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**REVIEW OF RESOURCES, PRIORITIES, AND
PROGRAMS IN THE FY 2016 STATE
DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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REVIEW OF RESOURCES, PRIORITIES, AND PROGRAMS IN THE FY 2016 STATE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2015

U.S. SENATE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOC-
RACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,

Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:35 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Marco Rubio (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Rubio, Flake, Gardner, Perdue, Boxer, Kaine, Markey, and Menendez.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator RUBIO. All right, the committee will come to order.

Today's hearing is to review the resources, priorities, and programs in fiscal year 2016 at the State Department budget request, focused on—here in our work in the Western Hemisphere, as well as transnational crime, civilian security, democracy, human rights, and global women's issues.

Our witnesses today from the administration are the Honorable Catherine Russell, the Ambassador-At-Large for Global Women's Issues; Dr. John Feeley, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, the Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs; and Miss Virginia Bennett, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

And the hearing is going to focus on a review of resources, priorities, and programs in fiscal year 2016 budget request in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, and the Office of Global Women's Issues. I want to thank all of you for being a part of this today.

These are important issues for the Department of State and for America's role in the world. Just as ensuring that our military is adequately funded to deter our enemies, the international affairs budget, of which the State Department budget is just one component, is an essential element of our national security. The programs we will review today help us advance U.S. national security interests in key regions and help us ensure that our foreign policy reflects our values.

I want to take the opportunity to briefly review some of the challenges facing us in the Western Hemisphere, as well as across the globe.

In Central America, the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which are collectively known as the “Northern Triangle countries,” have been mired in economic stagnation, rocked by violent crime brought on by the proliferation of narcotraffickers, and hobbled by entrenched corruption that inhibits economic growth and safety. I am cautiously optimistic about the desire of these countries to move themselves forward and the attention that the administration is now giving to this particular region. While there cannot be a blank check and no accountability, Central American governments must look within and stamp out corruption to restore public confidence in public institutions.

In Colombia, I remain supportive of the Government of Colombia and the Colombian people’s right to seek what is in their best interest with regards to the ongoing peace talks with the FARC. However, the FARC’s most recent deadly attack violated a cease-fire that had been in place since December, and resulted in the death of 10 soldiers. This is not the first time that the FARC has violated a cease-fire agreement, and the attack highlighted how deadly FARC continues to be. Our assistance to Colombia has been instrumental to the success in bringing the FARC to the negotiating table. The United States and Colombia must make sure that the FARC knows that they have been defeated on the battlefield.

In Haiti, the suspension of the October 26th elections last year was very startling, and the announcement of the President that he would rule by decree was even more disturbing. History—Haiti, unfortunately, has a history of turbulent elections, and the recent suppression of political protesters cannot continue. We are hopeful that the upcoming August election will go forward as planned and that a new democratically elected government will be installed that will be responsive to the people of Haiti.

In Cuba, despite all the efforts by the Obama administration to fast-track and reestablish relations with that government, the Castro dictatorship has used this opportunity to ridicule and attack American interests. The Cuban Government has made no concessions, no attempts to open a society that has been in darkness for 55 years, a darkness, make no mistake, that has been inflicted by the Castro brothers due to their ineffective and failed ideology. In fact, since December 17, the regime has increased its repression and beatings of dissidents, and has shown every intent of making U.S. overtures a one-sided deal. In particular, the consistent attacks on the Ladies of White show this brutal regime’s true nature.

In Venezuela, we continue to be concerned with the increasing authoritarian rule of Nicolas Maduro over Venezuela. The recent announced nationalization of privately owned commercial companies through the use of his decree powers is an affront to a free society. He also continues to lash out at the United States as the cause of Venezuela’s problems, never acknowledging that he is the one who has imposed restrictions on currency, travel, and trade. The Venezuelan people deserve better.

In Argentina, we continue to mourn the death of Argentine Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman, a courageous man who relentlessly

pursued those who were responsible for the bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, that killed 85 people and wounded more than 300. I am concerned over the slow pace of the investigation into his death. And, with that in mind, I introduced a resolution today regarding his courageous work and life, and a call for a swift and transparent investigation into his tragic death.

Nicaragua continues to reestablish its close ties with Russia, rekindling memories of Soviet presence in Central America during the 1980s. New military cooperation agreements between Vladimir Putin and Daniel Ortega serves as a further expansion of Russian reach into the hemisphere.

Mexico, which we join today in celebrating its army's defeat of the French Army on Cinco de Mayo, continues to be a strong partner of the United States, both economically through trade and security. I continue, of course, to be concerned about the violence that proliferates across the country, driven by drug cartels that seek to terrorize communities they operate in. I am particularly concerned about the massacre of 43 students in the city of Iguala.

On democracy and human rights, we are seeing a deterioration of democracy and human rights across the globe. In particular, freedom of press and freedom of religion is being challenged in every corner of the globe. In 2015, Freedom House Freedom of the World Report identified that global press freedom declined in 2014 to its lowest point in more than 10 years. A 2013 Pew Research study found that Christians were being harassed either by government or social groups in 102 of 198 countries included in the study. There are also serious questions about whether the U.S. Government is structured adequately to make human rights and democracy a priority of foreign policy.

