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has now entered its third month, and the humanitarian crisis it has wrought shows no sign of ending. Although Ethiopia embarked on the path of political reform in 2018 under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the situation in Tigray is a symptom of a political transition facing deep challenges. Ethnically motivated violence has proliferated, and there are indications of serious democratic backsliding, including the arrests of journalists and opposition politicians, as well as extra-judicial killings by security forces. Protracted instability in Ethiopia, which is the host of the African Union (AU), a major contributor to international peacekeeping missions, and the second most populous state in Africa, will damage U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa and across the continent.

What is your assessment of the current political situation in Ethiopia?

How can the State Department reinvigorate its diplomatic efforts in Ethiopia in an effort to stabilize the country and advance its democratic transition? In particular, how can the U.S. work to advance inclusive national dialogue between the country's rival political forces?

Will you commit to closely monitoring the conduct of Ethiopia's 2021 general elections and taking robust action to advance the cause of free and fair polls?

I am deeply troubled by the loss of life and mass displacement that is a result of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Violence has continued and humanitarian access remains limited -- which is unacceptable. Continued violence is a risk to Ethiopia's stability and regional peace and security. There must be an end to violence, constructive dialogue, immediate unimpeded humanitarian access, and accountability for atrocities committed by all parties. A political way forward is required. Ethiopia's successful transition to a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society is critical to U.S. interests. If confirmed, we will renew our diplomatic engagement, including on the conflict in Tigray, the political and economic reform agenda, the upcoming elections, and the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam.

Prosper Africa

Prosper Africa was supposed to be the United States' answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative in Africa: by increasing private investment in Africa, we could steer countries away from pernicious Chinese lending, stimulate and liberalize African economies, and make money for American investors.

Do you consider Prosper Africa a success?

In your opinion, should it be the goal of Prosper Africa to use private investment to advance political goals, such as improving U.S.-Africa relations and confronting Chinese investment; or should it be primarily a commercial initiative to aid U.S. investors and African businesses?

Does Prosper Africa need to be reexamined by the new administration?

Increasing trade and investment to and from Africa has been a shared bipartisan priority across administrations. The new administration will examine Prosper Africa to identify ways to build commercial and economic ties that benefit Americans and Africans.

AIDS, TB, Malaria

The U.S. has been a leader in fighting AIDS, TB, Malaria, and other diseases in Africa for years, but the impact of COVID and our response has led to concerns about sustainability and effectiveness.

What action will you take to protect the decades of progress made so far and build confidence in our commitment to continue the fight against these diseases?

I share the Committee's intense concern about the second-order impacts of the COVID crisis on global health and other development gains. The Biden-Harris administration will mobilize an aggressive and comprehensive plan to combat backsliding on these gains while also fighting to end the pandemic. The COVID emergency bill proposed by the President includes a further $11 billion in funds to deal with the global COVID crisis; approximately half of this would target secondary effects of COVID including impacts on essential global health programs. If confirmed, I will also explore ways to ensure synergies between COVID programs and other health interventions. Ultimately all health programs -- whether for COVID, HIV, or other diseases -- must be built on a foundation of strong health systems.

USAID

USAID's success depends upon its reputation for delivering programs, assistance and aid without the weight of political agendas. That's not to say USAID missions don't play a critical role in bolstering reform, good governance, and citizen-responsive government and democracy.

USAID certainly does so, but without a U.S. agenda overtly on display. The partnerships USAID has built around the world are possible because USAID is not seen as an arm of the State Department.

Will you commit to respecting USAID's autonomy in its program operations, and refrain from the overt interjection of political agendas into its mission operations?

Overt politicization of U.S. foreign assistance programs works against America's interests -- it makes these programs less effective in their development aims, runs counter to America's commitment to humanitarian principles and leadership, and rarely delivers the desired political outcomes. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to restoring credible U.S. leadership on global development and humanitarian action, and that starts with ensuring principled, evidence-driven, effective aid interventions.

F Bureau is not always popular with this committee, and it is probably less popular at USAID. I'd like your commitment to ensure that F work with USAID in developing its budget and approving program allocations and to avoid playing a dictatorial role.

Ensuring accountability and coherence of foreign assistance programs across AID and State is an important priority for the Biden-Harris administration, and F plays an important role in that process. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that F's engagement with USAID is characterized by respectful mutual partnership grounded in the expertise and comparative advantages of each agency.

Canada

The Government of China arbitrarily detained two Canadian citizens – Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor – in retaliation for Canada's decision to detain Meng Wanzhou at the request of U.S. prosecutors. For two years, Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor have been held in substandard conditions and routinely denied consular access by the Canadian government.

What is your assessment of the detention of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor and will you work with the Trudeau government to help secure their release?

If confirmed, I would make clear that the United States stands with Canada in calling on Beijing for the immediate release of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor. I will work with my counterparts in the Canadian government to help secure their release.

Mexico

Arms trafficked from the United States into Mexico have reached disturbing levels and, in some cases, transnational criminal organizations operating in Mexico possess more sophisticated

weapons than those of Mexican law enforcement, all of which is enabling dangerous groups to expand their influence and activities in the country.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to address international arms trafficking from the U.S. into Mexico?

I share your concerns. If confirmed, I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican government to deepen our law enforcement cooperation with Mexico and to address this issue in particular.

Central America

Across Central America, citizens have fled their homes and migrated from their countries in search of safety and opportunity. Additionally, certain undemocratic leaders have facilitated the criminality that leaves many Central Americans unable to see a future in their country.

If confirmed, how will you prioritize the use of foreign assistance to support democratic civil society and struggling citizens, while also holding accountable certain leaders that have facilitated criminality and placed their own interests above their citizens?

The Biden-Harris administration will be strongly committed to improving conditions in the region, including with immediate, post-storm assistance to address critical humanitarian needs. We recognize the ultimate solution for sustainably reducing migration in the region is to work with civil society, the private sector, governments and international partners to catalyze structural change to address corruption, security, and prosperity in the region. Despite our shortcomings, civil society leaders and human rights defenders around the globe continue to look to the United States for support against corruption and authoritarian regimes -- we must stand by their side once again. President Biden has articulated a comprehensive $4 billion, four-year plan in this area that will provide financial and other forms of assistance and incentives to confront corruption, enhance security, and foster prosperity across the region. We look forward to working with Congress on this plan.

Since taking office in 2007, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has conducted widespread, systematic attacks against civilians, including murder, torture, and arbitrary detentions. Moreover, in October 2020 Nicaragua's Parliament passed the Foreign Agents law that gives the government power over citizens who receive funding from abroad. As the country moves into an election year in 2021, U.S. support for humanitarian, human rights organizations, and opposition groups in Nicaragua is critical.

If confirmed, how will you prioritize support for Nicaraguan civil society in light of the enactment of these troubling laws, and how will you work with international partners to ensure a free, fair and transparent electoral process in Nicaragua?

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights throughout

the hemisphere. We will once again challenge authoritarian governance and stand up for the rights of all people. This starts with restoring our democracy at home. Despite our shortcomings, human rights defenders around the globe continue to look to the United States for support against authoritarian regimes -- we must stand by their side once again. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this issue.

Cuba

Since November, Cuban activists and artists from San Isidro Movement have faced increased harassment and repeated detention by the Cuban regime. What is your assessment of the Cuban government's actions towards the San Isidro Movement, and if confirmed, what steps will you take to speak out about human rights abuses in Cuba?

If confirmed, support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. The crackdown on Cubans by the regime grew worse over the last four years, not better. We will engage directly with a large swath of Cuban civil society; we will empower them and respect their rights through our policies, and we will directly engage the Cuban government to denounce abuses and call for reform. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue.

Iran

I support this administration's interest in a long overdue return to serious diplomatic engagement with Iran. However, one of my main objections to the JCPOA was that it did not address Iran's many other dangerous and destabilizing activities. I am therefore concerned that simply returning to the JCPOA without a clear and concrete plan to address Iran's other nefarious activities will fall short, both here in Congress, and on the ground in the region.

The President is under no illusions about Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. Missiles, support for terrorism, and regional misbehavior are all elements we plan to address in follow-on talks and in coordination with our allies and partners. In the meantime, we will continue to maintain and impose sanctions on Iranian entities providing political, financial, and material support to terrorist groups and violent militias in the region. The Biden-Harris administration will also take action, in coordination with our allies and partners, to both deter and counter Iran's destabilizing activities and to vigorously pursue talks on these critical issues. If confirmed, I am committed to consulting closely with Congress on the path forward.

Recent reports that Iran is once again enriching uranium to 20% offer more proof that the Trump Administration's Maximum Pressure campaign has made Iran more dangerous, while alienating our European allies. What diplomatic steps can the Biden Administration quickly take to get the Iranians to change course?

The "maximum pressure" campaign pursued by the Trump administration has shown the limits of unilateral U.S. sanctions pressure: Iran has expanded its nuclear program and

shortened its breakout time, and its misbehavior in the region has only gotten worse. The President is committed to ensuring that Iran does not acquire a nuclear bomb and believes diplomacy, in coordination with our allies, is the best path to achieve that goal. At this point, Iran has taken a number of highly concerning steps that have significantly reduced the breakout time from what was the case at the end of the Obama-Biden administration. Those steps need to be reversed. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue.

While I believe the UN arms embargo sunset on Iran in the JCPOA had too short a timeline, the previous Administration failed to muster a coalition in the UN to renew it, and now Iran is, again, more dangerous than before. How will you address Iranian importing and exporting of arms?

The President is committed to working with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, including its provision of weapons to violent proxies. Although the arms embargo against Iran expired, we will continue to dissuade countries from providing arms to Iran and fueling Iran's efforts to undermine neighbors in the region. We also will redouble our efforts to enforce other, existing United Nations Security Council resolutions barring the export of weapons to groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis.

What steps will the Biden Administration take to work with our allies and partners in Europe, the Middle East and Asia to ensure that Iran's nefarious activities abroad are addressed along with the nuclear file?

The President is under no illusion about Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. Missiles, support for terrorism, and regional misbehavior are all elements we plan to address in follow-on talks and in coordination with our allies and partners. In the meantime, we will continue to maintain and impose sanctions on Iranian entities providing political, financial, and material support to terrorist groups and violent militias in the region. We will also take action, in coordination with our allies and partners, to both deter and counter Iran's destabilizing activities and to vigorously pursue talks on these critical issues. If confirmed, I am committed to consulting closely with Congress on the path forward.

As I said in my opening statement, I firmly believe that there is bipartisan willingness to work with the Biden Administration to craft a diplomatic approach that comprehensively addresses ALL of Iran's destabilizing behavior, not just the nuclear issue. Will you commit to proactively engaging Congress in order to forge such an approach?

Yes. If confirmed, I will be committed to consulting closely with Congress from the very outset on the best way to deal with the challenges presented by Iran -- its nuclear program, destabilizing activities, support for violent proxies, and ballistic missiles program.

Yemen

The war in Yemen is about to enter its 6th year and, in spite of the efforts of UN special envoy Martin Griffiths, little progress has been made toward ending a conflict that has killed more than 17,000 civilians and created the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Iran continues to ship weapons, including ballistic missiles, which have allowed the Houthis to menace Saudi Arabia and continue their war against the internationally recognized Yemeni government. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia continues to hit civilian targets in Yemen with U.S.-made warplanes and munitions.

Will the Biden Administration continue President Trump's policy of selling precision guided munitions to Saudi Arabia without showing clear and convincing evidence that U.S. engagement has significantly improved Saudi targeting capabilities and lowered the rate of civilian casualties from Saudi airstrikes or will the Biden Administration end logistical, military and intelligence support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen?

I am also deeply concerned by the previous administration's freeze on assistance to Northern Yemen. I am fully aware that the Houthis have repeatedly tried to imposed major conditions on international assistance but the United States is the only major donor to the Yemen response to implement such a freeze on desperately needed assistance for innocent Yemeni civilians. Will the Biden Administration lift this freeze? What steps will the Administration take alongside the UN and other international donors to ensure that the Houthis are not able to divert or place unacceptable conditions on international assistance?

What leverage will the Biden Administration use to push all warring parties to agree to a nationwide ceasefire in Yemen and begin talks aimed at a sustainable political solution to the conflict?

Secretary Pompeo's designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in final days of the Trump Administration appears poorly thought out with little regard to the major humanitarian, diplomatic and even environmental effects of such a designation. Do you intend revoke this designation?

The Biden-Harris administration shares the bipartisan congressional concerns about the last-minute decision to designate the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity. While we understand that the Houthis are far from benign actors, we take seriously the warnings from the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations that these designations could lead to a wide scale famine. Accordingly, the President intends to ask the appropriate agencies to address this issue. At the same time, we will not hesitate to apply pressure to push the Houthis to curb their abuses against the Yemeni people and to negotiate an end to the war.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia remains an important regional partner with the potential to play a significant role in regional stability in general. I was pleased to see the recent news that Saudi Arabia and Qatar are finally taking major steps to end the GCC rift. However, we have seen too many blank checks signed with massive amounts of American weaponry pouring into the

Kingdom and to its neighbors. President Trump's efforts to shield Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman from accountability for the devastating conflict in Yemen, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and jailing of human rights defenders has undermined our long-term interests.

Do you agree that we need a serious review of our policy towards countries like Saudi Arabia to assess our long and short term interests, especially towards arms sales?

In October 2018, then-Chairman Corker and I led a bipartisan effort under The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to determine who was responsible for Mr. Khashoggi's murder. Over two years later, the Trump Administration has still not complied with the law. Will the Biden Administration comply with this law and make such a determination? If so, when can we expect it?

What steps will you take as Secretary of State to push Saudi Arabia to release unjustly detained human rights defenders like Loujain al-Hathloul and others and to ensure that peaceful dissent is not subject to bogus charges in the future?

President Biden has said that he would end U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen and order a reassessment of our relationship with Saudi Arabia. He has said that while we recognize the value of cooperation on counterterrorism and deterring Iran, America needs to insist on more constructive Saudi actions in return for U.S. support. I agree that we should review U.S. policy toward Saudi Arabia, including arms sales. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and with Congress in this effort.

Asked by the Senate Intelligence Committee whether the Biden-Harris administration would declassify and release an intelligence report regarding the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told the Senate Intelligence Committee, "yes, absolutely, Senator, we'll follow the law."

As then President-elect Biden said in October, "I will defend the right of activists, political dissidents, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence." If confirmed, I will raise the issue of political prisoners directly with leaders in Saudi Arabia. The Biden-Harris administration will make clear from the outset that the issue of political prisoners - including brave Saudi women like Loujain al-Hathloul - will be a priority in U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia; and that Saudi Arabia will face U.S. pressure to avoid additional detentions as well as resolve current cases.

Informal Arms Sales Consultative Process

Does the Department of State intend to honor and observe the informal consultation process going forward, without exceptions?

If confirmed, I am committed to returning to regular order with respect to the arms sales consultative process with Congress.

Licensing of Small Arms

Do you intend to seek the return the export licensing of small arms and light weapons to the jurisdiction of the Department of State and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations? If not, why not? If not, if confirmed, will you ensure that proposed export licenses for such exports will be sent to this Committee for its information in advance of such licenses being granted?

If confirmed, I will look into changes that have been made to licensing procedures for the export of small arms and light weapons. I look forward to consulting with the Committee on this matter.

Control of Arms on the U.S. Munitions List

Do you agree that the only reason that any U.S. defense article or defense service should be on the U.S. Munitions List is that it provides a critical military or intelligence advantage to U.S. Armed Forces? Should not such articles and services also be controlled under such List because of foreign policy and national security considerations, as required by the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as well as for human rights and humanitarian considerations? If so, if confirmed, will you seek appropriate changes in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations to better align it with such requirements of the AECA?

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that arms transfers reflect our values and our interests, to include maintaining the technological advantage of U.S. military forces, human rights, non-proliferation, and counter-terrorism priorities, among others.

Secretary of State Oversight on Special Forces Support to Unknown Foreign Persons

Section 10 U.S.C 127e allows the Secretary of Defense to provide undefined support to any foreign person that is in any undefined way supporting U.S. Special Forces operations in a country, so long as the Chief of Mission of such country concurs. There is no requirement in the law that the Secretary of State, nor the Department of State, be aware of such activities. Such "support" has included, at least, the provision of lethal defense articles to unknown foreign persons, who could be involved in criminal or even terrorism-supporting activities. It is vital that the Secretary of State be aware of this support. Will you, if confirmed, direct all Chiefs of Mission not to agree to any such request without first consulting with you?

If confirmed, I will inquire about the current practices and procedures in the Department with respect to reporting and concurring with such transfers and, if necessary, make amendments. It is increasingly important that the Departments of State and Defense are tightly linked given the changing global threat environment.

Climate Change

The 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community noted climate change is, "likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through

2019 and beyond...Changes in the frequency and variability of heat waves, droughts, and floods—combined with poor governance practices—are increasing water and food insecurity around the world, increasing the risk of social unrest, migration, and interstate tension."

What is the State Department's role in managing and mitigating these climate security risks, beyond advocating for global emissions reductions?

What concrete steps will you take as Secretary of State to ensure these risks are addressed and the Department coordinates across the national security enterprise to manage these risks?

There is no greater long-term challenge confronting the U.S. and the world than climate change. The Biden-Harris administration understands the critical role the U.S. must play in the global climate effort, and he will waste no time reengaging the global community on this shared challenge. Top priorities include rejoining the Paris Agreement; developing an ambitious U.S. target and working with countries around the world to raise their ambition alongside the U.S.; and meet America's climate finance pledge and catalyze global clean energy research, development, and deployment, which will be essential to providing the green recovery the world needs. If confirmed, I will coordinate with counterparts across our national security departments and agencies to ensure the U.S. is leading global efforts to address the security challenges posed by climate.

In a September interview you noted that "climate change would be fully integrated into our foreign policy and national security strategies, as well as our approach to trade."

What concrete actions will you take to integrate climate change action, or make considerations for climate change and issues that come under the climate change policy (for example increased clean energy deployment, natural resource scarcity, effects on global agricultural and food security, forced migration due natural disasters exacerbated by the effects of climate change) across U.S. diplomatic missions, State Department bureaus, relevant interagency activities, regional and country plans that support in critical regions such as the Asia-Pacific, the Arctic, the Americas, Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East?

Would such integration require a degree of reevaluation or retuning of the State Department operations? If so will you commit to closely commit to consulting with Congress on such changes?

If confirmed, I will seek to integrate climate change policy and actions across the State Department in coordination with the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change. I will commit to consulting closely with Congress on any potential changes to the Department's operations that would advance our climate objectives.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

If confirmed, will you commit to funding humanitarian assistance programs to help the ethnic Armenians in the south Caucasus affected by Azerbaijan's attack last fall? Will you commit to restoring funding for demining in Nagorno-Karabakh?

I am deeply concerned by the renewed hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan last fall and the ongoing humanitarian needs in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. I strongly support U.S. funding for demining efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh. If confirmed, I will also work with Congress, as well as USAID, international organizations such as the UN, and our allies and partners to meet humanitarian needs in the region.

How can the U.S. help Armenia, and ethnic Armenians in their efforts to defend themselves throughout the South Caucasus, from Azerbaijan and Turkey's aggression?

I support the provision to Armenia of security assistance and aid to strengthen democratic governance and promote economic growth, both of which will help to strengthen Armenia's security and resilience. In light of the recent outbreak of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, our administration will review our security assistance to Azerbaijan. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Secretary of Defense to determine the appropriate level of assistance to meet the security needs of Armenia and the region.

As an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, how do you plan to reengage in the peace process and work towards a sustainable peace that reflects the interests of Armenians, not just Aliyev, Erdogan, and Putin?

The President has said the United States should be leading a diplomatic effort to find a lasting resolution to the conflict, working together with our European partners, and should push for international humanitarian assistance to end the suffering. If confirmed, I will reinvigorate U.S. engagement to find a permanent settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that protects the security of Nagorno-Karabakh and helps to ensure another war does not break out. This includes stepping up our engagement via the Minsk Group, of which the United States is a co-chair, and additional diplomatic work to prevent any further interference by third parties.

Considering Azerbaijan's aggression in last fall's conflict, do you plan to waive Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act and provide assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan? What is your view of providing security assistance to Azerbaijan?

In light of the recent outbreak of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Biden-Harris administration will review our security assistance to Azerbaijan. If the circumstances warrant, the Biden-Harris administration will be prepared to suspend waivers of requirements under section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Secretary of Defense to determine the appropriate level of assistance to meet the security needs of Armenia and the region.

Greece and Cyprus:

Last Congress, I led efforts to pass the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act into law. The law envisions a new strategy built around the U.S. partnership with the region's three democracies – Greece, Israel and Cyprus. How would you continue and enhance investments described in the law and further solidify the critical security relationships with Greece and Cyprus?

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this legislation and working with Congress and colleagues in the interagency to support robust ties between the United States and Greece, Israel, and Cyprus. The U.S-Greece security relationship is important to our interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and has grown significantly as bilateral ties have improved, beginning in the Obama-Biden administration. If confirmed, I will work to continue to deepen ties between the United States and Greece, as well as Cyprus.

Vladimir Kara-Murza:

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a prominent opposition activist in Russia and a U.S. lawful permanent resident, was poisoned in Russia in 2015 and again in 2017, and nearly died on both occasions. Following both poisonings, samples of his blood were accepted for testing by the FBI, and tests were performed, but I understand that the results of those tests and the FBI's assessment of the cause of Mr. Kara-Murza's poisonings have been withheld from both interested Members of Congress and Mr. Kara-Murza. On July 5, 2018, I understand that Mr. Kara-Murza submitted a request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act (FOIPA) to the FBI (FBI FOIPA Request No. 1410820-000) for documents relating to his poisonings, including the results of tests performed by U.S. government agencies. Mr. Kara-Murza has been informed that 277 pages of documents responsive to that request have been referred by the FBI for review to other, undisclosed agencies of the federal government. Of those 277 pages, 251 have yet to be released to Mr. Kara-Murza pending consultation with other government agencies. If confirmed, do you commit to providing answers to the following questions within 2 months of taking office?

If confirmed, I will examine this matter closely and direct the Department to respond to requests for information from Congress.

Has the Department of State received from the FBI or the Department of Justice a referral of documents responsive to Mr. Kara-Murza's FOIPA request?

If confirmed, I will examine this matter closely and direct the Department to respond to requests for information from Congress.

If such a referral has been received, on what date or dates did the Department receive the referrals, and how many pages were contained in each referral?

What is the estimated date for completion of the review by the Department?

Do you commit to expediting the release of as many documents as possible to Mr. Kara-Murza, as soon as possible?

The Biden-Harris administration sees the Putin regime as it is: an increasingly paranoid and repressive system that has grown more aggressive in its efforts not just to undermine the United States, but also to silence political opponents and voices that are critical of the Putin regime, like Mr. Kara-Murza. We will stand with all of those advocating for democracy and universal rights -- whether in Russia or elsewhere around the world. If confirmed, I look forward to being responsive to requests for information from Congress, including regarding this issue.

Ireland:

The Good Friday Agreement was an historic achievement, and we must protect it and vigorously push for implementation of those elements that remain unfulfilled.

If confirmed, will you support U.S. funding for programs and entities that further the Northern Ireland peace process [such as the International Fund for Ireland] and for programs that further U.S.-Ireland ties [like the George J. Mitchell Scholarship Program]?

Will you commit to appointing a qualified, experienced senior-level official as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland?

The President has been unequivocal in his support for the Good Friday Agreement, arguing that it should not become a casualty of Brexit. As the United Kingdom and European Union begin implementing Brexit-related provisions, the Biden-Harris administration will encourage them to prioritize political and economic stability in Northern Ireland. The Special Envoy for Northern Ireland has historically played an important role in supporting the peace process. If confirmed, I will consider carefully the appointment of a senior-level official to fill that role. I will also ensure the State Department continues to support civil society and public diplomacy efforts that further the peace process.

Democracy & Human Rights

Will you set the tone for human rights considerations to be included in all policy decisions by requesting that (1) the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and other relevant bureaus develop human rights standards for every security assistance package and arms sale, (2) the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor views are incorporated into all relevant State Department positions and engagements with the National Security Council (NSC), including at Deputies and Principals Committee meetings, (3) human rights be included in

Embassy country planning, and (4) the Department of State and the Department of Defense be consistently supplied with human rights assessments of partner nations? Additionally, will you commit to briefing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on any new standards or procedures within sixty days of implementation and at the end of each fiscal year?

The Biden-Harris administration will restore democracy and human rights to the center of U.S. foreign policy. These issues must be elevated in how we frame all of our decisions, including in each of the fora you have mentioned. If confirmed, I will insist that human rights reporting and assessments be of the highest caliber so as to help inform these decisions. As noted at my hearing, the Department's partnership with Congress, and specifically with this Committee, will be a priority not only at the landing, but at the take-off of issues -- including on these matters.

Human Rights - Country-Specific Issues

In 2017, over a million Rohingya fled persecution at the hands of the Burmese military, which led the United Nations Fact Finding Mission, the Holocaust Museum, and other civil society organizations to levy charges of genocide against the country. Since then, the U.S. has been silent, refusing to call it what it is, despite multiple leading Rohingya advocates calling for a U.S. determination.

If confirmed, will you lead an interagency process for a legal determination that the crimes that occurred in 2017 against the Rohingya constituted genocide?

If confirmed I will commit to leading a review of atrocities committed, and work toward peace, security, and equal rights for the Rohingya as citizens of Burma.

Over the last decade, the Chinese government has subjected the Tibetans, Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities to widespread and systematic human rights abuses. With bipartisan support, the U.S. Congress passed and supported the Uyghur Human Rights and Policy Act, which the previous administration began implementing.

Will the Biden Administration commit to use all available tools required by law to free and end the unprecedented detention of Uyghurs and other political prisoners in China?

Uighurs and other ethnic and religious minorities have suffered unspeakable oppression at the hands of China's authoritarian government. China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences. We will put values back at the center of our foreign policy and stand up for democracy, human rights, and human dignity. We will speak out consistently and jointly with allies and partners, impose costs and sanctions on those responsible, and help those persecuted find safe haven in the United States and other countries. We will implement the Uighur Human Rights Policy Act and, if confirmed, I will work with Congress on these crucial issues.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Marco Rubio

CHINA

The Nature of the CCP

How would you characterize the nature of the Chinese Communist Party? Do you believe their worldview and value system are compatible with our own?

The Chinese Communist Party is illiberal, authoritarian, and increasingly assertive. Its values are often at odds with our own.

What are the global ambitions of the Chinese Communist Party? How do they challenge U.S. interests?

The Chinese Communist Party intends for China to become a dominant world power. They are working across the spectrum to compete with and challenge the United States.

Do you believe that the Chinese Communist Party's united front and intelligence activities inside the borders of the United States, and those of our allies and partners, challenge the integrity of our policymaking? Why?

Yes. China's use of information operations and other coercive and corrupting efforts to undermine and interfere in democracies are a concern for the U.S. and our allies.

Is Xi Jinping's "Community of Common Destiny for Humanity" compatible with your views of international order and the ways in which countries conduct diplomacy? If not, why not?

We have seen that when theU.S. walks away from international institutions such as the UN, others fill the void. When we forfeit our seat at the UN -- whether on human rights, public health, climate change, technology governance, or development -- others step in and occupy the space. China is working across the entire UN system to insert catchphrases like the "community of common destiny for humanity" and drive its authoritarian agenda that stands in opposition to core values of UN institutions and our commitment to human rights.

In what areas do you think the United States should try to frustrate the CCP's ambitions and undermine the party's ability to achieve their international ambitions?

Where China's ambitions are at odds with U.S. interests and values, such as in domains of military and technological competition, the U.S. should limit China's ability to achieve its ambitions.

How would you assess the United States' policy of engagement with Beijing from 1979 to 2017? In retrospect, did that policy effectively protect and advance of our most vital national interests? Do you support a return to that policy?

The strategic environment has changed significantly in recent years, as has China itself. There was once a broad consensus that economic liberalization in China would lead to political liberalization. That has not happened. China has been growing more authoritarian at home and more assertive abroad. Beijing is now challenging our security, prosperity, and values in significant ways that require a new U.S. approach. So of course U.S. policy and posture must change from what it was in, for example, the 1980s or the early 2000s. We are committed to meeting this challenge.

Please explain how you believe the United States should act to defend our national interests when challenged by the Chinese authorities, even if our allies and partners are reluctant to join us?

The United States should always defend our national interests, even if challenged by China. We will work to develop coordinated approaches with allies and partners but we will always be willing to defend our interests.

While multilateral efforts are preferred, would you support unilateral action to counter China's malign activities if diplomatic efforts to secure multilateral action should fail?

Yes.

During the Obama administration, a bilateral dialogue structure with the People's Republic of China (PRC) was constructed that centered around the annual Strategic and Economic Dialogue with dozens of smaller offshoots held on a wide variety of specific topics throughout the year. This massive dialogue structure resulted in little-to-no concrete progress on major issues of concern to the United States, and it allowed Beijing to avoid serious punitive action by promising progress that never came at the next round of endless dialogue.

> *In dialogue with Beijing, will you require meaningful progress as a precondition for further rounds of dialogue?*

Do you commit to raise issues that Beijing deems "sensitive" – such as human rights, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, and the Uyghurs – regardless of whether doing so may affect the CCP's willingness to engage in further dialogue?

Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to a robust public diplomacy efforts aimed at building public awareness of the CCP threat and calling out Beijing for its malign conduct as the Trump Administration has done?

It is important that our partners and allies understand the challenges the Chinese Commuinst Party poses to democratic values. If confirmed, the Department will communicate this clearly and directly in our public diplomacy efforts.

In May 2020, Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger delivered a speech online in Chinese commemorating China's May Fourth movement of 1919. The speech represented what our public diplomacy towards China has often lacked: a focus on the important events, figures, and philosophies of China's past that are compatible with the future China that we would like to see. Instead, we have shied away from anything that appears to challenge the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda about what is means to be "Chinese." We have let stand false assertions of continuity with Chinese tradition and culture made by a regime that tried to destroy both, and now seeks to distort them as a source of legitimacy.

If confirmed, will you agree to challenge the CCP's narrative on defining what it means to be "Chinese?"

Do you commit to continue U.S. government messaging that speaks directly to the Chinese people and relay the message that the United States does not see the Chinese people as a threat, but rather the regime that rules over them without their consent?

Yes.

CCP Interference and Collection

Do you support the Trump administration's designation of the National Association for China's Peaceful Unification as a foreign mission of the PRC? What steps will you take to ensure other such front organizations are properly designated, and to inform relevant stakeholders within the U.S.—including state and local governments, universities, and business associations—of the nature and mission of such front organizations?

A clear understanding of the organizations that China uses to attempt to influence U.S. policy is important. If confirmed, I commit to review these policies to ensure organizations are properly designated and inform relevant stakeholders within the U.S., including state and local governments, universities, and business associations, as appropriate.

Do you support the Trump administration's requirements that PRC diplomats report certain categories of meetings to the U.S. government, including meetings with educational institutions and Chinese community groups?

It is important that we bring greater transparency to bear on China's influence activities in the United States. If confirmed, I commit to review this policy.

Do you support the Trump administration's designation of multiple Chinese media outlets as foreign missions, and visa restrictions on PRC reporters (who frequently act as intelligence gatherers as much as reporters)? Are you prepared to explain and defend the difference between these PRC media outlets and a genuine free press?

I will always be prepared to explain and defend the difference between state-run media outlets and a genuine free press. If confirmed, I commit to review this policy.

Do you support the actions of the Trump administration to deny visas to certain classes of PRC-national researchers, including those who have concealed their affiliation with the People's Liberation Army? What steps do you support to build consensus and awareness among U.S. allies—particularly those in Europe—on this question?

It is a critical U.S. interest to make sure that we protect the intellectual property that is produced in this country and that, if used to advance China's military modernization, could undermine our security. It is also important that we maintain the openness and attractiveness of the United States, including as a destination for overseas talent. I will review the tools available to address these challenges, including visa policy, counterintelligence, and counterespionage tools. I will also consult with U.S. allies, including those in Europe, on these questions.

Do you support the Trump administration's push to deny Huawei access to the 5G markets of U.S. allies? If so, what steps will the State department take to ensure the continued success of this campaign, and support cooperation with friendly nations to ensure allied leadership in 5G and 6G wireless technology?

We are firmly committed to making sure that Chinese companies cannot misappropriate and misuse American data -- and to ensuring that U.S. technology does not support China's malign activities. We will also work with U.S. allies to share information about the risks and develop viable alternatives.

Will you push back against the efforts of some larger U.S. allies' desire to adopt an "actor agnostic" approach to 5G and technological competition, which avoids singling out China as an especially problematic actor?

Technology is at the center of U.S.-China competition. In many areas, where China is an especially problematic actor, we will not hesitate to speak out against its abuses and encourage our allies to do so as well.

What steps do you support to build consensus and awareness among U.S. allies of the organizations and tactics used by the PRC to influence the politics of democratic countries, including people-to-people diplomacy, organizations and entities supervised by the United Front Work Department, and political influence activities conducted through nominally private PRC businesses? Will you carry on the work begun by Secretary of State Pompeo in educating important U.S. constituencies—including state and local governments—on the risks posed by these tools of malign political interference?

China's use of information operations and other coercive and corrupting efforts to undermine and interfere in democracies are a concern for the U.S. and our allies. We will work with our allies and partners to build resilience against these threats, as we expose China's malign activity and, when relevant, impose costs. We will also educate important U.S. constituencies, including state and local government, on these threats.

Beijing's Broken Promises

China has failed to uphold many of its agreements with the United States and others. Xi Jinping told President Obama that China would not use its intelligence services to steal intellectual property for commercial gain. Xi made the same promise to President Trump in 2017 and 2018, but this theft has not stopped. Xi promised President Obama that China would not militarize the South China Sea. And in Hong Kong, Beijing has violated its commitments under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and its commitments to the people of Hong Kong under the basic law.

> *Do you believe that the CCP can be trusted to uphold its commitments?*
>
> *How do you think the United States' approach to diplomacy with China should change because of these broken promises?*

China's failure to uphold key past commitments is a significant factor in how we will develop our approach to China. We are clear-eyed and will keep these past shortcomings in mind as we deal with Beijing going forward.

Beijing has failed to live up to its commitments on carbon emissions and has continued to build coal-fired power plants at home and abroad on a massive scale. We understand addressing climate change will be prominent in the Biden Administration with John Kerry leading the effort.

> *Do you believe that China can be trusted to uphold any commitment it makes on climate change?*
>
> *How will you ensure that China fulfills its part of any agreement on climate change given its record of broken promises?*

On climate change, we must press China to act more constructively. We will approach diplomacy with China on climate change in an unflinching and unyielding way, and from a

position of strength. The United States will not limit our agenda to deal with the China challenge just because Beijing makes offers of cooperation. Accepting the reality of transnational threats like climate change means we will put more pressure on Beijing in ways to advance American interests and values.

Human Rights

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China maintains a list of more than 1,600 Chinese political prisoners—a snapshot of Beijing's efforts to punish and silence those who challenge the commnunist party. At the urging of Congress, the Trump Administration regularly raised these cases and those of Americans detained in the PRC. Chinese leaders determine the United States' seriousness on human rights by the level and the frequency with which it is raise.

> *Do you commit to ensuring that human rights concerns are integrated in every senior bilateral engagement, and that specific prisoner cases are raised at the highest levels both publicly and privately?*
>
> *Do you see the link between China's pervasive, egregious human rights abuses and its failure on so many other fronts to be a responsible global actor?*

Yes.

TAIWAN

Bilateral Trade Agreement

Do you believe we should have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Taiwan? If confirmed, will you urge USTR to prioritize FTA negotiations with Taiwan?

We are committed to deepening ties with Taiwan, which is a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner. Trade with Taiwan advances U.S. interests and helps create economic opportunity in the United States. We will continue to strengthen U.S. economic ties with Taiwan as an important priority.

Taiwan Security

If confirmed, will you stand unequivocally with Taiwan in opposition to the CCP's threats to force Taiwan to unify with the PRC? Will you commit to place the defense of Taiwan's democracy at the center of the U.S. regional security strategy?

President Biden has said many times that U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to

support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan.

If confirmed, will you commit to a regular and robust arms sales process that does not fluctuate in accordance with U.S.-China relations?

If confirmed, I will ensure the United States meets our commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability. Doing so increases stability both across the Taiwan Strait and within the region.

Do you believe that senior U.S. government officials, including members of the Cabinet, should meet with their Taiwanese counterparts in our respective capitals of Taipei and D.C. in accordance with the Taiwan Travel Act (P.L. 115–135)? If confirmed, will you commit to meeting with your counterpart and instructing and authorizing other Senate confirmed officials to do the same?

I cannot speak to specific travel or meeting arrangements at this time. But, if confirmed, I will be open to speaking with and meeting with anyone if doing so would advance U.S. interests and foreign policy objectives. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Do you agree that the peaceful resolution of Taiwan's status is fundamentally an international issue, as defined by the Taiwan Relations Act, and a matter of grave concern to the United States, and is in no way a Chinese "domestic issue?"

President Biden has said many times that U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments, including the Taiwan Relations Act.

The Taiwan Relations Act established that it is U.S. policy to "consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States." Do you fully support this statement of U.S. policy, and if confirmed, will you ensure that Beijing is made fully aware of the gravity with which the United States would regard coercive actions taken against Taiwan?

Yes.

The Taiwan Relations Act established that it is U.S. policy to "maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan." If confirmed, do you agree to work with the Secretary of Defense to ensure that U.S. military capabilities are maintained above and beyond what would be required to defend Taiwan from PRC acts of aggression?

If confirmed, I will ensure the United States meets our commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability. Doing so increases stability both across the Taiwan Strait and within the region. At the same time, we will further buttress peace and

stability by developing new concepts and capabilities to strengthen our own deterrent in the region. Bipartisan support for Taiwan in Congress is critical, and I look forward to working with Members on this crucial issue.

The Taiwan Assurance Act established that it is U.S. policy to advocate for Taiwan's membership and/or meaningful participation in international organizations, including but not limited to agencies of the United Nations. If confirmed, will you commit to robust efforts to increase Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations and to counter Beijing's attempts to isolate Taiwan in international organizations and beyond?

If confirmed I will continue U.S. policy to support Taiwan membership in international organizations where statehood is not a requirement and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation, as appropriate, in organizations where its membership is not possible. We will do so together with allies and partners.

Will you make the restoration of Taiwan's observer status at the World Health Organization a priority?

Yes.

Do you believe that it is in the interest of global health security for Taiwan to be invited to participate in World Health Organization meetings?

Yes.

By all accounts, Taiwan has developed into one of the most vibrant and successful democracies in the Indo-Pacific region. If President Biden follows through with his intent to assemble a summit of democracies, will you ensure that Taiwan is invited to participate?

The planning for the Summit for Democracy will begin in earnest in the coming weeks and months, and details like the specific invitation list and expectations of participants are yet to be determined. However, I agree that Taiwan is a leading democracy, as well as a major economy, a security partner, a technology powerhouse, and a shining example of how an open society can effectively contain COVID-19.

The bipartisan Taiwan Assurance Act, which became law in December 2020, requires the Secretary of State to conduct a formal review of the various internal documents that compose the Department's guidelines that govern relations with Taiwan, and to reissue new guidelines to executive branch agencies and departments. These new guidelines should be crafted to deepen and strengthen U.S.-Taiwan ties and to better reflect Taiwan's democratization and to afford the proper dignity deserving of that status. On January 9, 2021, Secretary Pompeo announced that he was lifting all self-imposed restrictions that regulate how our diplomats, servicemen and women, and other U.S. officials interact with Taiwan and declared the existing guidelines null and void.

Do you support the removing of State Department's self-imposed guidelines for engaging with Taiwan?

If confirmed, will you conduct this review as required by law, and establish new guidelines that are befitting of relations with a fellow democracy, and that do not re-impose limitations on how the United States interacts with Taiwan that stem from undue consideration of PRC claims rather than advancing U.S. interests and values?

In line with the Taiwan Assurance Act passed by Congress, the State Department has been engaged in a review of contact guidance for our unofficial relations with Taiwan. I agree with Congress that it is time for updated guidance to reflect our commitment to deepening ties with Taiwan -- a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner. For the time being, we will leave the recent revocation of contact guidance in place so that we can complete the review that was already well underway.

In 2020, U.S. warships set a record of more than a dozen transits of the Taiwan Strait in a single year, two in the month of December alone. During the Obama administration, transits were much less frequent, rarely exceeding once a year. Freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the contested waters of the South China Sea were also infrequent during the Obama administration, the timidity of which emboldened the People's Liberation Army to expand its operations in the region and militarize its man-made islands. If confirmed, will you support the continuation of frequent transits and FONOPs in the Taiwan Strait at levels commiserate with the Chinese threat against Taiwan? Will you refuse to reduce transits in order to curry favor with Beijing on climate change or any other issue?

Yes.

In 2020, the CCP's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) committed an unprecedented number of incursions into Taiwan's airspace. The PLAAF flew approximately 380 sorties into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) last year, entering its ADIZ on 91 days during the first 11 months of the year, according to a recent report. Last year further witnessed the highest number of long-distance training missions by the PLA around Taiwan. Several of these incidents have involved PLAAF fighter plans crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait that was originally established by the U.S. military. If confirmed, what will you do to counter these efforts by the PLA to intimidate Taiwan and to compromise its military preparedness by exhausting its personnel and equipment?

If confirmed, I will carefully review the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait. President Biden has said many times that U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

In a November 12, 2020 interview, Secretary Pompeo said, "Taiwan has not been a part of China. That was recognized with the work that President Reagan did to lay out the policies that the United States has adhered to now for three-and-a-half decades." Secretary Pompeo was

referring to the Six Assurances that President Reagan provided to Taiwan in 1982, one of which was that the United States would not alter its longstanding position on the sovereignty of Taiwan, which was that Taiwan's status is unresolved and must be resolved peacefully. The United States has never recognized Taiwan as a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), as a matter of fact and principle.

Do you affirm that U.S. policy does not recognize and has never accepted the PRC claim to sovereignty over Taiwan? If confirmed, will you pledge to ensure that the State Department continues to deny U.S. recognition to PRC claims that are based on its spurious assertion of historical sovereignty over Taiwan?

President Biden has said many times that U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

UYGHUR ATROCITIES

Secretary of State Pompeo rightly determined that the People's Republic of China is committing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. Do you agree with this determination? What are the appropriate tools for holding the PRC Government and its officials accountable for these atrocities?

Uighurs and other ethnic minorities have suffered unspeakable oppression at the hands of China's authoritarian government. President Biden has called this oppression genocide, and I did so as well at my hearing. China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences. We will speak out consistently and jointly with allies and partners, impose costs and sanctions on those responsible, and help those persecuted find safe haven in the United States and other countries. We have been heartened by bipartisan congressional action on Xinjiang and commit to implement the Uighur Human Rights Policy Act. We look forward to working with Congress on this crucial issue.

Will you commit to using those tools you identified as being appropriate in a timely fashion?

Yes.

Will you push for a final determination from the new administration to determine whether human rights abuses carried out in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region constitute genocide and crimes against humanity, and will you work toward getting like-minded countries to join the U.S. in a genocide determination? What is your interpretation of the definition of "genocide" as laid out in the Genocide Convention? If confirmed, do you plan to call for international organizations to carry out an investigation into human rights abuses in Xinjiang? Will you work to ensure that the interagency Atrocity Early Warning Task Force implements policies throughout the U.S. Government to respond to atrocities in Xinjiang?

If confirmed, I will review these issues as a priority.

Will you endorse the Rubio-Merkley Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act after it has been reintroduced this Congress to prevent Beijing from profiting from its abuse of Uyghur and other persecuted groups' labor?

The Biden-Harris administration stands against forced labor and China's abuses targeting Uighurs and other persecuted groups. If confirmed, I will review this legislation and look forward to working with Congress to hold Beijing accountable.

The Trump administration used the Department of Commerce's Entity List and wide-ranging withhold release orders to prevent the importation into the United States goods made with Uyghur and other groups' forced labor. Do you believe the United States should continue to use these measures? What other tools do you think the U.S. government should apply?

The U.S. government has taken bold action to ensure that products made with forced labor in Xinjiang do not enter the U.S. market, including through a Withhold Release Order issued in January that bans all cotton and tomato products produced in Xinjiang. Other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom, have also begun to take actions to restrict imports of goods made with forced labor in Xinjiang. However, observers have speculated that China may be able to absorb much of the impact of such restrictions in its domestic market, and China has continued to enjoy support for its policies in Xinjiang from countries around the world, including Muslim-majority countries.

> *What actions can the U.S. take multilaterally to continue to address the issue of forced labor in Xinjiang, including to protect against retaliatory actions from China?*
>
> *How can the U.S. best provide support to civil society actors in Muslim-majority countries who are conducting advocacy on this issue? Will you work to ensure that discussions over arbitrary mass detention and forced labor in Xinjiang are integrated into trade discussions?*

The Biden-Harris administration stands against forced labor and China's abuses targeting Uighurs and other persecuted groups. If confirmed, I will review these decisions, consult with allies, partners, and civil society groups, and consider all available tools.

China has used its growing global influence to pressure other countries to harass, intimidate, and even deport Uyghurs. Those who are deported back to China are almost certain to face detention or other types of severe persecution upon their return. In December 2020, China announced that it had ratified an extradition deal it had signed with Turkey in 2017, leaving Turkey's sizeable Uyghur community vulnerable to deportation. Observers have speculated that Chinese officials have warned Turkey they will not much-needed COVID-19 vaccines to the country if it refuses to ratify the deal.

What actions will you take to work with countries hosting Uyghur communities to ensure they do not summarily deport Uyghurs to China?

> *How can the United States use its diplomatic and economic leverage to protect Uyghurs from unjust deportation from other countries back to China?*

We will speak out consistently and jointly with allies and partners, impose costs and sanctions on those responsible, and help those persecuted find safe haven in the United States and other countries.