On women and girls—face numerous challenges across the globe, from China's one-child policy, which places a preference on boys over girls, to Saudi Arabia, where the state of women's rights is so abysmal that they are not even allowed to drive. Gender-based violence cuts across ethnicity, race, class, religion, educational level, and international borders. An estimated one in three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex, or experienced some other form of abuse in their lifetime.

While these lists of challenges seem daunting, the U.S. Government is dedicated to improving the status of democracy, human rights, and women's rights. Today, we are exploring how we can best dedicate our resources to improve ongoing U.S. efforts.

With that, I recognize the ranking member, Senator Boxer.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA BOXER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA**

Senator BOXER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and I want to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished witnesses.

Today's hearing is part of a series of subcommittee hearings to examine in more detail the State Department's strategic and budgetary priorities for fiscal year 2016. These hearings will help inform the committee's efforts to craft a State Department authorization bill, which is a top priority for our new chairman.

Our subcommittee has jurisdiction over a range of critical matters relating to U.S. foreign policy and national security, including U.S. relations with countries of the Western Hemisphere, as well as a global responsibility for democracy, human rights, and women's issues.

I just want to call out for praise Secretary Kerry. When I went to then-Chairman Kerry with this notion that we add this very important part to our subcommittee—human rights, democracy, and women's issues—he said yes. And Republicans support it, as well. I am very grateful that it stays with this subcommittee.

The State Department's budget request seeks to implement key policies and strategies in each of these areas. I strongly support the administration's historic \$1 billion request for a U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America. This funding will support a government-wide approach to promote regional prosperity and economic opportunity, address high levels of violence and insecurity, and strengthen democratic institutions. I also support the administration's efforts to deepen U.S. engagement in the region, including its decision to chart a new path forward in United States-Cuban relations. And I know we are sharply divided on that in this committee, but that is healthy disagreement.

In addition, I appreciate the administration's strong commitment to promoting women's rights, protecting women's security, and ensuring their full and meaningful participation in all areas of public life.

The budget request also includes funding for programs that combat gender-based violence, that our chairman alluded to, and for continued implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally. It is also critical that the United States continues to lead the world in advancing democracy and human rights worldwide. Today, sadly, we continue to see widespread human rights violations and threats to fundamental freedoms in countries from China to Russia to Uganda to Venezuela. So, I support funding for programs that support human rights defenders and civil society organizations, promote religious freedom, and strengthen accountability and the rule of law.

It seems to me, if we are going to wrap our arms around the distress in the world, I think this subcommittee is a good place to start, because of our broad jurisdiction over these issues.

And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Senator.

And now we are going to begin with Ambassador Russell.

Welcome to the committee. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE RUSSELL, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador RUSSELL. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you very much for inviting me to testify today.

We, at the Department of State, believe that advancing the status of women and girls worldwide is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. Study after study demonstrates that

countries are more stable, peaceful, and prosperous when women are healthy, educated, and able to fully participate in their economies and their societies. As the Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues, it is my job to develop and help implement policies and initiatives that promote gender equality and advance the status of girls and women around the world. My office is focused on both policy and diplomacy efforts. We implement a handful of targeted programs to strategically advance our objectives. We share best practices for promoting gender issues within the State Department, and we coordinate with USAID and other U.S. Government agencies, as well as other governments, international institutions, and NGOs.

I would like to begin today by providing you with an overview of my office's three priority areas, and I will then outline how we use our resources to support these objectives.

Our first priority is to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, both in conflict and in peacetime. As you said, Chairman Rubio, more than one in three women around the world faces sexual or physical violence in her lifetime. That is why I make sure that addressing gender-based violence is the—on the agenda every trip that I take. For example, I have met with survivors of acid attacks in Pakistan. I have met with the Government of Bangladesh to encourage them to uphold 18 as the legal age of marriage for girls. I have met with Afghan President Ghani to discuss the recent mob murder of a 27-year-old woman named Farkhunda. And we continue to push the Afghan government to fully implement the elimination on the Violence Against Women Act.

Our second priority is to advance women's full participation in all aspects of society. In the places where decisions are made, women are vastly underrepresented. From politics to peace negotiations, women often do not have a seat at the table. We are working very hard to change that. We also work to expand women's economic participation. One of the most effective ways to empower women is to facilitate greater economic independence. Women's economic opportunities have ripple effects for their families, communities, and countries. Women spend the majority of their earnings on food, schooling, and immunizations that help secure their children's futures. And when more women work, when the gap between women and men in the workforce narrows, economies benefit, as well. Research has shown that the narrowing gap between male and female employment accounted for a quarter of Europe's annual GDP growth over the past two decades.

Our final priority is addressing the needs of adolescent girls. In too many parts of the world, adolescence is the most precarious time for girls. Many are at risk of early and forced marriage. In fact, one in three girls in the developing world is married by the time she is 18 years old. Millions of girls live in conflict settings that raise the risks of gender-based violence and further disrupt already perilous situations. And far too many girls have the education—far too few girls have the education they need to participate fully in the economy. Girls' attendance in formal schooling during adolescence is also correlated with later marriage, later childbearing, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, fewer hours of domestic and labor work, and greater gender equality. That is why, through the

Let Girls Learn Initiative, a government-wide effort recently launched by the President and First Lady, we are working to make the case that every girl deserves a chance to complete her education, especially secondary education.

These are the priorities we are focused on. I would like to talk very briefly about how we use our resources and programs to advance gender equality.

As I mentioned, my role is a strategic combination of policy and diplomacy. The majority of programmatic activities related to gender are carried out by State and USAID embassies and missions around the world, as well as some of our bureaus here in Washington. My office helps advance these issues through our own targeted programming. In many instances, we use our resources to fill gaps and test innovative strategic ways to address challenges related to women and girls.

I am committed to ensuring that our funds are spent on programs that have real impact and that can serve as models for other work. That is why we have implemented procedures to carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the projects we fund.

One thing we have learned is that it is difficult to see change without comprehensively addressing the many challenges that women and girls face. For example, it is one thing to provide services to survivors of domestic violence, but to truly reduce rates of gender-based violence, we must also focus on prevention and empowerment. And for us to succeed in achieving full gender equality, we need everyone—diplomats, government practitioners, civil society men and women—to play a role.

The same concept applies to U.S. foreign policy. Each of the global challenges we face include and involve women. We cannot effectively counter violent extremist groups without engaging women. We cannot create stable and prosperous societies without including women. We cannot build stronger economies without making sure that girls go to school. That is why, across every bureau and every embassy, we need to make every effort to advance the status and address the needs of women and girls.

Your leadership and support are critical to the success of our efforts. And I thank you very much for having me here today and for supporting our work.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Russell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHERINE M. RUSSELL

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, and thank you, Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer, and distinguished members of the committee for inviting me to testify today on the resources, priorities, and programs of the Global Women's Issues Office.

My principal responsibility as the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues is to develop and help implement policies and initiatives related to promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls internationally. We do this by disseminating best practices for promoting gender issues within the Department of State and also through coordination with USAID and other U.S. Government agencies, as well as other governments, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We are an office focused on both policy and diplomacy efforts, and we also implement a handful of targeted programs to strategically advance our objectives.

The Department believes that advancing the status of women and girls worldwide is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do. Study after study demonstrates that countries are more stable, peaceful, and prosperous when women are

healthy, educated, and given the opportunity to fully participate in their economies and societies. In other words, we believe women and girls are a good investment.

I would like to begin today by providing you with an overview of my office's three priority areas, and I will then outline how my office uses our resources to support these objectives.

Priorities

Our first priority is preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, both in conflict and in peacetime. This work includes addressing cases that capture international headlines, like the rape and murder of young girls in India, Boko Haram's brutal kidnapping of teenage girls who had gathered to take their college entrance exams, and the kidnapping of hundreds of Yezidi women and girls by ISIL. But it also includes the challenging work of changing social norms and deeply ingrained attitudes that lead to more than one in three women around the world experiencing sexual or physical violence in her lifetime. In too many places, far too many people—including women—think domestic violence is justifiable for a variety of incomprehensible reasons, all rooted in the low status of women and girls.

That is why I make sure that addressing gender-based violence is on the agenda of nearly every trip I take. These efforts range from meeting with survivors of acid attacks in Pakistan, to encouraging the Government of Bangladesh to uphold 18 as the legal age of marriage for all girls, to encouraging the Afghan Government to fully implement the Elimination of Violence Against Women Act (EVAW). On a trip to Guatemala, I visited a USAID-supported 24-hour specialized court for cases related to violence against women, exploitation, sexual violence and human trafficking, which takes an innovative and integrated approach combining legal, medical, and psychological services for survivors of gender-based violence. Recently, I met with the President of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, and discussed the brutal mob murder of a 27-year-old woman named Farkhunda and the Afghan Government's efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.

My office also works to make sure that our embassies and bureaus around the world incorporate best practices for preventing gender-based violence into their strategic planning, diplomatic efforts, and programming and to ensure continued implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally.

Our second priority is advancing women's full participation in all aspects of society, including in the political sphere. Today, only 22 percent of all of the world's parliamentarians are women, and there are 21 women either serving as head of state or head of government. Only 18 percent of all government ministers are women, with the majority serving in the fields of education and health. Between 1992 and 2011, women have represented fewer than 4 percent of signatories, 2 percent of chief mediators, and 9 percent of negotiators to major peace processes. These are the places where decisions are made. Decisions that affect women's lives as they do men's. Yet too often women don't have the seats at the table they both need and deserve.

We also work to expand women's economic participation. One of the most effective ways to empower women is to facilitate greater economic independence. Women who take home dependable pay from decent jobs are better equipped to provide for themselves and more likely to stand up for their rights. Being a wage earner can also positively influence a woman's sense of personal empowerment; she may have the means or wherewithal to leave an abusive situation. Becoming a breadwinner may provide a greater voice for her in household decisionmaking such as the education of her daughter. In addition, investing in women produces a multiplier effect: women spend the majority of their earnings on food, schooling, and immunizations that help secure their children's futures.