TIBET

Do you believe that the CCP is committing cultural genocide against Tibetans, whose civilization is distinct from that of China and boasts its own rich language, literature, religious tradition, and culture?

The Biden-Harris administration will stand up for the people of Tibet. China's government has been relentlessly advancing its assault on the human rights, religious freedoms, and dignity of the Tibetan people. We will also work with our allies to press Beijing to return to direct dialogue with the representatives of the Tibetan people to achieve meaningful autonomy, respect for human rights, and the preservation of Tibet's environment as well as its unique cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions. And we will consider sanctioning Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses in Tibet.

If confirmed, will you relay to Beijing that the United States will not accept a Chinese-controlled process to select the Dalai Lama's successor?

The Chinese government should have no role in the succession process of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese government's interference in the succession of the Panchen Lama 25 years ago, including disappearing the Panchen Lama as a child and attempting to replace him with Chinese government-chosen successor remains an outrageous violation of religious freedom. If confirmed, I am committed to working with the Special Coordinator for Tibet at the State Department and with the Ambassador at large for International Religious Freedom to promote religious freedom for Tibetans in China and around the world.

China's censorship and information and communication blockade, specifically in Tibet, prevents reporters from investigating the reality of the situation in Tibet. What steps will you take with the Chinese authorities to ensure that American journalists will be able to freely access Tibet just as Chinese journalists are able to do so in the United States?

It has long been the policy of the U.S. government, codified in the bipartisan Tibetan Policy Act of 2001, *to promote dialogue between the Dalai Lama (and/or his envoys) and the Chinese government toward a solution of the Tibet issue that guarantees the respect of the "distinct identity" of the Tibetan people that is based on their own history, traditions, language, and religion. The dialogue has been at a standstill since 2010, and the lack of substantive progress toward a genuine resolution continues to be a thorny issue in U.S.-China relations. The United*

States has played a key role in encouraging past dialogues. Would you, if confirmed, personally commit to pressing the PRC leadership to address Tibetan concerns through the resumption of dialogue with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, without preconditions?

Yes.

Will you, if confirmed, commit to pressing the Chinese authorities to approve the opening of a U.S. Consulate in Lhasa, and make clear that the opening of any new PRC consulate in the United States is contingent on the opening of a U.S. consulate in Lhasa?

If confirmed, I will continue to press for the opening of a U.S. consulate in Lhasa.

Unfortunately, PRC authorities forced the closure of the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu in August 2020. As the U.S. diplomatic mission geographically closest to the Tibetan Plateau, the Consulate bore most of the responsibility for reporting on conditions in Tibet and for leading U.S. outreach to Tibetans. In December 2020, Congress passed and President signed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019, which requires that "The Secretary shall establish a Tibet section within the United States Embassy in Beijing, China, to follow political, economic, and social developments in Tibet until such time as a United States consulate in Lhasa, Tibet, is established under subsection (a)." If confirmed, will you promptly establish a Tibet Unit within the Political Section of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing?

Yes.

Section 14 of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2001 requires that "the Secretary of State shall ensure that Tibetan language training is available to foreign service officers, and that every effort is made to ensure that a Tibetan-speaking foreign service officer is assigned to the consulate in the People's Republic of China responsible for tracking developments in Tibet." Even prior to recent closure of Consulate General Chengdu, the State Department was not in compliance with Tibetan Policy Act, as there was no Tibetan language designated position anywhere in Mission China. The Department's focus was exclusively on Mandarin Chinese training. If confirmed, will you promptly correct this compliance issue, and ensure that the officers who staff the newly created Tibetan Issues Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing are provided with a minimum of nine months of Tibetan language training prior to taking the assignment?

Yes.

Congress has passed several laws, including most recently the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, *which contains a geographic definition of "Tibet" that encompasses the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), as well as the Tibetan areas incorporated by the PRC into Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. This legal definition best reflects Tibet's history and ethnography. The State Department, by contrast, often follows PRC nomenclature. PRC nomenclature places the CCP's political claims above historical facts, and is designed to obscure the size of Tibet and the magnitude of the Chinese invasion and occupation. For example, the PRC has split the area of eastern Tibet known as Kham between the TAR, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces. Amdo is split between Qinghai and Gansu provinces. These*

were political decisions made by Chinese, not Tibetans, which took no account of important cultural, linguistic, and geographic distinctions between these Tibetan areas and the Chinese provinces to which they were subordinated. If confirmed, will you commit to correcting State Department nomenclature so that it reflects the true historical and ethnographic scope of Tibet rather than PRC propaganda?

If confirmed, I will review this issue.

If the Chinese authorities attempt to force a politically chosen successor on the Tibetan people, will you commit to impose serious sanctions in response?

If confirmed, I would consider all available tools at our disposal to hold China accountable, and would closely consult with Congress on the appropriate steps.

In 1995, at the age of six, Chinese authorities abducted the Panchen Lama, along with his parents. The family has not been seen since that time. Will you commit to regularly raise the case of the Panchen Lama and press for his release? Will you ensure that no U.S. official meets with, or provides a public platform, for the individual that Beijing appointed in his place?

Yes.

The Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is a Congressionally-mandated position that has been traditionally held concurrently by the Undersecretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. If confirmed, will you ensure that the Special Coordinator for Tibet is properly dual-hatted with the Undersecretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy? Will you commit to empowering him/her to exercise equivalent authority within the bureaucracy to the Undersecretary of Political Affairs, and when appropriate, to participate in principal meetings held at the White House?

If confirmed, I will ensure that we appoint a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the appropriate senior level in the Department and will empower that individual.

HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CHINA

Beginning in 2015, the PRC passed a series of laws that codified the most abusive practices of its massive internal security apparatus, and gave its security forces carte blanche to target PRC citizens and foreign residents for virtually any activity or speech that Beijing claimed touched on purposely vague and expansive concepts such as "national security," which its laws left purposely vague and expansive, imposing a legal requirement to "adhere to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in national security matters." In other words, "national security" means whatever the Communist Party says it means. These problematic laws include the National Security Law, the Counterespionage Law, the Cybersecurity Law, the Counterterrorism Law, the National Intelligence Law, and the Overseas NGO Domestic Activities Management Law.

If confirmed, will you raise U.S. objections to these laws with the PRC authorities?

Will you, as a matter of policy, deny the legitimacy of these laws, and refuse to equate them with legislation passed by democratically elected legislatures, which unlike China's laws, contain proper limits on the authorities of security services, narrower and clearer definitions of crimes, legal protections for fundamental freedoms, and reliable legal mechanisms for redress?

Yes.

The Overseas NGO Domestic Activities Management Law has suffocated civil society in China, leaving virtually no space for serious work to be done, and forcing thousands of previously vibrant groups, particularly those with foreign partners, to cease all operations, completely restructure, or abandon certain areas of work that Beijing links to liberalization. If confirmed, will you raise the cause of civil society in China, support groups that are trying to do good work despite these restrictions, and speak out forcefully against this illegitimate law?

Yes.

Religious believers who gather or organize themselves in China are compelled to register with the state and accept onerous and intrusive regulation by "mass organizations," which were established by the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party to serve as the "official supervisory organs" that control religious expression for the five legally recognized religions. These include the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China, the Chinese Christian Council, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the Chinese Taoist Association, and the Chinese Muslim Association.

If confirmed, will you agree to actively oppose this system of mandatory registration and political subjugation of religious groups to "mass organizations" as an egregious violation of the fundamental freedom of religious belief and practice?

Yes.

In December 2018, Chinese authorities detained Pastor Wang Yi of the Autumn Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, and one year later, sentenced him to nine years in prison for refusing to accept the CCP controls of his congregation described above. If confirmed, will you agree to raise Pastor Wang's case with leaders in Beijing and advocate for his immediate and unconditional release until they do so?

Yes.

In July 2018, Secretary Pompeo hosted the first ever Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom that brought together leaders from around the world to discuss the challenges facing religious freedom, identify means to address religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, and promote greater respect and preservation of religious liberty for all. The second ministerial was held in Washington, D.C. in July 2019, and Poland was set to hold the third ministerial in July 2020, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic.

If confirmed, will you commit to maintain this important forum, and build on the last Administration's efforts to promote religious freedom around the world?

Under the Biden-Harris administration, the United States will remain engaged in this forum. The United States will continue to be a strong voice for religious freedom globally.

During the Obama Administration, the so-called U.S.-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange was held annually alongside the Strategic and Economic Dialogue. The Chinese participants were invariably drawn from "mass organizations" established and controlled by the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This charade that did nothing to advance U.S. interests or facilitate genuine people-to-people ties.

If confirmed, will you ensure the U.S. government does not authorize or participate in similar "people-to-people" exchange forums that are CCP-controlled and not representative of Chinese society?

If confirmed, I commit to review this matter and ensure that any people-to-people exchanges are genuine and representative of Chinese society.

In May 2020, the Bureau of Industry and Security at the Department of Commerce announced that it had added nine PRC entities to Entity List on account of their involvement in human rights violations. Inclusion on the list means those entities are subject to specific license requirements for the export, re-export and/or transfer (in-country) of specified items, and transactions with those entities automatically carry a "red flag" that warrants scrutiny. Did you support this decision? If confirmed, would you encourage the Department of Commerce to continue to use the Entity List to prevent unlicensed business transactions between U.S. companies and PRC entities complicit in human rights abuses?

If confirmed, I would encourage the U.S. government to consider all available tools, including the Entity List, to prevent unlicensed business transactions between U.S. companies and PRC entities complicit in human rights abuses.

HONG KONG

If confirmed, will you refuse to sign any new bilateral agreement with the People's Republic of China until it returns to compliance with the Sino-British Joint Declaration? If not, please explain on what basis you believe the PRC could be trusted to comply with a bilateral agreement that it signs with the United States when it has not abided by this agreement?

China's assault on freedom and democracy in Hong Kong are at odds with its agreements at the handover. China's failure to uphold key past commitments is a significant factor in how we will develop our approach to China. We are clear-eyed and will keep these past shortcomings in mind as we deal with Beijing going forward.

Under the draconian National Security Law, the CCP has been targeting Hong Kong for merely engaging in peaceful protest or dissent or participating in their city's democratic processes. Will you direct our diplomatic missions around the world, including in Hong Kong, to do their utmost

to assist Hong Kongers who fear political persecution and use all consular options, including Special Public Benefit Parole, to provide safe harbor?

Yes, we will help those persecuted in Hong Kong find safe haven in the United States and other countries.

If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that the State Department maintains a high degree of pressure on Beijing for its violations of Hong Kong's autonomy and prioritizes this key issue above all other competing interests in Hong Kong?

Yes.

In retrospect, what warning signs did the State Department fail to identify during your time as Deputy Secretary that foreshadowed the coming crackdown on Hong Kong?

As I said at my hearing, there was a broad bipartisan consensus for years, over administrations of both parties, that economic liberalization in China would lead to political liberalization, and that has not happened. There is no doubt that the United States should clearly address Beijing's assault on freedom, democracy, and autonomy in Hong Kong. If confirmed, I will work with partners and allies to devise, as much as possible and appropriate, a coordinated approach to the crackdown.

If confirmed, will you commit to appoint senior officers as Consul General who are strongly committed to the democratization of Hong Kong?

Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to advocate on behalf of Hong Kong protesters who are imprisoned for violations of the so-called National Security Law, or for similar politically motivated charges, both in your private conversations with Hong Kong and PRC central government officials, as well as in public diplomacy?

Yes.

In May 2020, Secretary Pompeo decertified Hong Kong as sufficiently autonomous to warrant special treatment under U.S. law. Do you agree with Secretary Pompeo's decision? If confirmed, will you use decertification and all other available means to deny legitimacy to the government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region until the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Basic Law are restored?

If confirmed, I commit to review this matter and will push for the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Basic Law.

If confirmed, will you raise strenuous objections to the National Security Law's criminalization of Hong Kong residents' communication with foreign officials, such as U.S. diplomatic personnel? Will you commit to raise U.S. objections to these laws with PRC central authorities?

Yes.

TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES WITH CHINA

Is it possible for U.S. companies to do business with China in a manner that is free of the risk of interference by the Chinese Communist Party? If not, how would you, if confirmed, mitigate the risk of these business relationships being politicized and/or exploited for espionage?

The economic dimension of U.S.-China competition is crucial, and President Biden is firmly committed to taking on the challenge of China's abusive, unfair, and illegal practices. That includes dealing with the risks presented when U.S. companies do business in China.

The judiciary of the People's Republic of China (PRC) completely lacks independence. This is demonstrated by its judges being members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) who are appointed by the CCP, and formal mechanisms for ensuring that CCP leaders are able to weigh in directly regarding individual cases before decisions are handed down. Given the politicized nature of this judiciary, it is unreasonable to expect that American investors could ever receive a fair and impartial hearing of business disputes that occur in China. If confirmed, will you commit to issue explicit public warnings about the risks of doing business in the PRC, and actively discourage U.S. companies from pursuing business there until serious judicial reforms are undertaken that would provide proper avenues of legal redress to U.S. investors?

The economic dimension of U.S.-China competition is crucial, and President Biden is firmly committed to taking on the challenge of China's abusive, unfair, and illegal practices. That includes the risks presented by China's opaque legal system.

During the final year of the Obama Administration, negotiations over a bilateral investment treaty (BIT) with China – favored by Wall Street and multinational corporations – continued until the very end, even in the absence of any progress on U.S. demands. It is far from clear on what basis the administration believed that such an agreement, if reached, would have actually been honored when China has yet to fulfill its obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) after nearly two decades of enjoying the benefits of membership.

> *If confirmed, would you commit to forgo BIT negotiations with China so long as the CCP remains in control of large sectors of China's economy and noncompliant with its WTO obligations?*

The economic dimension of U.S.-China competition is crucial, and President Biden is firmly committed to taking on the challenge of China's abusive, unfair, and illegal practices. Our test for such agreements must be whether they deliver for the American worker and the middle class. We will not sign any new trade deals until we have made significant investments in American workers and infrastructure.

In June 2019, President Trump signed a "Memorandum on Reforming Developing-Country Status in the World Trade Organization." China has misused the developing-country status in

the WTO and other international organizations for years to reduce its obligations and to give its industries an unfair advantage over its U.S. rivals. If confirmed, will you advise President Biden to lead a multilateral effort to revoke China's developing country status at the WTO and in other relevant organizations?

If confirmed, I will review this matter in consultation with allies and relevant stakeholders.

In March 2018, President Trump blocked Broadcom's acquisition of Qualcomm as a result of an investigation by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). In March 2020, President Trump ordered Beijing Shiji Information Technology to divest all of its interests in StayNTouch as result of a CFIUS investigation. Did you support these decisions? If confirmed, will you commit to support a vigorous CFIUS review process that carefully vets all investments linked to the PRC for potential threats to U.S. national security broadly defined?

If confirmed, I will review these matters with interagency colleagues to ensure that we protect critical technology and intellectual property and threats to U.S. national security.

In April 2018, the Commerce Department imposed a denial order on Chinese telecom company ZTE that banned all U.S. exports to ZTE. Three months later, Commerce lifted this order after negotiating a settlement agreement with ZTE. If confirmed, will you commit to work with the Secretary of Commerce to revisit this case, and if the evidence supports the conclusion that ZTE remains a threat to national security, will you support the reinstatement of a denial order?

President Biden is firmly committed to making sure that Chinese companies cannot misappropriate and misuse American technology -- and to ensuring that U.S. technology does not support China's malign activities. I am not in a position to comment on specific regulatory actions, but I can assure that we intend to review these issues carefully and will be committed to protecting U.S. national security and America's technological edge.

In June 2018, President Trump directed USTR to launch a case against China's intellectual property practices at the WTO, and to impose tariffs amounting to $50 billion of PRC imports. This was the largest-ever tariff action by any administration, which was later expanded to cover $370 billion of PRC imports. If confirmed, will you urge President Biden to make ample use of tariff actions, as well as WTO mechanisms, to counter China's unfair trade practices? How could these be more effectively applied?

As the President has said, we are going to review tariffs very carefully. The President has been clear that he does not want to prejudice his options.

In May 2019, President Trump issued an Executive Order on Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain. This executive order authorized the Commerce Secretary to regulate the acquisition and use of ICT and related services produced by a "foreign adversary," which largely applies to the People's Republic of China. Do you support

this decision? If confirmed, will you urge President Biden and the Commerce Secretary to uphold this executive order and rigorously implement it?

If confirmed, I will support a careful review of the Executive Order and the Commerce Secretary's recent rulemaking implementing that Order, to ensure that they protect U.S. national security.

In May 2020, the Commerce Department updated its export control rules for foreign-produced products to specifically target Huawei, impacting Huawei's acquisition of advanced semiconductors for 5G equipment and handsets. There is convincing evidence that Huawei retains ties to the People's Liberation Army, and allows PRC intelligence agencies to access their equipment for surveillance and other intelligence purposes. Did you agree with these actions taken by the FBI, DOJ, and the Commerce Department, and if confirmed, will you advise President Biden to continue to enforce these actions and take further measures as necessary to prohibit Huawei from having access to the U.S. market and U.S. consumers?

President Biden is firmly committed to making sure that Chinese companies cannot misappropriate and misuse American technology -- and to ensuring that U.S. technology does not support China's malign activities. I am not in a position to comment on specific regulatory actions, but I can assure that we intend to review these issues carefully and will be committed to protecting U.S. national security and America's technological edge.

In June 2020, the Federal Communications Commission named Huawei and ZTE as national security threats and banned the use of FCC's Universal Service Fund to purchase equipment from these companies. Did you support this decision? If confirmed, will you urge the White House to uphold this designation of Huawei and ZTE as national security threats and the ban against purchasing their equipment?

President Biden is firmly committed to making sure that Chinese companies with malign intentions are not given the opportunity to threaten U.S. national security. I am not in a position to comment on specific regulatory actions, but I can assure that we intend to review these issues carefully and will be committed to protecting U.S. national security and America's technological edge.

The PRC government uses talent programs, such as the Thousand Talents Plan, to attract foreign scientists and engineers to the PRC to use their expertise and access to foreign technologies to aid in the development of new technology that gives China's military and industries an advantage. Thousands of researchers across the world have participated in these talent programs since 2008, often without reporting their income or their participation. Some researchers have faced criminal charges or have been fired by their home institutions for participating in PRC talent programs.

How should the United States respond to these programs?

What measures do you think should be used to apply greater scrutiny to U.S.-PRC science and technology cooperation to protect U.S. intellectual property and national security interests?

What steps will you take to raise public awareness of the dangers of PRC talent programs?

We must hold China accountable for its unfair and illegal practices of acquiring U.S. technology and intellectual property. We intend to review China's talent programs and respond in ways that protect U.S. economic competitiveness and national security.

Beijing has weaponized trade and market access to punish trade partners that defy its political agenda. When the United States and our allies become targets of Beijing's economic coercion, how do you plan to respond? How will you assist our allies in this effort?

We must hold China accountable for its unfair and illegal practices. Our approach to date has been too unilateral -- and, as a result, ineffective. The most effective way to meet the challenge is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors. On its own, the United States represents about a quarter of global GDP. When we join together with fellow democracies, our strength more than doubles. China cannot afford to ignore more than half the global economy.

CORONAVIRUS COVER UP

While the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in Wuhan, has claimed the lives of nearly two million people so far, CCP-ruled China has prevented any transparent and thorough international investigation of the COVID-19 pandemic's origin. On January 15, 2021, the State Department issued a public statement and unclassified fact sheet that not only reiterated U.S. calls for an international investigation, but also disclosed new information on activities at the Wuhan Institute of Virology that raise serious questions, including: (a) researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology falling ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in Autumn 2019, just prior to the known start of the outbreak; years of research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, including "gain of function" experiments, on coronaviruses similar to the virus that causes COVID-19; and Wuhan Institute of Virology links to classified Chinese military research.

If you are confirmed, how will the State Department, under your leadership, push for international transparency and accountability to ensure we learn what caused the COVID-19 pandemic and how to prevent the next pandemic?

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department will follow up on the Department's January 2021 disclosure of new information on activities at the Wuhan Institute of Virology? Will you commit to sharing with Congress—and with the public as appropriate—further details on the disclosures including the names of the Wuhan Institute of Virology researchers who were sick in the fall of 2019?

If confirmed, will you commit to provide this committee with a thorough briefing within 60 days of confirmation that summarizes all of the relevant diplomatic reporting gathered to date on the origin of the coronavirus and its initial cover up by Chinese officials?

It is imperative that we get to the bottom of the early days of the pandemic in China. The international investigation should be robust and clear. We must prepare to draw on information collected and analyzed by our Intelligence Community and to work with our allies to evaluate the report's credibility once the investigation is done. We will follow up -- with Congress and, as appropriate, with the public -- on recent disclosures of new information and relevant diplomatic reporting. We also need to make sure that this can't happen again. That is why the President will rebuild and expand the systems to prevent, detect, and respond to biological threats. With China specifically, we will work to get our experts back to China so that our scientists can be on the frontlines to fight the emergence and spread of potential future pandemics. Our plan is to pursue these steps aggressively and in concert with our partners. That is how we will be able to investigate what happened and, most importantly, ensure it can never happen again.

Indo-Pacific Strategy, Chinese Expansionism, and the South China Sea

If confirmed, how will you direct the State Department to support allies and partners in the Pacific and Southeast Asia who are willing to stand up to Chinese influence operations and encroachment on their interests?

The Biden-Harris administration will mend America's alliances and modernize them for the world we face. We're committed to working with allies to combat COVID-19 and climate change; to face down foreign election interference and corruption; to strengthen our defenses in cyber space and to produce and secure the technologies of the future. If we do this, we will be better-equipped to face down the China challenge together.

If confirmed, will you commit to developing a country-by-country strategy for the Indo-Pacific region that aims to enhance trade and investment ties in specific sectors of each of these economies in a manner that would reduce their dependency on China?

Yes.

In July 2016, The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, constituted under Annex VII to the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), ruled in favor of the Philippines and against China in a case that considered China's claims to the South China Sea. The ruling was an unequivocal rebuke of China's claims. It concluded that there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea falling within the parameters of its so-called "nine-dash line." The tribunal found no evidence that China had historically exercised exclusive control over the waters or their resources. It further concluded that China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights by obstructing fishing and oil exploration, constructing artificial islands and by encouraging Chinese fishermen to fish in the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration did not do enough, unilaterally or multilaterally, to enforce the ruling, even though it involved a long-time U.S.

treaty ally versus our greatest strategic competitor. What lessons have you learned from this case? If confirmed, what will you do to enforce this ruling going forward?

In recent years, China has placed deeply problematic pressure on the Philippines in the South China Sea. In taking its case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration, where it won clearly and convincingly, in a thorough repudiation of PRC claims, Manila acted just as it should. For the United States, freedom of navigation and adherence to international law are vital interests in the South China Sea. The United States will stand by the Philippines to make sure the alliance can safeguard Filipino interests and territory, and the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows and our alliance commitments require.

Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) is a national strategy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to develop the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a "world class military" by 2049, according to the State Department. The CCP is systematically mobilizing state-owned enterprises, private companies, and science and technology (S&T) research institutions in China to ensure that new innovations made by economic and academic actors are simultaneously advancing military technological development. The goal of MCF is to enable the PRC to develop the most technologically advanced military in the world. Simply put, MCF is eliminating the barriers between China's civilian research and commercial sectors, and its military and defense industrial sectors. The CCP is implementing this strategy, not just through its own research and development efforts, but also by acquiring and diverting the world's cutting-edge technologies – including through theft – in order to achieve military dominance. In April 2020, the Commerce Department issued three significant export control regulatory changes to counter the military-civil fusion strategy, but more work needs to be done.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to protect U.S technology and expertise from being acquired for use by the PLA?

Will you support further regulatory changes to reduce U.S. vulnerabilities to the military-civilian fusion strategy?

Will you agree to subject all S&T joint research projects and exchange programs between the United States and China to strict scrutiny?

President Biden is firmly committed to making sure that Chinese companies cannot misappropriate and misuse American technology and that U.S. technology does not support China's military modernization and is not acquired for use by the People's Liberation Army. We will be committed to protecting U.S. national security and America's technological edge.

Chinese fishing vessels are engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. They often exploit the fishing resources of smaller nations. If confirmed, how will the State Department under your leadership seek to expose and prevent Chinese IUU fishing, and sanction this misconduct when it occurs?

It is incumbent on Beijing to demonstrate in word and deed that it respects international law, institutions, and norms that govern the global commons and the Indo-Pacific. We will stand alongside partners to insist that it does so.

In October 2018, President Trump signed into law the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act of 2018 (BUILD Act), creating the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). If confirmed, do you commit to utilizing the DFC as a tool to counter China's Belt- and-Road Initiative and other economic influence operations by the PRC? How would you make the DFC a more effective tool of the U.S. government?

The Biden-Harris administration will review how we can better utilize the DFC and work in coordination with allies and partners, such as Japan and Australia, to offer higher-standards, transparently-governed infrastructure alternatives. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this.

PRC Visa Issues

The Obama Administration relaxed visa regulations despite the ongoing prevalence of visa fraud committed by PRC nationals. While visa fraud for immigration purposes is less common among PRC nationals than in previous decades, visa fraud to perpetuate the theft of trade secrets and to commit other forms of espionage remains rampant. The Department of Justice arrested three PLA officers on visa fraud charges in June and July 2020 and sought a fourth who took refuge at the PRC Consulate in San Francisco. All four acquired visas to conduct research in the United States and concealed their military affiliation from visa officers when they applied for visas to conduct research in the United States.

> *If confirmed, how will you ensure that Consular officers who interviewed PRC nationals have sufficient training in the Chinese language and investigative skills to prevent such fraud from occurring?*
>
> *Will you commit to explore regulatory changes that would make it easier for Consular officers to deny visas to PRC nationals who work in high-risk security fields, and introduce a strong presumption of denial that must be overcome by the applicant in these cases?*

It is important to address the challenge of the theft of trade secrets and other forms of espionage by China and other competitors. If confirmed, I will review these issues carefully to protect U.S. prosperity and national security.

MONGOLIA

Mongolia sits between two authoritarian states, the People's Republic of China and Russia, both of which have taken aggressive action against neighboring countries. If confirmed, will you commit to strengthen U.S. relations with Mongolia?

Yes.

If President Biden follows through with his campaign promise to assembly a summit of democracies, will you ensure that Mongolia is invited to participate?

The planning for the Summit for Democracy will begin in earnest in the coming weeks and months, and details like the specific invitation list and expectations of participants are yet to be determined. However, I agree that we have common values and shared interests with Mongolia.

Will you as a matter of policy seek to increase U.S. investment in Mongolia and bilateral trade ties?

Yes.

The southern territories inhabited by Mongolians were taken over by the Chinese Communists in the late 1940s after the end of World War II. Beijing called this area the "Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region." Until recently, Mongolians there continued to receive an education in their indigenous language, and were largely able to maintain their traditional culture, though religious belief and practice were highly regulated and restricted as it is throughout the PRC, and the government forced many nomads to give up their traditional lifestyle in the name of "development." Beginning in September 2020, Chinese authorities began to scale back on Mongolian language education in what appeared to be a move toward a monolithic Chinese curriculum, which likely signals a shift to policies of cultural genocide carried about by Chinese authorities in Tibet and Uyghur areas. If confirmed, will you work with your counterpart in Ulaanbaatar to promote programs to protect the Mongolian language, culture, and Buddhism, and wherever possible, to extend such promotion to Mongolians in the PRC?

If confirmed, I will engage with my counterpart in Ulaanbaatar and will also push back against the attacks of China's government on the Mongolian language, culture, and Buddhism.

JAPAN

If Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister recently expressed concern about Taiwan's security in light of China's crackdown on Hong Kong, and called on President Biden to support Taiwan's defense. If confirmed, will you work with your counterpart in Tokyo, as well as the Secretary of Defense, to ensure that U.S. forces and Japanese forces are planning to respond jointly in the event of a Taiwan contingency? Will you encourage Tokyo to engage in security cooperation with Taiwan to complement existing U.S. cooperation with Taiwan?

Yes. If confirmed I will commit to working closely with allies to advance our shared prosperity, security, and values in the Asia-Pacific region.

On November 29, 2012, the U.S. Senate unanimously approved an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 that affirmed that the Senkaku Islands fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty, and that the United States would defend Japan from armed attack. In April 2014, President Obama took the same position. Do you support this interpretation of our treaty obligations to Japan?

Yes. This is the longstanding position of the U.S. government and the Biden-Harris administration stands firmly behind it.

KOREA

The Republic of Korea remains a close security partner of the United States and relies on our military alliance to provide security from North Korea. When it comes to countering the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party, however, ROK leaders are more reticent to cooperate for fear of angering Korea's largest trade partner. If confirmed, what will you do expand U.S.-ROK trade and investment ties, and encourage Seoul to diversify its trade and investment away from China in order to reduce its vulnerability to Chinese economic coercion?

Since 1953, our alliance with South Korea has been the linchpin of the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific. It has been essential to keeping the peace on the Korean Peninsula, and is a foothold from which the United States helps to bring peace and stability to Asia. Our military and defense ties are undeniable, but so too are our economic, technological, diplomatic, and values-based bonds strong and enduring. If confirmed, I will work to expand U.S.-ROK trade and investment ties, as well as review our approach to Seoul on a range of priority challenges including the risks of Chinese economic coercion.

THAILAND

Large-scale protests engulfed Bangkok in 2020, giving stage to unprecedented public expression of discontent with the monarchy's and military's longstanding domination of Thailand's politics and economy. If confirmed, how will you respond to the protest movement in Thailand, and how will U.S. policy promote human rights and democracy in Thailand going forward? Will you encourage Bangkok to reform the military and monarchy?

It is no secret that, for the last decade, political turmoil in Thailand has caused friction between our two countries. Values must be at the center of our foreign policy, and political repression, quashing of civil society, and military rule -- by any government, anywhere -- must change the way we pursue our diplomacy. The United States and Thailand have been through many difficult periods in the past. Our shared history, shared interests, and the common values that unite our peoples make me confident that we can continue to navigate these challenges for the good of both countries.

If confirmed, how will you work to counter PRC influence and increase awareness of the risks of dependency on trade and investment from China?

If confirmed, I will review our approach to countering PRC influence in Thailand and increasing awareness of the risks of dependency on trade and investment from China.

CAMBODIA

Despite repeated denials by Hun Sen's government in Phnom Penh, it is clear that the naval forces of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has been involved in the expansion of the infrastructure at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base. The PLA presence does not appear to be temporary, and the base is likely to house PLA assets for years to come. If confirmed, what will the Biden Administration do to curtail CCP efforts to grow relations and influence with Cambodia?

If confirmed, I will review our approach to PRC efforts to grow relations and influence with Cambodia.

ASEAN

The Mekong River is one of the world's greatest life-sustaining waterways, and its vitality and the ecosystems that depend upon it throughout mainland Southeast Asia are threatened by hydropower dams and development projects upstream in areas controlled by, or under the strong influence of, the PRC. As it does elsewhere in the world, the PRC engages in resource extraction with no regard for its effects on the peoples of Southeast Asia, including their food supply that relies on fishing. If confirmed, will you lend the power and influence of the United States to the nations of Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to help press for China to cease activities that are threatening the health of the Mekong?

Yes.

CUBA

Unilateral Changes to Cuba Policy

If confirmed, will you advocate against any unilateral changes to U.S. sanctions or conditions put in place against the Cuba regime as required by U.S. law, including the Libertad Act absent the Cuban regime committing to a democratic process and democratic openings?

Support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue.

Do you believe that the Obama Administration's unilateral changes to Cuba policy without concessions from the Cuban regime made Cuba more free? Do you believe it helped the Cuban people?

The crackdown on Cubans by the regime grew worse over the last four years, not better. The Biden-Harris administration will engage directly with a large swath of Cuban civil

society; we will empower them and respect their rights through our policies, and we will directly engage the Cuban government to denounce abuses and call for reform. In 2015 and 2016, the U.S. made significant progress in advancing U.S. interests on the island, increasing support for civil society, and empowering a new class of Cuban entrepreneurs independent of the state. Most importantly, President Obama's policies of engagement strengthened family ties, increased cultural and educational exchanges, and empowered Cuba's private sector. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on how we can effectively empower the Cuban people to determine their own future.

Do you believe that the United States should normalize relations with Cuba before outstanding U.S. property claims are resolved and verified claimants are compensated? And outstanding judgments from U.S. federal courts?

Engagement has opened up the door for bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as the environment, health, and commerce, and discussions on issues of disagreement, such as human rights, property claims, and the return of fugitives from justice. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue.

If a bill were to pass Congress to remove the U.S. embargo against Cuba, and there had not been any democratic changes, including the release of all political prisoners as well as free and fair elections, would you advise the president to veto that bill until democratic transformation of the country occurs?

Support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts through empowering the Cuban people to determine their own future. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this issue.

What is your position on the current state of our policy toward Cuba, and how will you advise the president with regard to the overall Trump Administration's Cuba policy?

Our Cuba policy will be governed by two principles: support for democracy and human rights will be at the core of our efforts. Second, Americans -- especially Cuban-Americans -- are the best ambassadors for freedom in Cuba. We will demand the release of political prisoners and make human rights a centerpiece of our diplomatic engagement. We recognize there are many different views in Congress on what our approach to Cuba should be. We will consult with Congress on any potential actions.

Do you believe that Miguel Díaz-Canel is the legitimate leader of Cuba?

If confirmed, I intend to consult with Congress on how best to empower the Cuban people to determine their own future, including the leadership of their government.

Do you support maintaining the policy of prohibiting financial transactions with the Cuban military?

If confirmed, I will work with the White House and relevant State Department bureaus and offices to review this policy to assess their impact on the political and economic well-being of the Cuban people.

The 2020 State Department Trafficking in Persons Report cites the Cuban regime for using force or coercion against Cubans participating and remaining in its labor export programs, particularly the foreign medical missions program. It reports, "the government has not taken action to address its exploitative and coercive policies in these missions, which are clear indicators of human trafficking." Extensive testimony exists indicating that the Cuban regime disregards International Labor Organization standards for the fair treatment of its citizens that violates their human rights even when serving outside Cuba. What will the Department, under your leadership, do to demand transparency, and legal, fair, and humane treatment for Cuban medical personnel serving abroad?

Support for human rights will be at the core of our efforts. We will engage directly with the Cuban government to denounce abuses and call for reforms.

A group of Cuban doctors have filed a federal lawsuit against the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) alleging that PAHO organized and unduly profited from Cuba's "medical mission" to Brazil between 2013 and 2018. Do you believe PAHO should be immune from civil liability if it collected unauthorized funds in violation a federal laws against forced labor? What steps would you take to hold PAHO accountable for its actions?

If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the issue and the U.S. government's current policy approach to determine if any adjustments are necessary. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

PAHO has retained an outside law firm to conduct an "administrative review" of its actions in Brazil. Do you believe such a review offers any possibility of accountability by PAHO, either to the victims or to U.S. taxpayers whose money was used to facilitate human trafficking to enrich the Cuban government?

If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the issue and the U.S. government's current policy approach to determine if any adjustments are necessary. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Thousands of Cuban medical professionals were able to escape their servitude in Cuba's overseas missions under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, which was in effect from 2006 until January 2017. In addition to the humanitarian dimension, much our government's knowledge of Cuba's violation of international labor standards comes from these parolees. Would you offer your support to reinstate this program?

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing all of our consular policies toward Cuba in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security to assess what adjustments are necessary. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terror

Do you support maintaining Cuba's designation as a State Sponsor of Terror for its role in harboring terrorists? If yes, why? If you do not support, why not?

If confirmed, I will carefully review the recent decision to designate Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, and I will consult with the intelligence community and Congress on the way forward.

Cuban regime vs. Venezuelan Regime

Will you continue to recognize the legitimate government of Venezuela led by Interim President Juan Guaidó and the legitimate National Assembly?

President Biden was clear throughout the campaign and during the transition that he believes Maduro is a dictator and the National Assembly elected in 2015, and headed by Juan Guaido, was the country's sole remaining democratic institution. The Biden-Harris administration will stand with the Venezuelan people and their call for a restoration of democracy through free and fair elections.

Do you support stronger sanctions against Maduro, and the allies of Maduro, currently sanctioned for committing human rights abuses, trafficking drugs, or are involved in corruption/subverting democracy in Venezuela?

We will seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the release of political prisoners, and implement sanctions against Venezuelan officials credibly accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

VENEZUELA

Fraud Elections in Venezuela

How will you treat the Maduro-manipulated National Assembly stemming from the December 7th electoral farce?

As President Biden has said, we stand with the Venezuelan people and for democracy. It is past time for free and fair elections so the Venezuelan people can turn the page on the corrupt and repressive Maduro regime.

Negotiating with the Maduro Regime

Do you believe that the U.S. should engage in direct negotiations with dictator Nicolás Maduro? If so, do you envision any outcome that the U.S. could accept where Maduro or his regime could stay in power? Under what conditions would you enter into negotiations with the Maduro regime?

I agree with the "VERDAD Act" that there must be a negotiated solution to the problems in Venezuela. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

Transnational Crime

In the 2019 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), the State Department reported that Venezuela was one of the preferred trafficking routes for the transit of illicit drugs out of South America, especially cocaine. China and Russia are providing critical support to a network that stretches from drug-producing states and is decimating the rule of law through transit zones in Central America and Mexico. How do you believe we should address the issue of Venezuela as a key transit route for illicit drugs?

Assistance for counter-narcotics efforts overseas helps to keep Americans safe at home and reduces the flow of drugs to our shores. We will work with allies, such as Colombia, to combat drug trafficking in the Andean region. We will seek to rebuild multilateral pressure on Maduro, call for the release of political prisoners, and implement sanctions against Venezuelan officials credibly accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

Guyana

In recent days, Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro has been making threatening remarks towards neighboring Guyana over a territorial dispute dating back to the 19th century. He has vowed to "reconquer" the disputed Essequibo province, which makes up the western two-thirds of Guyana. Guyana is in the process of developing a giant offshore oil field, part of which involves disputed waters. The Trump administration has stood by Guyana in the face of Maduro's threats. Will the you commit to supporting Guyana in this matter — including its right to develop its energy resources without intimidation— and warn Maduro that his pressuring of Guyana will have consequences from the U.S.?

Yes.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN

The amount of narcotrafficking being conducted from Venezuela is staggering and having a devastating impacts on Venezuela, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and destination countries. Some of these countries do not have proper equipment to monitor their coasts and territorial waters for illicit smuggling. Essentially, there are parts of the Caribbean that have become highways for illegal drugs. Will you work with the committee and our regional allies to ensure that they have the equipment necessary to become stronger partners in our mutual effort to combat illegal narcotrafficking?

Assistance to support other countries' counter-narcotics efforts overseas help to keep Americans safe at home and reduces the flow of drugs to our shores. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing the current policy and funding priorities the Department has dedicated to the Western Hemisphere and determine if any adjustments are necessary to advance a successful counternarcotics strategy. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed and exposed weaknesses in our global supply chains. We are too dependent on China for critical supplies. What specifically will you do to work with our allies and partners in Latin America and Caribbean to create a stronger, mutually beneficial, supply chain for important products that are in our national security interest? How do you intend to strengthen the economies of our partners in the Americas and combat Chinese influence throughout the Western Hemisphere?

COVID-19 response and recovery, including vaccine diplomacy, will be an important focus for U.S. policy in the Americas. As the region recovers, we will look to build a resilient hemisphere that is less reliant on China or other extra-hemispheric actors.

Keystone Pipeline XL

You testified that the President-elect intends to rescind the Keystone XL permit, but under your leadership as Secretary the State Department would, "going forward…address [proposed permit applications] with absolute objectivity and professionalism." It is the believe of many that revoking an international cross-border permit that has already been granted will damage the bilateral trade relationship between the United States and Canada and discourage them from wanting to make future major investments in projects. Canada has invested significant resources in this project, including the Government of Alberta, which has invested $1.1 billion in the Keystone XL. While you also said this is a decision for the President to make, is it, in your opinion, a decision that a President should make without the benefit of objective discussion and through deliberation with our friends in the Canadian government?

The President rescinded the Keystone XL permit under his authority because he does not believe it is in the national interest.

Why, exactly, would the Keystone XL permit not advance the national interest of the United States?

The President rescinded the Keystone XL permit under his authority because he does not believe it is in the national interest. It would not be consistent with the economic and climate imperatives the President has outlined for the country.

Within the United States, Keystone XL has already created thousands of jobs and is poised to employ more than 10,000 more American workers in 2021. In addition to the creation of direct American union jobs, roughly $1.6 billion in construction contracts were recently awarded to companies in Wisconsin, Montana, and Texas. In total, project expenditures are occurring with businesses in 29 states, including Precision Pipeline, an affiliate of Florida-based MasTec Inc. This includes the purchase of new steel pipeline, which will be made and manufactured in America.

Do you believe that revoking Keystone XL's permits will hurt American workers, hurt our states, and hurt America's relationship with Canada, especially as we try to recover from the COVID pandemic?

The President will fight for good-paying union jobs building the infrastructure we need to maintain U.S. competitiveness, restore U.S. climate leadership, and contribute to a thriving clean energy economy.

IRAN

JCPOA/Terrorism Designations

Over the last four years, numerous Iranian entities were sanctioned for their role in the regime's terrorism campaigns. Among those designated are the Central Bank of Iran, the Iranian National Development Fund, and the National Oil Company. More broadly, Iran's terrorism networks and infrastructure permeate key sectors of Iran's economy.

Do you commit to not lifting these sanctions or any other terrorism-related designations as part of any negotiations with Iran?

Regarding the JCPOA itself, do you agree the deal was flawed deal and provided Iran a legal path to the bomb?

The United States and our partners negotiated a deal that prevented Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and subjected it to the most intrusive inspection regime ever negotiated. It was working. As a result of the Trump administration's unilateral withdrawal from the deal, Iran has accelerated its nuclear program and has threatened to cease to cooperate

with the enhanced procedures under the deal. The President has made clear that the United States will be prepared to resume participation in the deal if Iran restores strict compliance, as a starting point for follow on negotiations to lengthen and strengthen these nuclear constraints, and address other issues of concern, including Iran's ballistic missiles program and its regional activity. But make no mistake: with or without the JCPOA, the President is steadfast in his determination to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and to take the necessary actions to defend our forces and our friends and allies in the region from any threats posed by Iran.

Do you agree Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a terrorist organization? Are you committed to strict enforcement of sanctions against the IRGC and its subsidiaries and affiliates?

Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. It threatens our forces and partners in the region. The President is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities using the array of tools at our disposal. As I said during my hearing, this includes tough sanctions to deal with Iran's participation in and support for terrorism.

In 2017, you wrote in a New York Times op-ed that Iran's President Hassan Rouhani "seeks to moderate Iran's international behavior." Since 2017, Iran has only increased its destabilizing activities across the region. Have we actually seen anywhere across the world that Iran has moderated its behavior? Do you still believe Rouhani has moderated Iran's international malign activities?

President Biden is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities. In the years since the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, Iran has not only expanded its nuclear program and shortened its breakout time, but also intensified its regional provocations, significantly increasing its direct and indirect targeting of our forces, diplomats, and assets. Even as the Administration prioritizes diplomacy and works with our allies and partners to ensure Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon, we will work with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region.

Human Rights

How will you ensure that the U.S. supports Iranian aspirations for democracy and does not abandon the cause of protecting human rights in Iran?

Do you believe that the U.S. can separate the Iranian regime's horrific human rights record and hostage taking from its other malign activities?

The Iranian regime denies its citizens their most fundamental universal rights, including freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. The Biden-Harris administration will be committed to calling out and standing up to Iran's human rights abuses, which include inhumane executions of political opponents, the unjust detention of prisoners of conscience, and the lack of due process. The inhumane executions of the wrestling champion Navid Afkari in September and that of Ruhollah Zam in December are examples of these abuses. We will continue to maintain and impose sanctions on Iranian entities perpetrating these

human rights abuses. We will also work with our allies to hold Iran accountable for these violations.

I am particularly appalled by Iran's continued unjust detention of American citizens. Our administration will work to secure their release and bring them back home. We will also work with our allies, many of which also have nationals currently detained by the Iranian regime, to seek their release and to stand up to Iran's practice of hostage-taking.

ISRAEL

General

Do you believe Israel is, and should always remain, a Jewish State?

President Biden supports Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. He continues to believe the two-state solution is the best way to ensure that Israel remains both Jewish and democratic. In service of this vision, the Biden-Harris administration will restore credible U.S. engagement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and look for opportunities for the type of diplomatic progress that can protect Israel's long-term security.

Israel Security Assistance

You were at the State Department for the negotiations of the current U.S.-Israel memorandum of understanding on security assistance. Are you committed to fulfilling the terms of the agreement without placing any new conditions on aid to Israel?

President Biden's commitment to Israel's security is ironclad. As you know, the President played an important role in helping to negotiate the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on security assistance, the largest aid package in U.S. history. The Biden-Harris administration will uphold the terms of the 2016 MOU without reservation. We also have been clear that the Biden-Harris administration does not support placing conditions on military aid to Israel.

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS)

If confirmed, will you make it a priority to counter the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) campaign against Israel? If no, why not?

President Biden and I firmly oppose the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) campaign against Israel. This movement unfairly singles out Israel and too often veers into anti-Semitism. While the Biden-Harris Administration will respect the American people's First Amendment rights, we will not hesitate to voice our disapproval of the BDS campaign or to fight efforts to delegitimize Israel on the world stage.

International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court over the last several years has taken actions potentially leading to the prosecution of American and Israeli forces despite neither country being a

member to the court. If confirmed, will you oppose and work to prevent ICC prosecutions of Americans or Israelis?

The United States shares the goals of the ICC in promoting accountability for the worst crimes known to humanity. At the same time, the U.S. has always taken the position that the Court's jurisdiction should be reserved for countries that consent to it, or that are referred by the UN Security Council. We are following the court's work on Afghanistan closely and will vigorously defend U.S. personnel from legal jeopardy before the ICC. We are also following the court's work on the Israeli/Palestinian situation. U.S. lawyers have often worked with Israeli lawyers to share expertise on the court and I anticipate that this will continue. We understand that the ICC has recently undergone an independent review and that member states may be considering various reforms to help the court better achieve its core mission of punishing and deterring atrocity crimes. We think this is a worthwhile effort.