Furthermore, ensuring women's participation in the workforce helps boost economies. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has found that the narrowing gap between male and female employment has accounted for a quarter of Europe's annual GDP growth over the past two decades and that closing gender gaps in the labor market in the Middle East and North Africa could increase per capita GDP in that region by more than 25 percent.

For example, the Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas Initiative, or WE-Americas, Initiative, which we implement with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, leverages public-private partnerships to support women entrepreneurs.

Through the Equal Futures Partnership—a U.S. led initiative—we are working diplomatically with 26 countries and the European Union to decrease barriers to women's economic and political participation. We are encouraging every partner country to make and fulfill commitments on these issues and linking more devel-

oped countries with others that still face significant challenges to the full inclusion of women. As an example of how Equal Futures countries work together, Italy recently shared with Mexico a successful anti-gender-based violence campaign. Studies show that gender-based violence is and remains a significant barrier to women's full economic participation.

We are also working to increase the role of women in peace and security efforts. This is part of our strategic commitment to the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, which affirms that ensuring the participation of women in issues such as security, stabilization, justice, and reconciliation is critical to lasting peace and to U.S. national security.

For instance, I was recently in Baghdad and met Iraqi women from a range of different backgrounds as well as U.N. and minority group representatives to discuss the urgent security and humanitarian challenges, including the needs of traumatized women and girls such as those who have escaped or otherwise returned from ISIL captivity. The Department is actively seeking ways to further assist these and other survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, building on existing interventions by the U.N. and other international organizations.

In Sierra Leone, a program funded by my office intended to strengthen women's local leadership proved effective in responding to the Ebola outbreak. The group used its convening authority to engage in public outreach with health care providers and local populations on the Ebola response, helping to ensure that the unique needs of women and girls were addressed.

Our final priority is addressing the needs of adolescent girls. Unfortunately, in too many parts of the world, adolescence is the most precarious time for girls. Far too many people believe that a few years of education is enough for a girl and that once she reaches adolescence, it is time for her to get married or increase her domestic responsibilities.

A quarter of a billion girls live in poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 1 in 10 girls graduate from high school. One in three girls in the developing world is married by the time she is 18, and one in nine is married by the age of 15. Every year, millions of girls undergo female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). There are about 380,000 new HIV infections among young women aged 15–24 every year. Millions more live in conflict settings that raise the risks of gender-based violence and further disrupt already perilous situations. And far too few girls have the education they need to participate fully in the economies of their countries.

Through the Let Girls Learn Initiative, a government-wide effort recently launched by President Obama and the First Lady, we are working to make the case that every girl deserves a chance to complete her education, especially secondary education. One World Bank study found that every year of secondary school education is correlated with an 18 percent increase in a girl's future earning power. Girls' attendance in formal school during adolescence is correlated with later marriage, later childbearing, lower rates of HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health problems, fewer hours of domestic and/or labor market work, and greater gender equality.

Resources/Programmatic Activities

As I mentioned, my role is a strategic combination of policy and diplomacy, and I serve to advance the Secretary's Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality to achieve our national security and foreign policy objectives. The majority of programmatic activities related to gender are carried out by State and USAID embassies and missions around the world, and some of our bureaus here in Washington. In addition, my office helps advance these issues through our own targeted programming. In many instances, we use our resources to fill gaps and test innovative, strategic ways to address challenges related to women and girls.

One such initiative is the Secretary's Full Participation Fund, which provides resources to embassies and bureaus to implement innovative ideas that integrate gender equality into every aspect of their work.

Last July, my office was proud to announce our largest Full Participation grant ever—\$1.5 million—to help support our Embassy in Guinea in an effort to eliminate FGM/C, which U.N. data shows affects 96 percent of the female population in Guinea. This horrific practice has zero health benefits—and can even lead to death. Through partnerships with the Government of Guinea, Guinea's First Lady, UNICEF, and 26 local civic and human rights organizations, our Embassy in Guinea has established nationwide educational and media campaigns that engage policymakers, health professionals, FGM/C practitioners, religious leaders, and the general public in an effort to abandon FGM/C. Our Embassy has helped to start a national dialogue about this practice and has implemented programs that will protect up to 65,000 girls and women.

We also have our Global Women, Peace, and Security Grants. In coordination with the Bureaus of African Affairs and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, we are funding a program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help build local capacity to collect the forensic evidence necessary to prosecute rape crimes. The program supports training for local legal, law enforcement, and health professionals in the proper forensic documentation of sexual violence cases, chain of custody procedure, and use of court-admissible evidence to prosecute legal cases against alleged perpetrators of sexual violence.

I am committed to ensuring that our funds are spent on programs that have real impact and that can serve as models for other work. That is why we have implemented procedures to carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the projects we fund, including working with organizations at the outset of each award to establish detailed plans to achieve and demonstrate results, as well as through site visits and tracking of projects through quarterly reporting.