Golan Heights

Do you support maintaining the U.S. policy position supporting Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights?

In considering the U.S. position on the Golan Heights, we give great weight to Israel's security. As long as Bashar al-Assad is in control of Syria, it would be irresponsible to urge Israel to part with the Golan Heights. A dangerous combination of Iranian troops, Iranian-linked militias, Assad's forces, and Jihadists poses a serious security threat to Israel across the border with Syria. Control of the strategic Golan Heights provides Israel an added measure of security from the turmoil next door.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi government continues to commit egregious human rights violations including to freedom of speech and the press, freedom of expression, and the right to association and movement. They have deported Uyghurs back to China and continue to use textbooks filled with hateful and inciting language. Considering these issues, how would you, as Secretary of State address these issues with the Saudi government while still ensuring U.S. national security interests in the region?

As then-candidate Joe Biden said in October, "I will defend the right of activists, political dissidents, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence." The Biden-Harris administration recognizes the value of cooperation with Saudi Arabia, including on counterterrorism and deterring Iran. However, we will ensure that issues of universal human rights, including the cases of political prisoners, must also be a priority in U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia. I will raise human rights issues directly with leaders in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

If confirmed, do you commit to raising the cases of political prisoners at every opportunity with your Saudi counterpart, such as the women's rights activists, human rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, and the many more who remain wrongfully imprisoned?

Yes. I will raise the cases of women's rights activists and other political prisoners at every turn with Saudi counterparts.

SYRIA

Syria Policy failure under Obama Admin.

In a May 2020 interview, you said that the Obama Administration's Syria policy "failed to prevent a horrific loss of life. We failed to prevent massive displacement of people internally in Syria and, of course, externally as refugees. And it's something that I will take with me for the rest of my days. It's something that I feel very strongly."

What specific lessons from that experience will you apply as you approach Syria policy going forward?

Do you believe the United States has a responsibility to protect Syrian civilians against the Assad regime and its international backers?

The United States remains an important voice on Syria policy. The Biden-Harris administration will renew U.S. efforts to promote a political settlement to end Syria's terrible civil war, in close consultation with our allies, partners, and the UN, and by making sure U.S. diplomats are back at the table. A political settlement must address the underlying causes that led to nearly a decade of civil war. We will use the tools at our disposal, including economic pressure, to push for meaningful reform and accountability, and will continue to support the UN's role in negotiating a political settlement. We will also restore U.S. leadership in providing humanitarian aid. Syria is a humanitarian catastrophe and we must do more to aid vulnerable Syrians displaced within Syria, as well as refugees who fled abroad.

Caesar Sanctions

Bashar al Assad and his brutal regime have committed horrific atrocities and war crimes against the Syrian people. In 2019, The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 was finally enacted after years if bipartisan efforts to get this done.

Are you familiar with the law that imposes targeted sanctions on the Assad regime and its enables?

Do you commit to continuing pressure against the Assad regime through the utilization of the Caesar Act and other authorities?

Do you commit to targeting Iranian and Russian entities that provide material support to the Assad regime?

Despite political isolation, economic pressure, and weak control over most – but not all – of Syrian territory, Bashar al-Assad clings to power with no indication that he is willing to implement the reforms necessary to bring a sustainable end to the war and the suffering of the Syrian people. Members of Congress spoke out clearly on this issue when they voted

for the Caesar Civilian Protection Act in the last Congress imposing military, political, and accountability benchmarks for the Assad regime before it can receive sanctions relief. The Biden-Harris Administration will consult with our partners, and with Congress, to shape and set expectations with respect to Syria.

RUSSIA

Do you commit to holding Russia accountable for violating international norms, including chemical weapons attacks?

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a prominent opposition activist in Russia, was poisoned in Russia in 2015 and again in 2017, and nearly died on both occasions. Following both poisonings, samples of his blood were accepted for testing by the FBI, and tests were performed, but the results of those tests and the FBI's assessment of the cause of Mr. Kara-Murza's poisonings have been withheld from both interested Members of Congress and Mr. Kara-Murza. On July 5, 2018, Mr. Kara-Murza submitted a request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act (FOIPA) to the FBI (FBI FOIPA Request No. 1410820-000) for documents relating to his poisonings, including the results of tests performed by U.S. government agencies. Mr. Kara-Murza has been informed that 277 pages of documents responsive to that request have been referred by the FBI for review to other, undisclosed agencies of the federal government. Of those 277 pages, 251 have yet to be released to Mr. Kara-Murza pending consultation with other government agencies.

> *If confirmed, do you commit to directing State officials to work with Mr. Kara-Murza to assist in providing him and the Committee information surrounding his poisoning, including the results of the test that were provided by Mr. Kara-Murza?*

The Biden-Harris administration will, in coordination with our allies and partners, work to hold Russia to account for its illegal and aggressive actions. The Biden-Harris administration will work immediately to ensure the completion of an investigation into Russia's use of chemical weapons in the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny, as set out by the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991. If confirmed, I will will direct the Department to respond to requests for information from Congress, including regarding this issue.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Ben Cardin

Ethiopia: Months-long conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has displaced more than 1 million people, created a dire humanitarian emergency, and increased the threat of a wider regional crisis. Additionally, in the security and governance vacuum created by the Tigray conflict, targeted ethnic violence proceeded unchecked in other parts of the country – the most recent example being the January 12th massacre of more than 80 ethnic Amharas, Agaws, and other ethnic minorities in western Ethiopia. All of this threatens the extremely fragile democratic transition of a crucial U.S. partner in the Horn of Africa.

> *What more can the United States do to support efforts to end the fighting in Tigray, ensure unfettered humanitarian access to areas of the conflict, and address the alleged atrocities committed against civilians?*

> *If confirmed, how would you tie this immediate response into more sustained U.S. support for Ethiopia's democratic transition?*

> *How can the interagency Atrocity Early Warning Task Force be better utilized to address the increasing ethnicity-based violence that we are witnessing in Ethiopia?*

I am deeply troubled by the loss of life and mass displacement that is a result of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Violence has continued and humanitarian access remains limited -- which is unacceptable. Continued violence is a risk to Ethiopia's stability and regional peace and security. There must be an end to fighting, constructive dialogue, immediate unimpeded humanitarian access, restoration of all communications to the region, and accountability for atrocities committed by all parties. A political way forward is required.

Ethiopia's successful transition to a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society is critical to U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will renew our diplomatic engagement, including on the conflict in Tigray, the political and economic reform agenda, and the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam, working with partners in the region, Gulf, and UN.

Diversity: Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity.

What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the State Department is fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

To fulfill the President's ambitious international agenda and commitment to lead with diplomacy, the State Department must become more modern, more flexible, more responsive, and much more diverse and inclusive. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be a guiding principle that we uphold across all aspects of the Department -- in our people, funding and programs, and policies. If confirmed, increasing diversity -- especially women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, and religious diversity -- at all levels will be a major priority, including in appointments for senior leadership. I also plan to appoint a Chief Diversity Officer, empowered with the authority and staff to help me hold our organization accountable to our commitments.

Health Cooperation: Reducing the threat of pandemics is inherently a cross-governmental function and a global security priority. As we have experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. and many countries were ill-prepared to prevent, detect, and respond to outbreaks of COVID-19.

How will you work with your counterparts, including within the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense, to ensure close coordination and to continue to promote biosecurity as an integral component of the Global Health Security Agenda?

Global health security and the Global Health Security Agenda are whole-of-government endeavors. In alignment with President Biden's vision, the Department of State will streamline and elevate its engagement on COVID-19 and broader global health security and diplomacy. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with my counterparts at other agencies, in coordination with the White House, to ensure a well-aligned effort. I will also explore options for appropriately institutionalizing this portfolio within the core business of the Department of State.

Human Rights:

What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

From my time in the Clinton White House, to my time staffing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to the Obama White House and the State Department, I have long believed -- as President Biden does -- that the power of our example is greater than the example of our power, and that universal values should be at the heart of not only our own

ongoing political experiment but also our engagement with the world. Whether supporting the Dayton Accords that ended the scourge of ethnic cleansing in Europe, achieving the independence of Kosovo and South Sudan after devastating civil wars, elevating LGBTQ equality in U.S. human rights policy, or helping save thousands of Yazidis from ISIS, I have seen the power of U.S. diplomacy to be a unique force for good in this world. This belief has been validated by my experience which is that it is an empirical fact that durable, lasting so-called "hard" security cannot be achieved if it is not rooted in a commitment to human dignity. I have strived to share that conviction with colleagues, and, if confirmed, I hope to empower my colleagues at the Department of State to put human rights and democracy at the center of our work every day.

Human Rights in the Western Hemisphere: Human rights defenders, and journalists in Latin America face grave dangers as they carry out their vital work to protect rights, defend the planet, expose corruption, and protect democratic rule. Over two-thirds of human rights defenders who were killed across the globe in 2019 were from the Americas. In 2020, Mexico was the deadliest country in the world for journalists.

If confirmed, how will you raise the cause of these rights defenders and journalists, and demand accountability for crimes against them?

If confirmed, I will make press freedom and support for independent journalists a priority, including in the Americas. We will look for opportunities to partner with other democracies to push back against crackdowns on human rights defenders and independent journalists and to support their work. We will support the work of international organizations, such as the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, engaged in these important issues.

Will you commit to working with Climate Envoy Kerry to make protections and justice for environmental defenders a priority?

Environmental organizations and activists are often among the first targets of corrupt governments. If confirmed, I will work with Special Envoy Kerry to promote their freedoms of expression and association.

Burma and the Rohingya: The State Department has documented "well-planned and coordinated" attacks on the Rohingya by the Burmese military, and various entities, including the UN Fact Finding Mission and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, have all found strong evidence of genocide in Burma. Since 2017, Bangladesh has generously hosted nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees. However, recent efforts by the Bangladeshi government to relocate Rohingya to Bhasan Char (a remote silt island in the Bay of Bengal) without allowing the UN to evaluate the area is a concerning change of course.

If confirmed, will you commit to a review for the purposes of making a genocide determination in the case of the Rohingya?

What steps can the U.S. take to press Burma to create conducive conditions for return of the Rohingya that is safe, voluntary, and dignified?

How can the U.S. work with the international community to ensure safety and respect for rights for the Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the region?

If confirmed, how will you approach Bangladeshi's relocation of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char, which many fear is inhabitable and lacks adequate food and water?

If confirmed I will commit to leading a review of atrocities committed, and to work toward peace, security, and equal rights for the Rohingya as citizens of Burma as part of efforts to support conducive conditions for a safe, voluntary, dignified return.

For years, the international organizations and NGOs working on the ground in Cox's Bazaar have been engaged in relevant protection and assistance activities for tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing violence in Burma/Myanmar. If confirmed, I and other relevant State Department officials will engage with the government of Bangladesh, leaders of relevant international and non-governmental organizations, and other partners in the international community to support a coordinated, appropriate approach to hosting Rohingya refugees, recognizing the enormous burden on the government of Bangladesh.

Conflicts of Interest:

a. *Do you commit to bring to the Committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?*

b. *Do you commit to inform the Committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?*

If confirmed, I will work with the Committee to ensure that the development of U.S. foreign policy is based solely on appropriate considerations. If I should learn of information suggesting inappropriate considerations in the development of U.S. foreign policy, or our engagement with third parties, I will see that such information

is investigated thoroughly and, where necessary, reported to the appropriate parties.

c. *Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in any foreign country?*

No.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Mitt Romney

The need for timely and accessible passport services is urgent for the Western Mountain region of the United States, including my state of Utah. Today, residents of Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming must renew their passports by mail or travel significant distances to neighboring states to access the nearest passport offices. Consequently, same day service is essentially impossible for millions of Americans in these states.

As Secretary of State, would you support directing the Bureau of Consular Affairs to open a new passport office in areas of the country with large population centers currently lack same-day passport services?

If confirmed, I will support directing the Bureau of Consular Affairs to take appropriate steps to ensure that passport services are accessible to all eligible Americans, including those living outside of large population centers.

Would you support opening a new passport office in states that demonstrate a significantly high demand for passport services?

If confirmed, I will direct the Bureau of Consular Affairs to review appropriate steps to ensure that passport services are accessible to all eligible Americans, including in states with high demand for passport services.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Chris Murphy

Safe Abortion Services and Clarifying the Helms Amendment: Everywhere in the world, regardless of law or policy, women seek abortions. Restrictive laws like the Helms Amendment, which prohibits US assistance for most safe abortion services overseas, cause women to resort to more than 25 million unsafe abortions worldwide that lead to millions of injuries and tens of thousands of preventable maternal deaths. The Helms Amendment prohibits US Government funding for abortion used "as a method of family planning," leaving the door open for US funding to be used to help women access safe abortion services if they are raped, the victim of incest, or if their life is endangered by the pregnancy. As Secretary of State, will you commit to clarifying US policy in this area, to make safe abortion available to women who have been raped, the victim of incest, or whose life is endangered by their pregnancy? Do you agree that the "Leahy Amendment" allows U.S. Government personnel and programs funded by the U.S. Government to provide, consistent with local law, information or counseling about all pregnancy options, including abortion?

Sexual and reproductive health care services are essential to women's health and well-being. President-elect Biden will rescind the Mexico City policy, which undermines our efforts to advance gender equality globally by restricting our ability to support women's health and gender-based violence prevention and response programs. The Biden-Harris administration will also work to restore funding to UNFPA, whose health and gender-based violence programs are absolutely critical, particularly during this pandemic.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Todd Young

TURKEY

Turkey is a long-standing NATO member who has contributed to the stability and security in hotspots around the globe. However, their recent trajectory under the leadership of President Erdogan from purchasing the S-400, the tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh, and their broader ambitions are deeply worrisome both for NATO and the region.

How will the Biden State Department approach our relationship with Turkey?

Turkey is a challenging ally. President-elect Biden has promised to call out Turkish behavior that violates international law or contravenes its commitments as a NATO ally. Our administration will also return human rights and rule of law to the bilateral agenda. At the same time, we have shared interests in countering terrorism, ending the conflict in Syria, and ensuring regional stability. We will seek cooperation with Turkey on common priorities and engage in dialogue to address disagreements. More broadly, it is important to keep Turkey facing west rather than taking steps that push it closer to Russia and other adversaries. We will seek to balance a principled stance on human rights and differences over regional issues with efforts to keep Turkey at least broadly aligned with the transatlantic alliance.

QUAD / CHINA

Our alliances in the Indo-Pacific region must serve as a bastion of deterrence against China's regional aspirations, and we must take at face value China's professed timeline for regional dominance, including the possibility of overt or covert acts against Taiwan.

How will you seek to deepen the Quad alliance between the U.S., Australia, Japan, and India while empowering them to take a more muscular approach to deterring China?

The Quad is a good news story of the United States and its closets partners pulling closer together in the face of China's most assertive policies and for the good of the region. We view the Quad as having essential momentum, and important potential. We hope to build on its recent achievements by deepening cooperation on areas of traditional focus, such as on maritime and defense, while also working closely with Quad partners to confront some of the defining issues of our time, including COVID-19, climate, and democratic resilience.

Will your administration continue to provide robust support for the Quad, including meeting annually at the ministerial level?

Yes.

Do you believe the Trump administration's strategy of increasing their qualitative military capabilities through arms sales is an effective strategy and will you seek to continue it?

We will review the most effective strategies to deepen our partnerships and strengthen deterrence in a variety of ways, including through arms sales and other forms of defense cooperation.

With China specifically, how do you intend to move China to a better place on emissions while not losing sight of its obscene human rights record in Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and elsewhere?

Pushing China to up its game on climate does not require us to let up on human rights issues. China represents almost 30% of global emissions, in addition to its carbon-intensive investments in dozens of Belt and Road countries, so we must insist Beijing raise its ambitions on the global stage. But China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences. We are going to put our democratic values back at the center of our foreign policy and stand up for democracy, human rights, and human dignity alongside climate progress.

Most have come to realize that China is a strategic competitor to the U.S. In Africa, Beijing is winning the competition: many African states vote for China's preferred candidates for leadership posts of international agencies, sign on to open letters defending Beijing's policies in Xinjiang, or frequently vote with China, and against the U.S., at the UN. This is despite the many meaningful U.S. initiatives in Africa such as PEPFAR, the MCC, Feed the Future, and Power Africa. How will you guide the State Department to better protect American interests in Africa vis a vis China, and ensure our many engagements on the continent better prompt African support for key U.S. foreign policy priorities?

Diplomatic and security engagement with U.S. partners in Africa can advance our interests and values, while highlighting the dangers associated with dealing with China. Enhancing our alliances and partnerships in Africa through diplomatic, development, and security initiatives will enable us to better protect and secure U.S. interests in Africa.

TAIWAN

One of the challenges you may face as Secretary of State is whether or not we should come to the defense of Taiwan if China makes a move against them. While we have long sold Taiwan weapons systems, we have no formal treaty obligations that would require us to respond if attacked. That said, there are a lot of reasons why it is in America's interest to ensure that they remain an independent nation.

Is an independent Taiwan important to our national security?

If confirmed I will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan.

What are your views on the U.S. relationship with Taiwan?

U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid. If confirmed, I will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan.

How would you seek to support cross-strait diplomacy as Secretary, and how would you work with the Department of Defense to deter cross-strait aggression?

If confirmed, I will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan. U.S. support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

With former Secretary Pompeo's recent decision regarding Taiwan, do you believe we should increase military investment in the Taiwanese military to make it an unsinkable arsenal capable of delaying and supporting a military counter to Chinese aggressions?

Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and our one China policy, the United States continues to make available to Taiwan the defense articles and services necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. This longstanding policy contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

CRYPTOCURRENCY

Bitcoin and other digital and cryptocurrencies are providing financial transactions around the globe. Like many technological developments, this offers potential benefits for the U.S. and our allies. At the same time, it also presents opportunities for states and non-state actors looking to circumvent the current financial system and undermine American interests. For example, the Central Bank of China just issued its first digital currency.

If confirmed as Secretary of State, will you commit to working with the Secretary of the Treasury and others on this issue?

How will these innovations and technologies impact U.S. national security and the security of our allies?

What are the potential threats and benefits?

If confirmed as Secretary of State, I will commit to learning more about the potential benefits and risks of digital and cryptocurrencies and their strategic implications, as well as how technological innovations more broadly can contribute to our national security and that of our allies and partners. In all of these efforts, I will commit to working closely with our Treasury Secretary.

YEMEN

The crisis in Yemen has endured for the better part of the past decade and hundreds of thousands of Yemenis have suffered and died as a result of the fighting. Without question, our friends in Saudi Arabia bear a significant responsibility for this but so does the United States. Both our actions, such a former Secretary Pompeo's decision to designate the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO), and inaction, such as not pressing the Saudis to end this conflict and ignoring the law on aerial refueling, have undermined the cause of peace.

How are you thinking about bringing an end to this conflict?

Is President Hadi and the Government of Yemen part of the solution or are they part of the problem?

President Biden has pledged to cease U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has become a strategic, humanitarian and moral disaster. We also intend to revitalize diplomacy, alongside the UN and others, to end the war itself. While Saudi Arabia faces legitimate threats from the Houthis, its war has emboldened Sunni jihadists, caused a humanitarian catastrophe, and further entrenched Iran in Yemen. We need to use what leverage we have to push all sides to end this war.

IRAN

In a 2017 New York Times op-ed you made the claim that Iran's President Hassan Rouhani "seeks to moderate Iran's international behavior." Since then, Iran has only increased its destabilizing activities across the region. Tehran has pumped more and more weapons into Syria and Lebanon. It has attacked the facilities and tankers of our Gulf allies. Its nuclear archives where uncovered and the extent of Iran's secret nuclear weapons work was laid bare. And in December 2019 an attack on the K-1 Air Base killed an American contractor, leading to a number of other strikes including the US strike would took out Qasem Soleimani.

Have we seen anywhere across the world Iran has moderated its behavior?

Do you still believe Rouhani is a moderate or moderated Iran's international behavior?

President Biden is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities. I fully agree that in the years since the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA in 2017, Iran has not only expanded

its nuclear program and shortened its breakout time, but also intensified its regional provocations, significantly increasing its direct and indirect targeting of our forces, diplomats, and assets. Even as the administration prioritizes diplomacy and works with our allies and partners to ensure Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon, we will work with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region.

ISRAEL

The U.S-Israel relationship has long been the cornerstone of America's strategy in the Middle East. It is a mutually beneficial relationship grounded in common values and interests. In a region often gripped by chaos, Israel is the only true democracy the United States can count on to have its back.

Do you agree that U.S. policy in the region is best advanced when working closely with our ally Israel?

President Biden has been one of Israel's strongest supporters over the last fifty years. The U.S.-Israel relationship is deeply personal to him and, indeed, he's met and worked closely with every Israeli Prime Minister since Golda Meir. The President believes that the ties between our two countries, rooted in strategic interests and shared values, should transcend domestic politics. In this vein, his administration will not only further strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship, but also ensure that it enjoys bipartisan backing.

Israel constantly faces terrorist attacks and threats—including rocket attacks by Hamas in Gaza and attacks from Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon and Syria.

Do you support Israel's right to defend itself from terrorist attacks, including taking pre-emptive action to disrupt weapons shipments from Iran to its terrorist proxies?

President Biden's commitment to Israel's security is sacrosanct. We will ensure that U.S. military assistance to Israel continues, and uphold Israel's Qualitative Military Edge, which is critical to ensuring Israel has the means to defend itself. We will also take action, in coordination with our allies and partners, to both deter and counter Iran's destabilizing activities. There should be no doubt that the President has Israel's back.

While the U.S. and Israel are close allies, the two countries do not always agree on all issues. It is no secret that there were significant disagreements with Israel during your previous time at the State Department.

In your opinion, what's the best way for the two countries to work out their differences?

Do you believe that such disagreements are best resolved privately, or do you believe there is utility in showing public daylight between these two allies?

President Biden has been one of Israel's strongest supporters over the last fifty years. The U.S.-Israel relationship is deeply personal to him and, indeed, he's met and worked closely

with every Israeli Prime Minister since Golda Meir. The President believes that the ties between our two countries, rooted in strategic interests and shared values, should transcend domestic politics. We look forward to working with Israel to bolster its security, expand economic opportunities for Israelis and Americans alike, and widen the circle of peace.

As part of America's long-standing commitment to ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself, by itself, against any potential threat, the U.S. provides annual security assistance to Israel. The current terms of this assistance are laid out in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two nations—an agreement negotiated by the Obama administration.

Do you support full funding for United States security assistance to Israel as laid out in the current 10-year MOU?

If confirmed, will you oppose efforts to impose additional conditions or restrictions on this aid?

President Biden's commitment to Israel's security is ironclad. As you know, the President played an important role in helping to negotiate the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on security assistance, the largest aid package in U.S. history. The Biden-Harris administration will uphold the terms of the 2016 MOU without reservation. We also have been clear that the Biden-Harris administration does not support placing conditions on military aid to Israel.

You testified that the Biden administration would advocate within international financial institutions against financial support for non-renewable energy projects, including exports. In the developing world, where the lack of basic power-generation is holding back hundreds of millions of people, the combination of fossil energy resources and the relative ease of producing energy through them means we should not be discarding these sources of energy without clear, timely alternatives.

Do you believe it is ethical to raise barriers for countries in the developing world to access energy production through non-renewable means or to export their nation's resources for economic benefit, especially when China has made the energy sector an important piece of the Belt and Road Initiative?

The Biden-Harris administration will take action to counter this malign Chinese influence by increasing transparency and accountability associated with the Belt and Road Initiative, including related energy projects. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to use all available tools to promote abundant, affordable energy in the developing world consistent with our nation's energy and climate goals.

Understanding the Biden administration's focus on climate diplomacy and combating climate change, how do you propose the United States lead on increasing power-generation in the developing world through the use of the resources at hand?

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to ensuring developing countries can meet their energy needs while also reducing their emissions and building resilience against the destabilizing impacts of climate change -- both of which have clear benefits not only for the recipient countries, but also for the U.S. and the rest of the world. The Biden-Harris administration will work with the private sector to help promote a large-scale shift in private capital toward climate-friendly activities. This will help finance the transition to a net-zero carbon economy.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Tim Kaine

Ethiopia

In early December 2020, Ethiopian authorities struck a deal with the United Nations to allow unimpeded humanitarian supplies to reach the many people in need in Tigray. Unfortunately, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says most of that agreement has not been honored and today, an estimated 4.5 million people in Tigray need emergency food. In addition, attempts to accurately assess the situation in Tigray remain challenging as Ethiopian authorities have prevented many international media organizations from accessing the conflict one and disrupted phone and internet connections – essentially resulting in an information blackout. This reality has also hindered the ability of many members of the Ethiopian diaspora to reach their family members in Tigray as conditions continue to deteriorate.

Given the urgent need for humanitarian aid, what are your plans to scale up the humanitarian response to the Tigray region? As Secretary of State, what steps will you consider to ensure aid is delivered consistently and in a timely manner?

What is your strategy for engaging with the Ethiopian government to lift or alleviate the information blackout in Tigray?

I am deeply troubled by the loss of life and mass displacement that is a result of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Violence has continued and humanitarian access remains limited -- which is unacceptable. Continued violence is a risk to Ethiopia's stability and regional peace and security. As you state, the humanitarian crisis has had - and will have - devastating consequences. There must be an end to violence, constructive dialogue, open communication, immediate unimpeded humanitarian access, and accountability for atrocities committed by all parties. Addressing the humanitarian crisis is a U.S. priority, and Ethiopia's successful transition to a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society is critical to U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will renew our diplomatic engagement, working with partners in the region, Gulf, and UN, to press for humanitarian access and free communication.

Rwanda

In August 2020, the Government of Rwanda detained and arrested Paul Rusesabagina, a lawful permanent resident of the United States who has been internationally recognized for helping to save over 1,200 lives during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He is also an outspoken critic of President of Rwanda Paul Kagame. After been detained through extrajudicial means, Mr.

Rusesabagina was charged with multiple crimes, including terrorism and murder, based on his alleged ties to an armed opposition group. Mr. Rusesabagina suffers from poor health, but has been denied bail, and has encountered difficulties accessing his preferred legal counsel. The Department of State and humanitarian organizations frequently cite Rwanda for arbitrary detention, torture, repression of political opponents, and unexplained deaths of individuals held in custody.

If confirmed, how would you make clear to the Government of Rwanda that Mr. Rusesabagina's safety and security must be guaranteed while he is detained? How would you encourage the Government of Rwanda to conduct Mr. Rusesabagina's trial fairly and transparently?

If confirmed, I will make clear that the human rights of all prisoners, including Paul Rusesabagina, should be respected. We will work to ensure that a trial is conducted fairly and transparently. This is a case our team will follow closely.

Cameroon

On January 1st , 2021, the Senate approved Senate Resolution 684, which calls on the Government of Cameroon and separatist armed groups from the Anglophone regions to end all violence, respect human rights, and participate in mediation toward resolving the ongoing conflict in the Anglophone regions. The resolution also urged the Department of State to, among other actions, consider imposing targeted sanctions on Cameroon government and separatist leaders responsible for extrajudicial killings and other gross violations of human rights, and to support efforts to address the root causes of the conflict and achieve a sustainable peace.

As Secretary of State, what steps would you take to encourage peace and reconciliation between the Government of Cameroon and Anglophone separatists? Would you continue the Trump administration's policy of withholding security assistance to Cameroon state security forces? Do you believe that sanctions against individuals in Cameroon for human rights violations are warranted, and would those sanctions help facilitate a peaceful settlement to the conflict?

I am concerned about continued violence in Cameroon, and condemn the recent deadly attacks against civilians in the Anglophone region. An end to violence, and accountability for its perpetrators, is needed. It is important that children attend school and that aid can be delivered. More broadly, political dialogue is needed to resolve this ongoing conflict and to improve respect for human rights. If confirmed, I will review the different tools we have to press for a resolution of this conflict and to hold human rights violators' accountable, including sanctions.

Sri Lanka

Since March 2020, the Sri Lankan government has adopted a policy of mandatory cremations of victims infected with, or suspected of, being infected with COVID-19. Despite guidelines from the World Health Organization that COVID-19 victim burials are safe, forced cremation has caused distress among the country's Muslim and Christian minorities who say it violates their freedom of religion and fundamental rights under the country's constitution.

To date, the United States has provided over $5 million in assistance to Sri Lanka to combat COVID-19. How can we utilize bilateral diplomacy to support the country's pandemic response while also ensuring government authorities respect the religious and constitutional rights of minority communities?

Are there any ongoing or planned efforts by the State Department to engage with Sri Lankan authorities on the issue? If so, how has the Sri Lankan government responded?

Assisting countries with COVID-19 response will be an important pillar of the Biden-Harris administration's foreign policy. If confirmed, I will also make it a priority to ensure that the voice and diplomatic engagement of the U.S. government is robustly deployed in defense of religious freedom. I am committed to working with the White House to ensure the timely nomination of an Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom and will work with that person and the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to make sure that international religious freedom remains a priority.

Honduras

Following the 2016 killing of Berta Caceres, I remain concerned about human rights violations against Honduras's indigenous groups. In 2019, Honduras was the most dangerous country per capita for land and environmental defenders. Lethal attacks were particularly prevalent against women and against members of the Garifuna minority group – 16 of whom were killed for defending their land. In July 2020, five Garifuna land rights activists were abducted from their homes by heavily armed gunmen in police uniforms, leading to protests around the country. Most recently, environmental and human rights defender Felix Vasquez was shot dead at his home in western Honduras on December 26, 2020 – nearly four years after the assassination of Berta Caceres. What will you do as Secretary of State to protect environmental defenders and to hold the Government of Honduras accountable for its human rights violations?

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to again making human rights a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy. This includes redoubling our dedication to human rights and security throughout the hemisphere. We will once again challenge authoritarian governance and stand up for the rights of all people. This starts with restoring our democracy at home. Despite our shortcomings, human rights defenders around the globe continue to look to the United States for support against authoritarian regimes -- we must stand by their side once again.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi officials detained Mr. Salah Al-Haidar, a writer and journalist from northern Virginia, in April 2019 on baseless grounds. He was arrested just one week after his mother, prominent women's rights activist Ms. Aziza Al-Yousef, was provisionally released from prison after also being detained on false charges. We believe this is a targeted effort against the family for their advocacy of social reforms. Mr. Al-Haidar is next scheduled to appear in Specialized Criminal Court — a court specifically established to try individuals suspected of terrorism —on March 8,

2021. As the Specialized Criminal Court conducts trials in secret and does not allow defendants access to legal representation, it is critical that the U.S. Embassy attend and observe Mr. Al-Haidar's trial to ensure transparency.

Will you commit to having a State Department representative attend the trial of Salah Al-Haidar on March 8 and to updating my office following on the State Department's efforts to secure Mr. Al-Haidar's release and return to the United States?

The President has stated, "I will defend the right of activists, political dissidents, and journalists around the world to speak their minds freely without fear of persecution and violence." The Biden-Harris administration will ensure that the cases of political prisoners particularly dual citizens and jailed women's rights activists -- are a priority in U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia. If confirmed, I will raise the issue of political prisoners directly with leaders in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. Regarding this specific case, I will have my team look into it; ensure that our Embassy in Riyadh is closely monitoring its progress; and report back to your office.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Civilians in Azerbaijan and Armenia endured a heavy toll this fall during renewed hostilities over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The fighting forced tens of thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis to flee their homes after civilian areas were targeted with heavy weaponry, including rockets and artillery. The involvement of outside actors in the conflict, such as Turkey, was especially troubling, and risked a larger regional war. Although Russian involvement helped facilitate the cessation of hostilities, the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in the region cannot address the fundamental tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and may allow Russia to expand its influence in the former Soviet republics.

As Secretary of State, how would you ensure that civilians affected by the fighting in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region receive the necessary humanitarian assistance in the short and long-term? Would you continue to prioritize the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group as the forum for resolving outstanding issues related to this conflict?

I am deeply concerned by the renewed hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan last fall and the ongoing humanitarian needs in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. If confirmed, I will reinvigorate U.S. engagement to find a permanent settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including via the Minsk Group, of which the United States is a co-chair, and work to prevent unproductive interference by third parties. I will also work with Congress, as well as USAID, international organizations such as the UN, and our allies and partners to meet humanitarian needs in the region.

Citizenship of Children Born Abroad to LGBTQ U.S. Citizens

I am deeply concerned by indications that in 2018 the State Department altered Foreign Affairs Manual guidance about the requirements for U.S. citizens to transmit U.S. citizenship to their children board overseas. These new guidelines discriminate against same-sex married couples by focusing on the biological parentage of a child. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which governs citizenship transmission for children born outside of the United States to American citizens, delineates different guidelines for children born "in wedlock" and "out of wedlock." The Department's insistence that a child is only born "in wedlock" if the child is biologically related to both of its married parents disproportionately inhibits same-sex married couples from transmitting citizenship to their children and appears contrary to U.S. law as well as to American values.

Will you reverse the recent changes to the Foreign Affairs Manual to ensure that a uniform set of rules for transmitting U.S. citizenship to children born overseas applies to all married U.S. citizens, whether gay or straight?

The Biden-Harris administration believes that the standards of conveying citizenship should be uniformly applied, in ways that do not discriminate on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. If confirmed, I will ask Department attorneys for a more detailed understanding of this issue, and for recommendations of any changes to the FAM that are necessary to accord with new administration policy, including as it pertains to non-discrimination. The Biden-Harris administration will be unwavering in its commitment to LGBTQI+ rights, fairness, inclusion and respect.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. John Barrasso

What is your view of the EU-China investment deal?

As we look to rebuild our relationship with the EU, one of our first priorities will be consulting on a coordinated approach to China's abusive economic practices, human rights violations, and other important challenges. The EU has made it clear that it is ready and willing to cooperate with the Biden-Harris administration on China. If confirmed, I look forward to early consultations with our European partners on our common concerns about China.

What impact will the investment deal have on transatlantic efforts to address common concerns about China's economic and human right practices?

While the United States and the EU may not see eye to eye on every issue, the EU has made it clear that it is ready and willing to cooperate with the Biden-Harris administration on China to address common economic, security, and human rights concerns and to push back on China's malign influence activities.

China continues to infiltrate top U.S. companies, laboratories and universities to steal valuable American intellectual property and trade secrets. The FBI estimates it opens a new China-related counterintelligence case approximately every 10 hours. FBI Deputy Director David Bowdich believes China's economic coercion is like those of "an organized criminal syndicate."

Working with international partners, how will you end China's economic espionage?

China is undercutting American companies by dumping products, erecting barriers, and giving illegal subsidies to corporations. It is stealing intellectual property and engaging in other practices to give it an unfair technological advantage, including forced technology transfer. We will build a united front with our allies and partners to counter the full range of China's abusive economic practices, expose malign activity, and hold Beijing accountable.

In September 2020, you spoke at an event hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. You indicated President elect Biden would seek to reset the terms of economic and technology ties with China while combating unfair practices and aggressively enforce U.S. trade laws.

What is your strategy to reset the terms of the economic and technology ties with China?

Economics and technology are at the center of U.S.-China competition. We need a comprehensive strategy and a more systematic approach that actually addresses the full range of these issues in concert with our allies and partners. We have to play a

better defense, which must include holding China accountable for its unfair and illegal practices. We also have to play a much better offense, by investing in the sources of our economic and technological strength.

You have previously expressed support for the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, a trade agreement with 12 countries mostly in the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, you expressed concern that walking away from the trade deal was an economic and strategic mistake.

If confirmed, would you seek to rejoin or revive the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership?

Our test for trade policies is whether they deliver for the American worker and the middle class. We will not sign any new trade deals until we have made significant investments in American workers and infrastructure. Our approach to trade must not be unilateral. A better way to meet the challenge is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors. On its own, the United States represents about a quarter of global GDP. When we join together with fellow democracies, our strength more than doubles. China cannot afford to ignore more than half the global economy. We have to do so in a way that keeps American working families as our focus, defends our values, and protects the long-term prosperity and security of the United States.

What are your top economic and trade priorities?

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to a foreign policy for the middle class--that means using trade policy to grow the American middle class, enable economic growth, and ensure fair competition. We must invest in the talent of our people, in our innovation and industrial base, in our workforce and our education and our infrastructure. We are stronger when we are working together with democratic allies in Asia, Europe and elsewhere to develop a common agenda when it comes to pushing back against China's abuses in the trade space, in the technology space and in other ways. We have a great deal to do with our European allies and trade partners to make sure we are effectively enforcing existing agreements and building coalitions to support workers and business. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to shape international economic policy that serves American workers at home and our interests and values around the world.

In 2012, the United States joined leaders of the Western Hemisphere in committing to an initiative called "Connecting the Americas 2022." The initiative's aim was to achieve universal access to electricity through enhanced electrical interconnection by 2022.

What is the status of this initiative and what progress has been made in reaching the initiative's goals?

Do you support providing technical assistance and capacity building programs to strengthen regional electricity markets, power generation, and regulatory institutions in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Andean region?

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing U.S. commitments under Connecting the Americas 2022 and assessing the progress toward the initiative's goals. I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

The United States is the largest financial contributor to the United Nations. In fact, the U.S. contributes more to the UN budget than all of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council combined. The United Nations has failed to seriously implement budgetary discipline.

What steps would you take to ensure the financial burdens at the United Nations are shared more equitably and in accordance with current economic realities?

What policies need to be implemented to maintain fiscal accountability within the United Nations?

Do you believe other nations need to be doing more when it comes to burden sharing at the United Nations?

The Biden-Harris administration will continue to hold the UN accountable to its mission and its member states. This means doing all we can to ensure that the UN is using resources efficiently and effectively -- eliminating waste, demanding zero tolerance for any corruption, strengthening whistleblower protections and transparency and accountability, and ensuring other countries pay their fair share. The next negotiations among member states on UN assessment rates will take place later in 2021, and we are already looking at strategies for engagement on this issue. As the largest donor to the UN, we should aim to get the most we can out of our financial leverage. If confirmed, my team and I will do everything we can to make sure that other countries pay their fair share.

Over the last year, the Trump Administration helped negotiate several historic developments between Israel and its regional Arab neighbors. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan joined Egypt and Jordan in establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. These agreements have created a path to peace through recognition and engagement rather than isolation and boycotts of Israel.

Do you agree the close relationship the Trump Administration established between the U.S. and Israel helped make these peace agreements possible?

We applaud the Trump administration's role in the normalization agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These agreements reflect recognition by Israel and Arab countries that they hold many interests in common and can most effectively address them through cooperation. The Abraham Accords are the product of years of quiet diplomacy between Israel and the Arab world that was supported by U.S. administrations from both parties.

How would you build upon these historic successes and encourage fostering additional peace agreements between Israel and Arab nations?

The Abraham Accords are an important contribution to peace and security in the Middle East. The Biden-Harris administration will seek to build on the agreements to expand the circle of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. We will also closely monitor the status of the normalization agreements reached over the last few months, encouraging the Arab states to uphold their commitments to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

At an event at the Hudson Institute on July 9, 2020, you discussed the priorities of a Biden Administration and stated, "Just as a matter of time allocation and budget priorities, I think we need to be doing less not more in the Middle East."

What specific efforts in the Middle East would you advocate the United States no longer spend time and resources on?

The Middle East remains home to critical U.S. interests, including counterterrorism, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, the security of our partners, the stability of global energy supplies, helping to end the region's many conflicts, prevent new ones, and advance the universal rights and dignity of its citizens. However, after nearly twenty years of war, the United States must pursue a diplomacy-first approach in the region enabled by civilian tools. Our military should be the tool of last resort, not first choice.

In April 2019, President Trump designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization. Iran uses the IRGC to direct and implement its global terrorist campaign. It is well known across the globe that the IRGC actively participates in, finances, and promotes terrorism.

Do you believe Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a foreign terrorist organization?

Are you committed to strict enforcement of sanctions against the IRGC and its subsidiaries and affiliates?

Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. It threatens our forces and partners in the region. The President is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities using the array of tools at our disposal. As I said during my hearing, this includes tough sanctions to deal with Iran's participation in and support for terrorism.

On October 18, 2020, the international arms embargo on Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, was officially lifted. Repeated efforts to persuade the international community to extend the embargo failed.

Do you support reinstating the international arms embargo on Iran? If so, what is your strategy to do so?

What is your plan to prevent a potential arms race in the Middle East should it not be reinstated?

The President is committed to working with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, including its provision of weapons to violent proxies. Although the arms embargo against Iran expired, we will continue to dissuade countries from providing arms to Iran and fueling Iran's efforts to undermine neighbors in the region. We also will redouble our efforts to enforce other, existing United Nations Security Council resolutions barring the export of weapons to groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis.

Are you committed to eliminating duplication and redundancies within the Department of State?

If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress to identify and eliminate any unnecessary duplication or redundancies within the Department of State and to ensure the Department is maximizing the use of its resources.

U.S. "natural soda ash" is refined from the mineral trona. It is a key manufacturing component of glass, detergents, soaps, and chemicals. Soda ash is also used in many other industrial processes. It has long been regarded as the standard for quality, purity, and energy efficiency in production. The Green River Basin in Wyoming is the world's largest area for naturally-occurring trona. Like many U.S. industries, soda ash faces significant trade barriers around the world.

As part of your effort to promote U.S. industries in international markets, will you commit to advocate for eliminating trade barriers for soda ash and other important U.S. industries in the international marketplace?

If confirmed, I will work with the United States Trade Representative to review current trade barriers for soda ash and to identify any appropriate steps regarding support for U.S. industries in the international marketplace.

There is a very large disparity between the United State and Russia regarding non-strategic nuclear weapons, also known as tactical nuclear weapons. During the New START debate, there were a number of Senators, including myself, extremely concerned the treaty did not include tactical nuclear weapons. The New START Resolution of Ratification specifically provided the President was to address the massive disparity in the tactical stockpiles prior to contemplating further reductions in the strategic arsenal.

What are your top arms control and non-proliferation objectives?

The nuclear, missile, and other proliferation dangers that we face are greater than they have been in decades. The United States must be at the head of the table, working with allies, partners, and -- when it is in our interests -- even adversaries, to tackle these potentially existential threats. President Biden intends to pursue an extension of the New START Treaty, an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia, and use that as a foundation for new arms control and strategic stability arrangements. Without a doubt there were unacceptable problems in Russia's compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and Open Skies Treaties. Going forward, we will

be focused first on extending the transparency and predictability of New START, and then looking to use that extension as a foundation for new arms control arrangements that serve U.S. interests.

Will you commit to the United States Senate that the next arms control agreement with Russia will focus on the massive numerical advantage Russia has over us and our allies in tactical nuclear weapons rather further reductions in the strategic arsenal?

New START extension is a first step. The Biden-Harris administration is determined to pursue restraints on other Russian weapons--but it makes no sense to gamble away tools that U.S. military and intelligence leaders greatly value. New START will cover two of the most important new long-range systems that are closest to being deployed. Failing to extend New START would free Russia to build up these and other treaty-covered nuclear forces. President Biden has made clear that he views New START's continuation as the beginning, not the end, of efforts to engage Russia and other countries, in close consultation with our allies and partners, on the threats facing us from nuclear weapons and new and emerging challenges to strategic stability.

People who live in poor and developing nations want and need a stable energy supply that helps them grow their economy and improve their lives. Energy can be a tool to help countries alleviate poverty as well as improve the education, health, and wellbeing of its people. The United States should be working to promote an all-of-the-above energy strategy. It is important that the United States help countries develop their traditional energy resources, which are the most affordable, reliable, and abundant forms of electricity.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the State Department is promoting all forms of energy projects across the globe, including oil, gas, and coal?

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to ensuring developing countries can meet their energy needs while also reducing their emissions and building resilience against the destabilizing impacts of climate change -- both of which have clear benefits not only for the recipient countries, but also for the U.S. and the rest of the world. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to promote affordable energy in the developing world consistent with our nation's energy and climate goals.

In an interview with CBS News on May 20, 2020, you stated, "We want to make sure that the WHO is reformed effectively to be able to deal better than it did with this crisis." You went on to say, "We need to insist on change and on reform and on more effective institutions."

What specific reforms do you believe the World Health Organization must make and how will you ensure they are implemented?

President Biden is committed to strengthening and reforming the World Health Organization so that it can deliver on its vital global mission. The Biden-Harris administration intends to immediately review and develop priorities for this effort. The State Department will work closely with other federal agencies and partner countries to build support for priority reforms.

How do those reforms differ from the reforms requested by the Trump Administration?

In the early weeks of the new administration, the Department of State will work with other federal agencies to review these priorities. Effective reform of the WHO can only occur through sustained constructive engagement with both the institution and our global partners.

Congress continues to be deeply concerned with the Turkish government's purchase of the S-400 surface to air missile defense systems from Russia. This reckless decision threatens a range of U.S. interests, including the strength of the NATO Alliance.

Are you committed to fully implementing the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) with respect to Turkey's S-400 acquisition and any related purchases by other foreign nations?

We believe that Russian S400s are incompatible with NATO equipment. A top priority will be urging Turkey not to deploy the systems. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to review the impact of the CAATSA sanctions imposed by the previous administration to determine their effect and whether additional measures are required or warranted.

Do you support the completion of a free trade agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom?

President Biden has been clear that he will make significant new investments in the U.S. and for American workers before he signs any new trade deals. We look forward to engaging with the British government on strengthening our ties across a wide range of economic issues where our interests align. We will review the progress made during bilateral trade negotiations by the previous administration and consult with Congress on the best way forward. President Biden has warned that any trade deal between the U.S. and UK is contingent upon respect for the Good Friday Agreement, which he said cannot become a casualty of Brexit.

In May 2016, as Deputy Secretary of State, you expressed concerns about Russia's Nord Stream II pipeline project and its potential to undermine Europe. You stated, "We continue to underscore our concern about projects, such as the Nord Stream II pipeline, that would undermine the EU's efforts to diversify energy supplies and routes."