One thing we have learned is that it is difficult to see change without comprehensively addressing the many challenges that women and girls face. For example, it is one thing to provide services to survivors of domestic violence. But to really reduce rates of gender-based violence, we must also work on prevention and ensuring that women and girls have opportunities for education and economic independence.

We also know that everyone is going to have to play a role if we want to effectively address the challenges women face. We know we can't do this alone—promoting gender equality is everyone's job who works in diplomacy and development.

We cannot effectively counter extremist groups without engaging women. We cannot create stable and prosperous societies without including women. We cannot build stronger economies without making sure that girls can go to school. Across every bureau and embassy, we need to make sure that we are making every effort to advance the status and address the needs of women and girls.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you very much.

Secretary Feeley, welcome to the committee.

STATEMENT OF JOHN D. FEELEY, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. FEELEY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to testify here today.

Mr. Chairman, the Western Hemisphere is a top priority for the United States, because important national interests are at stake. I am pleased to report that almost every available metric supports the view that the United States remains an influential actor and a vital partner in this region. The Obama administration's policy aims to forge equal partnerships with the countries of the Americas to advance our shared values and our common interests. And that is essential for the American people. It links families, it creates jobs, it promotes our common democratic values, and it increasingly enables us to work together on important regional and global issues, such as climate change, combating transnational criminal organizations, and promoting a prosperity agenda that begins here at home.

Our budget request reflects the high level of importance that this administration gives to the Western Hemisphere. The request, as you know, is \$1.99 billion, which represents a 34.7-percent increase from fiscal year 2014. Just over half of the total request supports the U.S. strategic engagement for Central America, a new whole-of-government approach to enhance prosperity, governance, and security in Central America.

Last summer's spike in the migration of unaccompanied children and women was a clear signal that serious long-standing challenges in Central America remain and, in some instances, frankly, are worsening. The administration is committed to working with Congress to develop a new approach to Central America.

Our assistance request for Central America includes new investments, as I said, for prosperity in governance consistent with our strategy while maintaining and strengthening our current focus on security. These funds are necessary to adequately address the complex web of factors that motivate many Central Americans—as I said, including women and unaccompanied children—to embark on a dangerous and undocumented migration to the United States.

As the Vice President and President have stressed, we must cooperate with our Northern Triangle partners to create the opportunities that will keep Central Americans at home and contributing to the creation of a safe, secure, prosperous, and middle-class region. While the level of support represents a significant increase from previous years, we believe that the political will does exist in the region to merit this renewed investment in Central America's security and prosperity.

We realize this is an important task, and we do not take it lightly. We, in the executive branch, must move quickly to demonstrate results and hold ourselves accountable. That means that we will continue to consult closely with all of you and your staff on this committee, and your colleagues elsewhere in the House and in the Senate. We will evaluate our programs. We will craft the most assistant—the most effective assistance package.

Beyond Central America, we must maintain investments in priority programs that are working. This past summer, Mexico was a key partner in the effort to stem the flow of migration to the United States. And it has a strong record of capturing important drug traffickers. Therefore, our request to continue the support for the Merida Initiative is of paramount interest to us. We must continue to support Mexico's efforts to support and strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption, build resilient communities, and protect human rights.

In Colombia, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, a historic peace process poses the best chance yet of bringing an end to Latin America's longest running conflict. Our request supports Colombia in that effort to strengthen their law enforcement and counter-narcotics activities, to promote human rights effectively, to look at women in conflict in the conflictive zones, to work on economic development, and to work on social inclusion. All of this will be crucial for a lasting and just peace.

In the Caribbean, our request includes \$241 million for Haiti and \$53 million for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, both of which are focused on important national and administration priorities. As you may know, Peru is now the world's largest producer of cocaine, and the government will need our help to change this trajectory.

Our request maintains important support for freedom of the press, human rights, and democracy efforts in the hemisphere, including in Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. And we will also continue to support a revitalized and a reinvigorated Organi-

zation of American States. We are well aware that there are many challenges, but we are even more convinced that there are many opportunities for the American people.

I look forward to this engagement. I look forward to this session. And I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Feeley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN D. FEELEY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the FY 2016 request for U.S. assistance for the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. Chairman, the Western Hemisphere is a top priority for the United States because important national interests are at stake. I am pleased to report that almost every available metric—including public opinion polls, levels of trade and investment, cultural and family ties, security cooperation, and shared democratic values—supports the view that the United States remains an influential actor and vital partner in the region. And this positive relationship with our neighbors is essential for the American people. It creates jobs. It links families. It promotes our common democratic values. The Obama administration's policy aims to forge equal partnerships with the countries of the Americas to advance these shared values and our common interests. Today, we are not only working closely with our partners to address regional and hemispheric challenges, but we are increasingly working together on important global issues, such as climate change, combating trans-national criminal organizations, and promoting a prosperity agenda that begins at home.

Let me be very specific. In the Western Hemisphere, our top priorities are jobs and prosperity, education and innovation, energy cooperation, and promoting democratic values. We are also focused on improving citizen security with more comprehensive policies that advance prosperity and innovation, deepening the successful North America relationship, and supporting Colombia's peace process.

Our FY 2016 budget request reflects the high level of importance that this administration gives to the Western Hemisphere. The request is \$1.99 billion, which is a 34.7-percent increase from FY 2014. Just over half the total request supports the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, a new, whole of government approach to enhance prosperity, governance, and security in Central America. Last summer's spike in the migration of unaccompanied children was a clear signal that serious and long-standing challenges in Central America remain and, in some instances, are worsening. In order to change this dynamic, we must adequately address the underlying factors driving migration or be prepared for what is likely to be an ongoing cyclical phenomenon—with significant impact and cost to the United States.

Our \$1 billion assistance request for Central America includes new investments for prosperity and governance consistent with our strategy, while maintaining and strengthening our current focus on security, including the investments we have made through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). These funds are necessary to adequately address the complex web of causal factors that drive many Central Americans to seek out better opportunities in the United States, despite the obvious dangers of making this journey as an undocumented migrant. As the President and Vice President have emphasized, we must cooperate with our Northern Triangle partners to create the opportunities that will keep Central Americans at home, where they can contribute to the creation of a safe, secure, prosperous, and middle class region. While this level of support represents a significant increase from previous years, we believe the cost of investing now in Central America's security and prosperity pales in comparison to the cost of addressing migration challenges here in the United States.

We are cognizant of the significance of this task and do not make this request lightly. We in the executive branch must move quickly to demonstrate results and hold ourselves accountable. That means consulting closely with the members of this committee and your colleagues in the Senate and in the House, rigorously evaluating our programs, and crafting the most effective assistance package.

Most significantly, we believe the essential condition for success is in sight: political will in the region. Vice President Biden traveled to Guatemala to meet with the Presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in early March. It was only the latest of his, the President's, and Secretary Kerry's engagement with these leaders. During months of intensive work with these three Presidents of the Northern Triangle of Central America, it has been clear that the notion of "shared responsi-

bility" is much more than a bumper sticker. I was pleased to join the Vice President during his most recent trip to the region earlier this spring, where the leaders agreed to a joint statement including a host of public commitments—with timelines—for continued progress. Together we committed to actions in Central America in order to promote a better business environment for investors and small businessowners, to strengthen police and judicial systems, to increase government openness and transparency, to improve revenue collection and make streets safer. And we did so publicly, inviting scrutiny and accountability.

Our prosperity agenda for Central America fosters the integration of a regional market of 43 million people and the reduction of legal impediments that hamper competition and growth and only benefit small groups of closely held, entrenched economic forces. Six million young people will seek to enter the labor force in the next decade. Encouraging an environment that enables investment and growth will encourage talented people to stay at home, and create jobs and local businesses to participate in a bigger market.

Our strategy's governance agenda recognizes that economic growth and security are only sustainable when democratic institutions of government are transparent, accountable, and actually deliver services to all citizens—and when independent civil society and the media can play their rightful oversight roles. Citizens and investors will trust institutions once those institutions establish a pattern of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Thus, the prosperity and governance components of our Strategy are essential for the success of our security investments. At the same time, security remains a core priority. Our \$1 billion request for Central America includes \$286.5 million for CARSI to scale up proven community-based security models and advance police reform.

Beyond Central America, we must maintain investments in priority programs that are working. This past summer, Mexico was a key partner in the effort to stem the flow of migration to the United States. And nearly every week it captures important drug traffickers. But its serious security challenges have persisted, as we saw with the tragic disappearance of 43 students in Iguala. Therefore, our \$119 million request in continued Merida Initiative support emphasizes technical assistance, support to additional Mexican states in line with Mexico's priorities, and assists Mexico's southern border strategy. It advances Mexico's efforts to strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption, build resilient communities, and protect human rights—all important priorities for the American people—especially those living in border states.

In Colombia, all eyes are on whether the peace process can bring an end to Latin America's longest running conflict. But we can't take our eye off the ball, so our request includes \$288.7 million to support Colombia's efforts to secure the rule of law and support sustainable development, which will be crucial for a lasting and just peace. Our assistance to Colombia strengthens law enforcement, counter-narcotics and rule of law, promotes human rights and humanitarian assistance, and expands support for economic development and social inclusion. The request also reflects Colombia's ability to provide for its own needs. However, our assistance will need to remain flexible as Colombia pursues negotiations to conclude its decades-long conflict. We appreciate Congress' long-standing bipartisan support for our partnership with Colombia and the Colombian people and we will absolutely continue to consult with Congress on this important bilateral policy.

In the Caribbean, our request includes \$241.6 million for Haiti and \$53.5 million for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). Our request for Haiti focuses on investments in infrastructure and energy; food and economic security, health, and other basic services; governance, rule of law, and security. CBSI assistance seeks to stabilize and reduce rates of crime and violence, which threaten both U.S. and Caribbean security. The request for CBSI emphasizes regional law enforcement information-sharing and cooperation, justice sector reform, and initiatives that address the root causes of crime and insecurity in targeted communities, with a focus on youth.