President Putin's pipeline is a geopolitical weapon - not a commercial project. Nord Stream 2 threatens European energy security, increasing Russian monopoly over the region. Congress has unequivocal declared our opposition to the Nord Stream II pipeline. We have provided the U.S. government important authorities to prevent the pipeline's completion. In fact, Congress provided new bipartisan Nord Stream II sanctions in the recently passed National Defense Authorization Act.

If confirmed, will you strongly oppose the Nord Stream II pipeline and apply sanctions against those companies aiding in the completion of this Russian trap?

As President Biden has made clear, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a bad idea, and as I said at my hearing, we will work to prevent its completion. We will carefully monitor for any activities taken by entities to complete or certify the pipeline. If such activities are detected, we will make a determination on the applicability of sanctions.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Ed Markey

Ethiopia

How effective do you believe a nationwide ceasefire and inclusive dialogue would be in helping to solve Ethiopia's ongoing crises? What should the U.S role be in supporting efforts to promote peace, reconciliation, and respect for human rights in Ethiopia?

A political way forward is required in Ethiopia and a ceasefire and inclusive dialogue is needed. In Tigray and across Ethiopia, there must be an end to violence, constructive dialogue, immediate unimpeded humanitarian access, and accountability for atrocities and violence. Ethiopia's successful transition to a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society is critical to U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will renew our diplomatic engagement, including on the conflict in Tigray, the political and economic reform agenda, the upcoming elections, and the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam.

Afghanistan

Paul Overby, a 78 year old constituent of mine, was last seen in Khost City, Afghanistan, in 2014. Mr. Overby had had traveled to Afghanistan to conduct research related to a book on the Haqqani Network. In the Trump administration, Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation , Amb. Zalmay Khalilzad, and Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Amb. Robert Cartens, were the most active senior State Department officials who worked to locate Mr. Overby's whereabouts and secure his release.

Were you briefed on the ongoing U.S. Government interactions with the Taliban's representatives, the Government of Pakistan, and other parties to secure information on Mr. Overby's current condition? If not, can you or another senior Department official commit to be debriefed on the latest efforts with respect to Mr. Overby?

Can you commit, to the maximum extent possible, to make the release of Mr. Overby and any other U.S. hostage a diplomatic priority with respect to Intra-Afghanistan peace negotiations and other engagements with regional governments?

Can you commit that the State Department will regularly update the family of Mr. Overby – and any other American believed to held or once held by the Taliban or Haqqani Network – as to their condition and diplomatic efforts to secure their release?

Bringing detained American citizens home is a top priority for the Biden-Harris administration, and will be a top priority for me, if confirmed. It is also vital that we continue to closely coordinate with the families of U.S. hostages. I am aware of Mr.

Overby's and other American hostages' cases and will take these up immediately, if confirmed.

Landmines

Thanks to bi-partisan support, the U.S. is the largest global supporter of Conventional Weapons Destruction programs that provide life-saving humanitarian landmine and ordnance removal relief and weapons security management assistance. Such programs offer the added benefit of being a cost-effective counter point to China's global influence. Given the value of Conventional Weapons Destruction programs for saving lives as well as countering Chinese influence, does the Administration plan to increase support for these programs?

The United States will continue to lead in international humanitarian efforts that locate and remove landmines and explosive remnants of war that pose persistent threats to civilians living in current and former conflict areas around the world.

Burma

You committed that, if confirmed, you would pursue a determination on whether the State Department-documented atrocities committed against the Rohingya constitute genocide. Can you commit to making that determination on the earliest possible date, as well as declaring support of other international mechanisms such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), given accountability is crucial to creating the conditions for the safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation of over 700,000 Rohingya refugees to Burma?

If confirmed I will commit to leading a review of atrocities committed, and work toward peace, security, and equal rights for the Rohingya as citizens of Burma.

Yemen

The Trump administration's designation of the Houthis in Yemen as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) is likely to harm the UN-led peace process in that country and make it more difficult for life-saving assistance in what is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Will you work to expeditiously remove the FTO designation for the Houthis while holding it accountable for its crimes in less harmful ways?

The Biden-Harris administration is concerned these broad terrorist designations make it even more difficult than it already is to provide humanitarian assistance to people who desperately need it. We take seriously the concerns about this decision from the United Nations; from our partners in the international community; from the humanitarian community; and from lawmakers on a bipartisan basis about the catastrophic humanitarian impact of a broad terrorist designation. The President intends to instruct relevant departments and agencies to take action to address these concerns. The Houthis are not a benign actor and their leaders should be held accountable for their actions. In seeking to counter Houthi conduct, however, we do not want to make the country's humanitarian crisis worse.

First Use of Nuclear Weapons

On January, 12, 2017, then-Vice President Biden stated at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace that, "Given our non-nuclear capabilities and the nature of today's threats—it's hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary. Or make sense." Do you personally agree with that statement of 2017 and will a Biden administration formally affirm that the United States will not use nuclear weapons first in a conflict?

President Biden is committed to maintaining a strong, credible deterrent to defend the United States and our allies, while also taking steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. He has said that the United States should review its current policy that reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first. He also said that he believes that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring -- and if necessary, retaliating against -- a nuclear attack, and he is committed to consulting with our military and allies to put that belief into practice. We will consult with Congress on any policies or actions in this area.

Armenia

Will you formally recognize the crimes committed against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire as Genocide?

As a presidential candidate, President Biden pledged in his Remembrance Day statement to support a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide. Our administration will be committed to prioritizing human rights and ensuring such a tragedy is not repeated. The Administration will determine the wording for the White House statement to mark Remembrance Day once in office and will consult with Congress on this important issue.

In the aftermath of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia last year, what steps will the Administration take to ensure the immediate return of POWs being held by Azerbaijan?

As the President has said, the United States should be leading a diplomatic effort to find a lasting resolution to the conflict, working together with our European partners, including facilitating the return of prisoners of war. If confirmed, I will reinvigorate U.S. engagement to find a permanent settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that protects the security of Nagorno-Karabakh and helps to ensure another war does not break out. This includes stepping up our engagement via the Minsk Group, of which the United States is a co-chair, and additional diplomatic work to prevent any further interference by third parties.

Will the Administration restrict funding to Azerbaijan, fully enforcing Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, as President-elect Joe Biden urged the Trump Administration to do?

In light of the recent outbreak of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Biden-Harris administration will review our security assistance to Azerbaijan. If the circumstances warrant, we will be prepared to suspend waivers of requirements under section 907 of the

Freedom Support Act. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Secretary of Defense to determine the appropriate level of assistance to meet the security needs of Armenia and the region.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Ted Cruz

China – BIS Entities List

The U.S. State Department on January 19, 2021 declared that the oppression of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang (XUAR) by the Chinese government constitutes a "genocide." During your testimony, you rightly echoed and agreed with that assessment. We can and must do everything we can to address this humanitarian atrocity. That must include blacklisting the technology companies that the Chinese Communist Party uses to conduct its surveillance campaigns in the XUAR, and for several years I have pushed to do so. Specifically, I urged the administration to add such companies to the Commerce Department's BIS Entities List, and in 2019 I introduced legislation mandating that some of those companies be listed, the TIANAMEN Act. In the fall of 2019 and in 2020, the Trump administration did so, adding batches of Chinese technology companies to the Entities List.

Though the Entities List is not maintained by the State Department, as Secretary of State you would have broad prerogatives, including formal prerogatives in the interagency process, to ensure that these and other companies remain listed. Can you commit to ensuring that they remain listed?

Uighurs and other ethnic minorities have suffered unspeakable oppression at the hands of China's authoritarian government. China is engaged in gross human rights violations that shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences.We will speak out consistently and jointly with allies and partners, impose costs and sanctions on those responsible, and help those persecuted find safe haven in the United States and other countries. We have been heartened by bipartisan congressional action on Xinjiang and look forward to working with Congress on this crucial issue. On the specific companies in question, if confirmed, I will closely review the issue in consultation with interagency colleagues.

China – Taiwan SOS

During your hearing, you spoke emphatically about the need to bolster our regional partners and allies, and more specifically to avoid denigrating them. I agree, and would like clarification about how specifics related to how you envision the U.S.-Taiwanese relationship progressing. In 2015, the Obama-Biden administration prohibited Taiwanese officials and military members from displaying their flags and insignia on U.S. government property. The policy was described in a State Department memorandum, "Guidelines on Relations with Taiwan." I believe those Guidelines and that prohibition was profoundly misguided, and introduced legislation mandating that they be reversed, the Taiwan Symbols of Sovereignty (SOS) Act, S.3310 in the 116th Congress. In recent weeks the Trump administration did rescind those guidelines, and we discussed that rescission during your hearing, during which I asked you to commit to allowing

our Taiwanese allies to display their flag and other insignia on U.S. government property. You indicated that you would examine the Taiwan Assurance Act and its requirements to "create more space for contacts." Are you now able to commit that, if confirmed, you would continue the current policy of allowing our Taiwanese allies to display their flag and other insignia on U.S. government property?

In line with the Taiwan Assurance Act passed by Congress, the State Department has been engaged in a review of contact guidance for our unofficial relations with Taiwan. As I understand it, this review will encompass the questions you raise. I agree with Congress that it is time for updated guidance to reflect our commitment to deepening ties with Taiwan -- a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner. For the time being, the Administration will leave the recent revocation of contact guidance in place so that we can complete the review that was already well underway.

Mexico

In recent months the Mexican government has shifted to a confrontational and in some senses even adversarial approach to the United States, including by undermining the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) capability to operate in Mexico, publishing sensitive information that had been shared by the Department of Justice (DOJ), and maneuvering to ensure the freedom of former Defense Minister Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda from drug charges. I am greatly concerned about the effects that these and other actions have on the U.S.-Mexican relationship.

To what degree are you concerned about the status of the U.S.-Mexican relationship in these dimensions?

It is critical that U.S. law enforcement has full cooperation from the Mexican government, and I look forward to comprehensive conversations with the Mexican government to ensure that it does.

What steps will you take to ensure that the Mexican government understands their recent actions against the DEA are unacceptable and returns to a posture of cooperation?

I will not hesitate to raise any issues with the Mexican government that I believe to be obstacles to security cooperation. I will consult with Congress on the appropriate steps to address Mexico's actions and advance security cooperation.

Iran – Terrorism Sanctions

Since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was negotiated, the United States has discovered and verified that vast parts of Iran's economy are intertwined with – and supply funding to – Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), an entity that the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has designated pursuant to counterterrorism authorities in Executive Order (EO) 13224. Specifically, the U.S. government established that Iran's financial sector, including Iran's Central Bank (CBI), and its energy sector, including the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), provide support for the IRGC, and designated those entities in those sectors pursuant to EO

13224. Providing sanctions relief for those entities would provide critical resources to the IRGC and other Iranian terrorist organizations.

During your testimony you largely agreed with these assessments, and indicated you did not believe it would be in the national security interest of the United States to provide Iran relief from terrorism sanctions.

Can you commit to not providing Iran relief from terrorism sanctions – including waivers, licenses, delisting, or removing or delaying sanctions – in the absence of the government of Iran and designated Iranian entities having ceased their support for terrorism?

Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. It threatens our forces and partners in the region. A Biden-Harris administration will be committed to countering the threat posed by Iran, using the various tools at its disposal, including sanctions, and working in close coordination with our allies and partners. We are aware that the previous administration expanded sanctions significantly and will be carefully studying those sanctions to determine whether they are justified on non-nuclear grounds such as support for terrorism or human rights violations.

Iran – JCPOA nuclear "compliance" and IAEA questions

During your hearing you repeatedly described the approach that a Biden administration will take toward reentering the JCPOA as "compliance for compliance," in the context of nuclear-related concessions contemplated by the JCPOA. However, we now know that while and since the JCPOA was negotiated, Iran was concealed nuclear materials, activities, and sites. In addition to the intelligence provided by the Nuclear Archive seized by Israel, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in summer 2020 confirmed that Iran was stonewalling the Agency on several outstanding questions related to potential nuclear-weapons related activity. These issues were concealed during implementation of the JCPOA, and I am deeply concerned that the U.S. would return to compliance with the JCPOA in the absence of Iran resolving the IAEA's concerns. Would you oppose the U.S. returning to compliance with the JCPOA in the absence of Iran resolving the IAEA's concerns?

As the President has made clear, he is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. He has said that if Iran resumes strict compliance with the JCPOA, the United States would return to the deal as a starting point for follow-on negotiations on a stronger and longer deal, and to address other areas of concern. But Iran is a long way from returning to compliance, and there are many steps in the process to getting there that we will need to evaluate once in office. Our first order of business will be consulting with Congress and our allies on the path forward.

Iran – Arms Embargo

UNSCR 2231 ended a long-standing international arms embargo against Iran, described across

the previous six resolutions terminated by paragraph 7(a) of the resolution. After an effort to extend that embargo, the Trump administration took two measures. First, it invoked the "snapback mechanism" described in paragraphs 10-15 of UNSCR 2231, reversing the termination of those resolutions. You and others have publicly suggested that the U.S. was not entitled to invoke that mechanism. Second, the Trump administration implemented EO 13949, "Blocking Property of Certain Persons with Respect to Conventional Arms Activities of Iran," which authorizes sanctions for transfers to and form Iran of arms or related material or military equipment.

As a result, the U.S. established a baseline deterrent against major arms sales to Iran. Multi-billion dollar arms agreements publicly described and anticipated by Russia, China, and Iran have not occurred.

Please describe how you envision continuing to implement an arms embargo against Iran, either through EO 13949 or a similar mechanism. Are you prepared to impose sanctions on Russian or Chinese entities, under whatever authorities are necessary, to prevent them from arming Iran?

The President is committed to working with our allies and partners to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region, including its provision of weapons to violent proxies. Although the arms embargo against Iran expired, we will continue to dissuade countries from providing arms to Iran and fueling Iran's efforts to undermine neighbors in the region, including through the use of sanctions. We also will redouble our efforts to enforce other, existing United Nations Security Council resolutions barring the export of weapons to groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis.

Iran – JCPOA as a Treaty

I believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and any similar arms control agreement with Iran should be brought to the U.S. Senate as a treaty for the Senate's advice and consent. You have indicated in public and private you disagree with that stance, because it is important in the context of such agreements to allow the U.S. to act "without the constraints of international treaty law." I disagree with that analysis, which fails to account for the Senate's prerogatives in general, and in the context of the JCPOA cannot be reconciled with the Obama-Biden administration's move to lock in the JCPOA at through United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231, which sought to constrain U.S. behavior at the level of international law.

(1) Please describe what those constraints are, and why they are necessary to the effective implementation of the JCPOA or similar agreements.

(2) Please describe why those considerations are more important than preserving the Senate's advice and consent prerogatives.

(3) How can the Obama-Biden administration's support for U.N. resolutions locking in the JCPOA or similar agreements be reconciled with your stance that the U.S. must preserve its flexibility to act in the context of those agreements "without the constraints" of international law?

The JCPOA was negotiated as a non-binding arrangement in 2015. Numerous other important international arrangements have been done in this way. The decision in 2015 allowed the United States to maintain maximum U.S. flexibility to re-impose sanctions if Iranian actions so dictated, without the constraints of international treaty law. Changing the legal status of the JCPOA at this stage would require a completely renegotiated agreement, leading to additional Iranian demands and greater constraints on U.S. actions, neither of which is in our interest. But the President and his administration are committed to consulting closely with Congress on the way forward concerning Iran.

Israel – Sovereignty

The Obama-Biden administration's approach to the Israeli-Arab conflict was justified on the basis of a theory of regional relations in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prevented broader Israeli-Arab rapprochement. That approach culminated in December 2016 when the Obama administration maneuvered the United Nations Security Council into passing UNSCR 2334, which among other things denied Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and part of its capital Jerusalem.

I believed that the Obama-Biden administration's approach was deeply misguided, and I urged the Trump administration to reverse it and to render UNSCR 2334 null and void, because the resolution was poor on its merits and because I believed that restoring the U.S.-Israel relationship could serve as the basis for regional peace. They did so, including by recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, by moving our embassy to Jerusalem, by seeking to end discriminatory approaches that distinguished legally and for the purposes of aid and trade between different Israeli communities, and by taking several other steps. I believe that approach has been vindicated by among other things the success of the Abraham Accords.
During your testimony, you praised the Abraham Accords and confirmed to me that you consider Jerusalem to be Israel's capital. I'd like to ask you some more precise questions in this context.

Do you believe that –

(1) Israel has sovereignty over the Golan Heights?

(2) Israel has sovereignty over Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem?

(3) Israel is in illegal occupation of any part of Jerusalem?

(4) Israel is in illegal occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem?

Additionally –

(5) Can you commit to preserving the Trump administration's recognition of the Golan Heights as sovereign Israeli territory?

As I testified before the committee, the Biden-Harris administration will not reverse President Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. Nor will it reverse U.S.

recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In considering the U.S. position on the Golan Heights, we give great weight to Israel's security. As long as Bashar al-Assad is in control of Syria, it would be irresponsible to urge Israel to part with the Golan Heights. A dangerous combination of Iranian troops, Iranian-linked militias, Assad's forces, and Jihadists poses a serious security threat to Israel across the border with Syria. Control of the strategic Golan Heights provides Israel an added measure of security from the turmoil next door.

Israel – Aid

President-elect Biden has repeatedly and rightly emphasized that providing our Israeli allies with U.S. security assistance plays a vital role in bolstering both American and Israeli national security. Nevertheless, some officials – including some who reportedly may take up posts in a Biden administration – have called for conditioning U.S. security assistance to unrelated issues, including the Israeli-Arab conflict. Some have called for conditioning assistance on progress in creating peace between Israel and the Palestinians, while others have called for limiting assistance in light of Israeli construction in some of its territories. I believe any such move would be breathtakingly dangerous to the national security of the United States.

Can you please –

> *(1) Describe your views on the importance of American security assistance to Israel?*
>
> *(2) Commit to ensuring that American security assistance to Israel remains insulated from, and not conditioned upon, non-security aspects of the U.S.-Israel relationship?*

President Biden's commitment to Israel's security is ironclad. The U.S. is required by law to preserve Israel's Qualitative Military Edge in the Middle East. As you know, the President played an important role in helping to negotiate the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on security assistance, the largest aid package in U.S. history. The Biden-Harris administration will uphold the terms of the 2016 MOU without reservation. We also have been clear that the Biden-Harris administration does not support placing conditions on military aid to Israel.

Russia – Nord Stream 2

In recent years the United States has taken a whole-of-government approach to stopping activation of the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) pipeline, undergirded by multiple statutes that received bicameral and bipartisan support in Congress, including and especially the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA), legislation I co-authored with Sen. Shaheen. The effort has thus far succeeded, and today NS2 remains unfinished and construction is stalled. The Russians continue to work to complete and activate NS2, and in January 2021 the Trump administration took decisive and necessary action to further complicate construction by designating a vessel the Russians intended to use, the Fortuna, pursuant to authorities in the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

I am nevertheless troubled by recent reports, some of which cited officials in Berlin and Moscow, indicating that a Biden administration will provide relief from sanctions related to the NS2 project. Some reports indicate the relief would come as an American gesture toward the government of Germany. Others suggest that the relief would come as part of an agreement in which the pipeline would be completed but not activated. Any of these scenarios are unacceptable.

Can you commit that, if confirmed –

(1) You will not relieve sanctions pressure on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline?

(2) You will ensure that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline remains physically uncompleted?

As President Biden has made clear, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a bad idea, and as I said at my hearing, we will work to prevent its completion.. We will monitor for activity to complete or certify the pipeline and, if such activity takes place, make a determination on the applicability of sanctions. Beyond sanctions, we will also develop a comprehensive approach to reinforcing European energy security and safeguarding against predatory behavior, while working closely with our partners and allies.

Responses to Questions for the Record
Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Jeff Merkley

China repeatedly rejected the Trump administration's unrealistic attempts to expand New START to include China but some sort of arms control dialogue with China separate from New START is a good idea. What do you think should be the short-term goals of U.S. engagement with China on arms control and how do you plan to begin that conversation?

The United States and China should focus on limiting the dangers surrounding the worlds' most dangerous weapons -- including, but not limited to, nuclear weapons. It is urgent for China to take on greater responsibility, transparency, and restraint for its nuclear weapons arsenal. The Biden-Harris administration intends to use an extended New START Treaty as a foundation for new arms control arrangements.

China continues to export dirty energy through its Belt and Road Initiative to the tune of tens of billions of dollars in annual development financing, with investments in at least 240 coal-fired power plants in 25 countries across Africa and Asia. How can the United States advance a more sustainable development model that developing countries recognize as a viable alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative?

The Biden-Harris administration will provide an alternative vision that promotes democratic governance and transparency in our global health and development work. We commend the bipartisan effort behind the BUILD Act that established the Development Finance Corporation and will seek to build upon these achievements as we continue to improve our public-private cooperation. We will also strengthen our ties with allies like Japan and Australia, with whom we must cooperate on infrastructure alternatives, and encourage other allies to join us. We will distinguish ourselves from China's approach to development, including the Belt and Road Initiative, by ensuring that social and economic safeguards are built into the projects we support. We will focus on partnerships and on strengthening local capacity. And we will work with allies and partners to advocate for the highest environmental, social, and labor standards to promote development investments that are both beneficial and sustainable over the long term.

Will the administration press Burma's government to abide by the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in January 2020, including to prevent genocide and to preserve evidence of atrocities?

If confirmed, I will work to support justice for atrocities committed, as well as peace, security, and equal rights for the Rohingya as citizens of Burma.

How will the Biden administration work with international institutions to address global nutrition needs, including ensuring that efforts to address the COVID-19 crisis do not result in even more food insecurity?

We share the Committee's intense concern about the second-order impacts of the COVID crisis on global development, health, food security, and humanitarian response. The Biden-Harris administration will mobilize an aggressive and comprehensive plan to combat backsliding on development gains while fighting to end the pandemic. The COVID emergency bill proposed by the President includes a further $11 billion in funds to address the global COVID crisis; approximately half of this would target secondary effects of COVID including impacts on nutrition and food security.

Do you oppose U.S. recognition of unilateral annexation of West Bank territory?
Will you support restoring Economic Support Fund funding in the West Bank and Gaza?

President Biden continues to believe that the two-state solution is the best way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and Democratic state, while upholding the Palestinians' right to a viable, sovereign state of their own. The Biden-Harris administration will oppose any unilateral actions that make such an outcome more difficult, whether incitement, settlement construction, or annexation of the West Bank. The President has pledged to restore assistance to the Palestinian people, not as a favor but because it is in U.S. interests. This funding serves important purposes, including supporting Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, providing critical humanitarian relief, and fostering economic development.

President Biden's proposed Summit for Democracy would be a great opportunity to restore U.S. human rights leadership on issues such as forced labor, refugees, genocide, security force reform, and more. How do you plan to engage civil society and what kinds of commitments do you envision governments making to make this summit a success?

What are your plans for addressing governments that use COVID-19 as a pretense to consolidate authoritarian control and violate human rights?

The Summit for Democracy is an opportunity for the United States to invite other governments and non governmental actors committed to democracy's success to join with us in defending democracy globally. As President Biden wrote when he committed to host the Summit, he wants to join with other countries to advance a common agenda including combating corruption, pushing back on authoritarianism, and advancing human rights. We expect that participating governments and civil society leaders will join the U.S. in committing not only to principles but to action. As President Biden has made clear, he envisions a Summit where civil society plays a central role -- indeed, it's hard to imagine a Summit for Democracy being credible or effective without civil society. Authoritarian regimes have sought, and will continue to seek, to use the pandemic and the accompanying economic crisis to their advantage; this makes a coordinated effort to defend democracy and push back against authoritarianism and closing space for civil society as important as ever in this difficult moment.

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Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Bill Hagerty

On the State Department's Clean Network Initiative

The State Department launched the Clean Network Initiative to counter the long-term threats that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and other authoritarian malign actors pose to the free world's data privacy, security, and human rights. The Clean Network Initiative promotes internationally-accepted digital trust standards and the international use of trusted vendors. It has advanced six main lines of effort—namely, (1) 5G Clean Path, (2) Clean Carrier, (3) Clean Apps, (4) Clean Store, (5) Clean Cloud, and (6) Clean Cable. On November 20, 2020, the State Department announced "53 Clean Countries, 180 Clean Telcos, and dozens of leading companies" have joined the Clean Network Initiative.

If you are confirmed, do you commit to continuing the State Department's Clean Network Initiative and advancing the Initiative's international objectives?

China is engaged in conduct that blunts our technological edge, threatens our alliances and our influence in international organizations, and is designed to make America and its allies more dependent on China, and China less dependent on America and our allies. We must counter China's aggressive and coercive actions and invest in advanced technologies, re-engage robustly in the UN system, and restore our vital security partnerships. We need a comprehensive strategy that addresses the full range of these issues, which will include a review of next steps regarding the Clean Network Initiative.

If you are confirmed, do you commit to working with Congress to secure any resources and new authorities that are required to continue the State Department's Clean Network Initiative and advance the Initiative's international objectives?

If confirmed as Secretary of State, I will commit to work with Congress on the needs of the Department to effectively administer our programs and achieve our objectives.

On the State Department's Role in Countering Cyber Threats

U.S. officials assess that Russia was behind the recent SOLARWINDS cyberattack that infiltrated more than 40 U.S. organizations, including various government agencies. This is one of many examples of the grave and growing cyber threats that emanate from Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and other actors.

If you are confirmed, what role do you envision the State Department playing in countering cyber threats to the United States?

What will you do to ensure that the State Department's efforts fully integrate with the activities of other Departments and Agencies to defend against cyber threats?

If confirmed as Secretary, I will renew the U.S. commitment to international engagement in cyberspace, to include by strengthening alliances to ensure robust cyber defenses and resilience, advancing norms of responsible behavior in cyberspace and holding those accountable that violate them. As part of these efforts, I will ensure that the State Department works closely and collaboratively with our partners across Departments and Agencies to advance a coherent approach to defending the nation against cyber threats.

On North Korea

North Korea has not conducted a nuclear weapons test or a long-range missile test in over two years. That said, at a recent gathering of the North Korean Party Congress, Chairman Kim Jong Un called for increasing and improving North Korea's nuclear weapons capability. As The New York Times reported: "During the party meeting, the first of its kind since 2016, Mr. Kim doubled down on his nuclear arms buildup, offering an unusually detailed list of weapons that the North was developing. They included 'ultramodern tactical nuclear weapons,' 'hypersonic gliding-flight warheads,' 'multi-warhead' missiles, military reconnaissance satellites, a nuclear-powered submarine, and land- and submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles that use solid fuel."

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department under your leadership will consult closely with the Senate on its diplomatic initiatives toward North Korea?

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department under your leadership will continue to pursue complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization in North Korea?

North Korea constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security and the global nonproliferation regime. The United States has a vital interest in deterring North Korea, defending against its provocations or uses of force, and in limiting the reach of its most dangerous weapons programs, and above all keeping the American people and our allies safe. We will remain committed to denuclearization of North Korea, while also focusing in the near term on limiting the threat to the United States and our allies. If confirmed, I look forward to consulting with Congress on this.

You said in 2016 that China has "extraordinary leverage" over North Korea. This refers, in part, to the fact that approximately 90 percent of North Korea's trade goes through China. You have also publicly said that the United States should "go after companies and individuals that prop up North Korea."

If you are confirmed, what measures will the State Department under your leadership pursue to ensure that China is fully using its leverage with respect to denuclearizing North Korea?
In your view, if Chinese economic pressure is a key source of leverage over North Korea, what metric will you use to judge whether China is applying sufficient pressure on North Korea to denuclearize?

If you are confirmed, will you commit to imposing sanctions against Chinese state-owned enterprises and individuals linked with those companies found to be engaging in business with North Korea in violation of U.S. and U.N. secondary sanctions?

China and Russia have felt free in recent years to not enforce fully the sanctions they had agreed to against Pyongyang. China and Russia must fully and completely enforce all sanctions in place against North Korea. Beijing and Moscow can no longer be bystanders and spoilers, and both must fully enforce all financial measures to which they have agreed, plugging the holes that they have poked in this all-important sanctions regime.

North Korea's record on human rights remains abysmal and a grave concern for the United States and the international community.

If you are confirmed, do you commit that, if the Biden Administration engages in negotiations with North Korea, the State Department under your leadership will commit to raising North Korea's abysmal human rights record with the regime in Pyongyang?

If you are confirmed, what personnel changes at the State Department will you implement to address the egregious human rights abuses in North Korea?

As part of its North Korea review, the Biden-Harris administration will carefully consider the grievous human rights picture and how best to respond.

South Korea has sought to revitalize its relationship with North Korea and attempted to pursue various inter-Korean projects that could provide economic benefits to North Korea. Depending on how well or poorly coordinated these projects are with U.S. policy, they can reinforce or undermine the U.S.-led international pressure campaign on North Korea.

If you are confirmed, how do you plan to ensure strong coordination with South Korea on inter-Korean projects?

If you are confirmed, will the State Department under your leadership support imposing sanctions on South Korean companies or individuals that violate U.S. or U.N. secondary sanctions?

Close coordination with and among allies will be central to U.S. strategy on North Korea. When it comes to North Korea, no ally is more important than Seoul.

On Japanese Abductees in North Korea

The DPRK has abducted numerous Japanese citizens, with many still remaining in North Korea. Despite the 2014 Stockholm Agreement in which North Korea agreed to conduct investigations on Japanese abductees, the issue remains unresolved.

If you are confirmed, will you commit to raising the issue of Japanese abductees in the event that the United States resumes negotiations with North Korea?

If you are confirmed, will the State Department under your leadership support imposing additional sanctions on North Korea if it is not willing to make progress on resolving the issue of Japanese abductees?

Japan is an essential military, political, intelligence, and diplomatic ally, and we must proceed with our approaches to North Korea in lock-step -- including on these issues of critical importance to Japan.

On China's Nuclear Modernization

In May 2019, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, Jr., publicly said that China, over the next decade, is likely to at least double the size of its nuclear weapons arsenal. In addition, China is currently developing and deploying an array of delivery capabilities that are fundamentally altering the military balance in the Indo-Pacific.

Given China's fusion of civil and military industries and the threats posed by China's nuclear modernization, do you support the imposition of sanctions against companies and individuals linked to China's nuclear weapons enterprise?

It is urgent for China to take on greater responsibility, transparency, and restraint for its nuclear weapons arsenal. The Biden-Harris administration will work to prioritize those programs that will allow us to maintain a favorable maritime balance in the Indo-Pacific. That will include investing to maintain our technological advantage, developing new defense concepts and capabilities and updating our force posture in the region, including through the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, and strengthening our alliances and partnerships.

On Taiwan

Taiwan is one of America's most important and technologically-capable partners in the Indo-Pacific. As one observer wrote in a December 2020 op-ed in The New York Times: "As of now, any country looking to dominate the digital future has to buy these superfast, ultrathin chips from either Taiwan or South Korea. And Taiwan has the edge in both technology and market power. It is a small island of just 24 million people, but it is at the center of the battle for global technological supremacy. Pound for pound, it is the most important place in the world. As the Cold War between China and the United States intensifies, that importance will only continue to grow."

If you are confirmed, how will you protect U.S. national security interests with respect to Taiwan from foreign threats, especially given Taiwan's critical role in semiconductor fabrication and other technology trade with the United States?

America's commitment to Taiwan will remain rock-solid. Taiwan is a leading democracy and a critical economic, technology, and security partner -- its future matters to the United States for all of these reasons. We are heartened by the enduring and bipartisan support for Taiwan in Congress, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this crucial issue.

On the Abraham Accords

The peace and normalization agreements between Israel and, respectively, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, are major accomplishments of American diplomacy and have created an opportunity for even broader peace agreements in the Middle East.

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department under your leadership will maintain these agreements?

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department under your leadership will prioritize seeking to establish additional Abraham Accord agreements, such as one between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

President Biden welcomed the Abraham Accords as an important contribution to peace in a divided region. If confirmed, I will seek to build on these agreements to further strengthen cooperation between Israel and its neighbors. We will work with other Arab and Muslim countries to encourage them to normalize relations with Israel.

On Iran

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 (INARA) mandates congressional review of any "agreement with Iran relating to the nuclear program of Iran." The law's Section 135(h)(1) expressly defines the term "agreement" as meaning: "an agreement related to the nuclear program of Iran that includes the United States, commits the United States to take action, or pursuant to which the United States commits or otherwise agrees to take action, regardless of the form it takes, whether a political commitment or otherwise, and regardless of whether it is legally binding or not, including any joint comprehensive plan of action entered into or made between Iran and any other parties, and any additional materials related thereto, including annexes, appendices, codicils, side agreements, implementing materials, documents, and guidance, technical or other understandings, and any related agreements, whether entered into or implemented prior to the agreement or to be entered into or implemented in the future."

If you are confirmed, do you commit that the State Department under your leadership will fully consult with Congress before making any decision to re-enter the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran?

Given INARA's definition of the term "agreement," do you agree with the interpretation that any subsequent agreement by the Biden Administration with JCPOA participants—"regardless of the form [the agreement] takes"—for the United States to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal will trigger INARA's congressional review provisions?

President Biden has pledged to work closely with Congress, and this includes briefing on any plans regarding his administration's future course of action on Iran. Should the U.S. resume JCPOA participation, it will also result in a resumption of the extensive reporting required under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA), which ended after the United States ceased participating in the deal. The JCPOA was submitted under INARA in 2015 and underwent close congressional and public scrutiny. If the U.S. resumes participation in the agreement following Iran's return to compliance, we will look at whether INARA would require that the agreement be submitted again. In any case, we are committed to consulting with Congress on the path forward.

In 2018, Israel publicly disclosed the existence of the Iranian regime's so-called "Nuclear Archive." Subsequent analysis of the archive showed it likely that Iran was violating the provisions of the JCPOA as soon as the agreement was struck. The archive also demonstrates that the Iranian regime did not disclose the full scope of its previous nuclear weapons program and that, contrary to what many believe, the Iranian regime continued nuclear research and development activities for many years after 2003. The archive also raises concerns about the limitations of the intelligence collection and analysis, and about the possibility of ongoing undeclared nuclear activities in Iran.

If you are confirmed, how do you intend to address the risk that Iran may be continuing to engage in undeclared nuclear activities and covert nuclear research and development?

President Biden has made clear he is committed to ensuring that Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon. Iran was in compliance with its commitments until the U.S. withdrew from the deal. Since then, and while it has violated several of its commitments under the deal, Iran has continued to allow intrusive IAEA verification as required by the JCPOA, the most intrusive verification procedures ever negotiated. More recently, Iran's parliament has enacted a law providing that, unless key sanctions relief is restored, Iran will cease the "provisional application" of the Additional Protocol as well as other intrusive inspections under the JCPOA. This would be a significant setback for the IAEA's ability to report reliably on Iran's program. The President has made clear that the United States will be prepared to resume participation in the JCPOA if Iran restores its compliance, and then, through follow-on diplomacy, the U.S. will seek to lengthen and strengthen the nuclear constraints.

U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231 addresses more than just the JCPOA's nuclear restrictions. It includes U.N.-imposed international travel bans, restrictions on ballistic missile development, and prohibitions on Iran importing and exporting conventional weapons. For example, the U.N. Secretary General last year reported Iranian proliferation to the Houthis in Yemen constituted a violation of UNSCR 2231.

If the Biden Administration decides to rejoin the JCPOA, is it prepared to provide, as required by Congress under INARA, certification on the full range of Iranian activities, including that the Iranian regime is not supporting terrorism nor pursuing any covert nuclear programs?

If the United States rejoins the JCPOA following Iran's return to compliance, the Biden-Harris administration will fully abide by the reporting requirements of INARA.

In remarks at the American Jewish Committee's Virtual Global Forum on June 17, 2020, you said: "Iran would have to come back into full compliance [with the JCPOA's requirements] and unless and until it did, obviously, all sanctions would remain in place. And then, if we come back into compliance, we would use that as a platform with our partners and allies who would be on the same side with us again to negotiate a longer and stronger deal."

Given your statement, will you, if confirmed, commit to the policy that, should the Biden Administration opt to return to the JCPOA, Iran must first achieve full compliance with the deal before the United States will lift any sanctions? Will you commit to not pursuing the concept of "less for less" in which Iran would make a limited concession and the United States would provide partial sanctions relief in return?

The President has said that if Iran resumes strict compliance with the JCPOA, the United States would return to the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations. But Iran is a long way from returning to compliance, and there are many steps in the process to getting there that we will need to evaluate once in office. Our first order of business will be consulting with Congress and our allies on the path forward.

Iran is on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) international blacklist due to money laundering, support of terrorism, and lack of transparency in an economy dominated by terror-sponsoring regime elites, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and their front companies.

If you are confirmed, how will the State Department under your leadership assure that any sanctions relief to the Iranian regime is not used to fund terrorism, underwrite destabilizing activities in the region, or oppress the Iranian people?

President Biden is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities, including its ballistic missile program and support for terrorist groups and violent proxies in the region. The Biden-Harris administration will also call out and stand up to Iran's human rights abuses, which include inhumane executions of political opponents, the unjust detention of prisoners of conscience, and the lack of due process. The Administration will continue to maintain and impose sanctions on Iranian entities supporting terrorist activity or perpetrating these human rights abuses, and we will work with our allies to hold Iran accountable.

The Iranian regime has a history of unlawfully imprisoning American citizens and citizens of other Western nations and using their captivity to coerce concessions.

If you are confirmed, how would the State Department under your leadership counter this malign Iranian scheme and ensure American citizens who are taken hostage by the Iran regime are not used as bargaining pawns and are instead returned home safely?

Iran's unjust detention of several U.S. citizens, held as part of its form of hostage diplomacy, is appalling and outrageous. Our administration will make it a priority to secure their prompt release. We will also work with our allies, many of which also have nationals currently detained by the Iranian regime, to seek their release and to stand up to Iran's practice of hostage-taking.

On State Department, New NSC Czars, and the Foreign Policymaking Process

President Biden has announced the creation of a new layer of empowered policy "czars" that apparently will sit on top of the National Security Council's traditional structure of Senior Directors and Directors. New policy czars will include Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, NSC Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Kurt Campbell, NSC Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett H. McGurk, NSC Coordinator for the Southwestern Border Roberta Jacobson, and others. Although it appears these policy czars will play very significant—and perhaps expansive—roles in the American foreign policymaking process, none of them will be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

What role will the NSC's new layer of empowered policy czars play in the Biden Administration's foreign policymaking process?

How will these empowered NSC policy czars affect and alter the Senate-confirmed Secretary of State's traditional role and responsibilities in the U.S. foreign policymaking process under the Biden Administration?

Will adding a new layer of empowered NSC policy czars—none of whom will be confirmed by the U.S. Senate—alter the Executive Branch's accountability and responsiveness to Congress and congressional oversight responsibilities?

Do you anticipate making organizational changes within the State Department to correspond in any way to the new roles and duties being undertaken by these new policy czars?

The Biden-Harris administration is committed to restoring diplomacy as the primary instrument of U.S. foreign policymaking and the Department of State will lead that effort. If confirmed, I will execute the Secretary of State's traditional role and responsibilities in the U.S. foreign policymaking process, and work closely with Congress in doing so.

On the New START Treaty

President Putin agreed in 2020 that Russia is willing to cap the number of nuclear warhead stockpiles at current levels in exchange for a one-year extension of the New START Treaty.

If you are confirmed, will the State Department under your leadership continue to pursue that offer from President Putin? What timeframe would you contemplate for such an extension?

We are aware that the previous administration engaged in negotiations with the Russians on an extension of the New START treaty, including on a potential one-year freeze on

nuclear warheads, but verbal commitments and positive signals, but was unable to reach an agreement. Russia's public pledge to freeze its overall nuclear warheads level is a positive development, but does not constitute an agreement. The President intends to seek an extension that is manifestly in the national security interest of the United States.

On Trilateral Arms Control

The United States has been pursuing a trilateral arms control agreement among the United States, Russia, and China.

In your view, should the next arms control agreement after the New START Treaty's expiration be trilateral and include both Russia and China?

The Biden-Harris administration fully intends to use an extended New START Treaty as a foundation for new arms control arrangements. President Biden has made clear that he views New START's continuation as the beginning, not the end, of efforts to engage Russia and other countries including China, in close consultation with our allies and partners, on the threats facing us from nuclear weapons and new and emerging challenges to strategic stability. The Biden-Harris administration looks forward to consulting with Congress and our allies on the appropriate way forward.

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Submitted to Honorable Antony J Blinken
January 21, 2021

Sen. Cory Booker

Horn of Africa: The growing instability in the Horn of Africa is deeply worrying.

Ethiopia appears to be in the midst of a civil war with reports that it is receiving support from Eritrea and the UAE to carry out military operations, Somalia remains fractured politically and partly overrun by al-Shabaab, China has established its only overseas base in the world inside Djibouti, and an economic crisis and lingering instability in Darfur threaten Sudan's transition.

The negotiations between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) remain stalled, while the threat of armed conflict looms. Tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan have been compounded in recent weeks over a border dispute.

This vital region at the mouth of the Red Sea, through which upwards of 10 percent of all global trade flows, has become a hotspot for international interventionism, particularly by our Gulf Arab allies and Turkey.

Given the importance of the Horn of Africa for regional stability and global trade, I am interested in your plans to revitalize diplomacy in the region, prevent further instability, and a humanitarian crisis.

You have indicated on social media that you are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia. What role do you see the U.S. playing to support efforts to end the conflict, ensure continued humanitarian access, and address the alleged atrocities committed against civilians?

Where do you see foreign powers' priorities in the Horn running counter to our own, and what opportunities do you see for collaboration?

Will you consider the appointment of a Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa while you wait for the confirmation of other relevant officials?

I am deeply troubled by the loss of life and mass displacement that is a result of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Violence has continued and humanitarian access remains limited -- which is unacceptable. Continued violence is a risk to Ethiopia's stability and regional peace and security. There must be an end to fighting, constructive dialogue, immediate unimpeded humanitarian access, restoration of all communications to the region, and accountability for atrocities committed by all parties. A political way forward is required. Ethiopia's successful transition to a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society is critical to U.S. interests. We will renew our diplomatic engagement, including on the conflict in Tigray, the political and economic reform agenda, and the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam. If confirmed, I will renew our diplomatic engagement, working with partners in the region, Gulf, and UN. It will be important that the UN

Security Council stay engaged in Ethiopia. The UN plays a vital role in delivering humanitarian assistance and in protecting refugees in Ethiopia. Especially because conflict in Ethiopia poses a threat to the broader region, we will work with the A3 in New York and other member states. As part of our strategy, I will review whether a special envoy is needed.

Africa/Competition with China: China is aggressively competing with us in Africa both with hard and soft power. Last year, the Chinese Foreign Minister's first overseas trip was to Africa and has taken several trips there.

I recently received a terrific yet unsettling briefing from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, who said "Under Xi Jinping's (She-Jin-Ping) leadership, Beijing has launched new initiatives to transform Africa into a testing ground for the export of its governance system of state-led economic growth under one-party, authoritarian rule." China has supplemented its substantial increase in its political and economic engagement with a deepening of its military influence.

What should we make of China's efforts to use Africa as a testing ground to export its authoritarian governance model?

How will the Biden Administration view engagement and competition with China in Africa and beyond?

Will you commit to traveling to Africa early in your tenure and ensure that we are staffing our Embassies in Africa with the best and the brightest at the State Department?

African countries are our partners in pursuing our shared interests -- from security, global health, climate change, democracy, and economic growth. Africa is influential on the global stage and young Africans will be the workforce of tomorrow. We engage with our African partners in this strategic frame -- not just to compete with China. Still, the reality is that China is our most serious competitor, and competition with China is one of the central challenges that will define the 21st century. In Africa, we will meet this challenge by ensuring that American companies can compete on an even playing field, providing a meaningful alternative to China's economic approach, promoting entrepreneurship and fair practices. We will push back on corrupt or coercive practices that damage our interests and that of our African partners, including impingement on state sovereignty or control over resources and the abusive use of new security technology. African publics continue to prefer the United States to China, and democratic values to authoritarianism. We will capitalize on this soft power -- engaging with youth, encouraging education opportunities, and promoting American business. We will actively engage with our African partners in multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council.

India:

If confirmed, how would you address the current prevalent violence towards minority communities in India and the growing intolerance of dissenting voices by the Indian government

and its supporters that Amnesty International and many other NGOs and journalists have recently documented?

The U.S.-India relationship is based on shared values. The Biden-Harris administration's intention to again make human rights and religious freedom core pillars of U.S. foreign policy and we will work with other democracies, such as India, to strengthen these values.

Do you envision a U.S.-India partnership that goes beyond defense and trade issues and, if so, what does that look like?

The U.S.-India strategic partnership is one our most critical relationships in Asia. If confirmed, I will counterparts in the U.S. and Indian government to seek to rebuild a comprehensive relationship that includes defense and economic cooperation, but also prioritizes cooperation on Covid-19 response and climate change. The Biden-Harris administration will also seek to work with India to support a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Libya Arms Embargo: The United Nations has repeatedly identified malign foreign interference and violations of the UN arms embargo as the most significant ongoing threats to stability in Libya.

Blatant disregard for the arms embargo by the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Russia has led directly to civilian deaths and violations of international humanitarian law. Violations of the Libya arms embargo are degrading the integrity of UN arms embargoes as a tool.

What specific actions will you take to enforce the UN arms embargo?

Will you impose sanctions on companies and countries that violate the arms embargo?

What diplomatic action will you pursue with Russia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates so that they halt all transfers of military equipment and personnel to Libya?

How will you hold them accountable for their involvement in civilian deaths?

It is time for external actors to disentangle themselves from Libya and to give the Libyan people the space to make their own decisions. The current cease-fire agreement calls for respecting the UN arms embargo and for the removal of foreign forces in Libya. The Biden-Harris administration will be looking at how the U.S. can best leverage our influence with external actors that have influence in Libya. This includes Turkey, which has supported the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli, and Egypt, Russia, and the UAE, which have been supporting factions in the eastern part of the country.

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