Peru is now the world's largest producer of cocaine, and the government will need our help to change that trajectory. Our request for Peru is \$95.9 million, which includes support for traditional counter-narcotics activities. Additionally, these funds would support alternative development programs. Our model of coordinated counter-narcotics and alternative development has reduced coca cultivation in Peru's San Martin region by 70 percent over the past decade, while simultaneously halving poverty, from 67 percent in 2001 to 30 percent in 2013. With USAID support, communities in San Martin now cultivate over 50,000 hectares of coffee, cacao, and other alternative crops for export markets in the United States and Europe. These proven models of success must go hand in hand with our law enforcement cooperation to help our committed Peruvian partners beat back the organized crime networks that

grow, make, and ship illicit narcotics. This assistance will continue our strong cooperation with the Humala administration, which has demonstrated a clear commitment to partnership with the United States.

The request maintains important support for freedom of the press, human rights, and democracy efforts in the hemisphere, including in Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. And we will also continue to support a revitalized and strengthened Organization of American States, under the leadership of Secretary General-elect Almagro, so that the organization is able to proactively engage on issues of democratic governance and human rights in the region. Ensuring the independence of the Inter American Human Rights System remains a key part of these efforts at the OAS. The United States has a long history of supporting human rights and civil society. Our request continues this approach.

The United States remains firmly committed to engaging our regional partners on a positive agenda for the hemisphere. Our consistent vision is of a prosperous, democratic and stable region, which requires us to focus on areas such as Central America that are most vulnerable. The U.S. assistance that supports our policy makes a direct difference in the lives of citizens throughout the hemisphere and benefits the national interests of the United States.

I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your questions.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you for being here today.
Secretary Bennett.

STATEMENT OF VIRGINIA BENNETT, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. BENNETT. Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the work we do in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to support freedom in closed societies and advance human rights and democracy around the globe. Your commitment to these vital issues is well known and much appreciated.

Assistant Secretary Malinowski regrets he cannot be here today. He is in Vietnam, leading our bilateral human rights dialogue. I am personally delighted, if I might say, about his travel, because it means my first opportunity to offer testimony. And it is a true privilege to participate in the dialogue that is the very foundation of U.S. governance. And I thank you for that opportunity.

Globally, space for civil society is shrinking. Restrictions and far more sinister acts to repress media are on the rise. Religious intolerance is captured through brutal imagery. And U.S. support for the organizations and individuals working to advance democratic freedom, human, and labor rights is making a difference in people's lives across the globe. We are deeply appreciative that DRL's advocacy work has long enjoyed strong bipartisan support from Congress.

DRL's total budget request is \$89 million, sort of dwarfed by WHA's. That request includes 60 million for the Human Rights and Democracy Fund, or HRDF, and 29 million for Diplomatic and Consular Programs, or DNCP. DNCP funds staff salaries, travel, and the like, as well as production of our annual human rights and international religious freedom reports. DRL also implements approximately \$70 million of foreign assistance funding per year in Economic Support Funds, or ESF. That funding is transferred to us from the Department's regional bureaus, and so is not included in our own budget request.

So, what do we do with these precious resources? Ninety percent of our work globally is in closed or closing societies where gross human rights abuses can occur unchecked and activists can be attacked and repressed with impunity. We seek to widen political space in struggling or nascent democracies and in countries with authoritarian regimes, including those where the United States has no diplomatic presence. DRL has many years of experience helping brave activists who target rights abuses and promote democratic principles in these environments.

Our programs are notified to Congress, and overt, but we do take protection of our implementing partners very seriously. I would be happy to provide this committee or my colleagues with a private briefing at a later date about more details of some of what these programs entail.

But, here let me highlight some examples of what makes our programming, in general terms, quite unique.

First, the agility with which we can respond. Last year, we launched a new NGO Consortium for Truth, Reconciliation, and Justice. When mass graves were discovered in eastern Ukraine, just a couple of weeks after that, we were poised to deploy experts to advise the Government of Ukraine and local civil society on tracking missing persons, identification of individual remains, and preserving forensic information.

DRL is also innovative. Our Digital Defenders Partnership has provided 350 civil society organizations with digital security assistance, and approximately 7 million people have benefited from software or hardware the Partnership has made available.

We have also used technology solutions to improve physical security. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, an SMS-based system now permits villagers to alert U.N. or DRC protection forces of impending attack. This system has thwarted some three dozen rebel attacks on villages which are home to approximately 150,000 people.

Many of our programs are tailored in their support of those who are targeted, whether women, religious and ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, or the LGBT community. Our Gender-Based Violence Fund just recently assisted 50 Yezidi women and girls who had escaped the brutality of ISIL captivity.

We also leverage like-minded support to stretch money. Since establishing the Global Equality Fund to advance the rights of LGBT persons, we have been joined by 10 other governments and 9 private entities. Their contributions have grown our \$2 million initial investment into \$20 million of programs in more than 50 countries. And we are proud of that.

Mr. Chairman, as the National Security Strategy in 2015 affirms, America is uniquely situated and routinely expected to support peaceful, democratic change. DRL stands ready to do our part. We must continue to seek the release of activists, continue to support civil society, and press governments to halt arbitrary detention to uphold freedom of expression. We must continue to seize opportunities to make a difference in democracies under threat and in countries in transition.

Thank you again for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bennett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VIRGINIA BENNETT

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for providing this opportunity for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor to discuss our work to advance human rights and democracy around the globe. I would like to share with you what we plan to accomplish with the foreign assistance funds we've requested. DRL enjoys strong bipartisan support from Congress, and we are appreciative.

Assistant Secretary Malinowski regrets that he cannot be here today. He is in Asia leading the U.S. Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue with the Government of Vietnam.

U.S. advocacy for democracy, human rights, labor, and international religious freedom are critical to our national response to the challenges we face. To continue this important work, DRL's FY16 budget request for Diplomatic and Consular Programs is \$29,432,000 for operations. Our operational budget represents the lifeblood of DRL's policy initiatives on human rights. It covers staff, foreign travel, our human rights report, our international religious freedom report and engagement. We combine diplomacy with foreign assistance programs around the world that support democracy and human rights promotion. I'd like to focus my remarks today on our foreign assistance request.

DRL has requested \$60 million for the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF). Approximately \$45 million would be obligated in accordance with the following core priorities:

- Promoting international religious freedom;
- Protecting labor rights;
- Promoting human rights in China;
- Providing emergency assistance to activists;
- Ensuring Internet freedom;
- Combating Anti-Semitism;
- Supporting the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Preventing atrocities and transitional justice;
- Emergency response for populations at risk.

DRL will use the remaining \$15 million to fund other programs across the globe. We provide a global figure in our Congressional Budget Request to allow us to respond to human rights crises or emergencies that arise during the fiscal year. For example, last year, we adjusted our operational plan to support unanticipated free and fair elections in Ukraine. We are currently seeking to assist the new government with post-conflict accountability and reconciliation. We strive to be rapid and responsive, and most of our programs go from inception to implementation in 6 to 8 months.

Our HRDF request represents a critical component of our programming budget, but it does not reflect our entire programming budget. We also receive transfers from regional Economic Support Funds. DRL manages 350 grants a year on average, and implements approximately \$150 million annually in foreign assistance. In general, ESF transfers are tied to specific countries and projects. HRDF allows us to pivot in response to changing conditions. We have created and deployed rapid response assistance to religious freedom, human rights, and labor activists or organizations suffering repression. And we have developed strategic partnerships with other governments and with foundations and corporate donors.

We support the use of new technologies to assist civil society activists and organizations worldwide. We support women; religious and ethnic minorities; indigenous populations; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. We seek to widen political space in struggling or nascent democracies and authoritarian regimes. We target human rights abuses, particularly in countries that systematically repress fundamental freedoms. And our rapid response programs allow us to react immediately to protect human rights defenders under attack across the globe.

I am confident our programs will accomplish these goals in FY16, as they have in past years. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRL funded an initiative to create an SMS-based early warning and response system. This allowed communities in remote areas to alert authorities to threats and outbreaks of violence. These communities were then able to receive quick, comprehensive emergency assistance.

Before this program, it was common for 10 to 15 communities to rely on one communication point to relay messages to U.N. protection forces. This left communities at the mercy of armed groups who could simply block roads and prevent them from

sounding the alarm. DRL's program provided villages with communications tools and provided training to civil community observers, civil protection officers, and rural police officers on how to use the warning system. Within the first two years, the system received 872 reports from remote villages. It thwarted 38 rebel attacks on villages that are home to approximately 150,000 people.

This program's success has demonstrated that training and communication technologies can empower communities and responders. They reduce response times, and help ensure comprehensive, real-time assistance from protection forces, as well as NGOs providing health or legal services. The provincial government of North Kivu has now taken the lead in managing and expanding these systems.

Last year, DRL launched the Consortium for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation. It comprised nine civil society organizations recognized globally for their expertise on transitional justice mechanisms. Within 2 weeks of the program's launch, our Embassy in Ukraine asked for assistance in responding to the discovery of mass graves in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine. There, Russian-supported separatists continue attacks against the Ukrainian Government. The Consortium quickly deployed technical experts to advise the Government of Ukraine and local civil society organizations on establishing processes and procedures to deal with reporting missing persons. They establish procedures for exhuming mass graves, identifying individuals, and preserving forensic information. In the last 6 months, the Consortium has begun longer term programs to document ongoing human rights abuses and to promote local reconciliation in Iraq and South Sudan.

I am pleased to highlight the reach and impact our programs have. We are even stronger when we partner with others in defense of human rights. To that end, DRL has forged strategic partnerships with other governments, foundations, and private donors. This maximizes our ability to implement programs in support of the Bureau's mandate. In many situations, our initial engagement has motivated other U.S. agencies or non-U.S. Government donors to provide funding to promote human rights and democracy goals.

For example, we used HRDF to establish a multilateral fund called Lifeline, to provide emergency assistance to civil society organizations under threat for their efforts to advocate for fundamental freedoms. We have since recruited 16 like-minded governments and 2 foundations to contribute to a consortium of seven international human rights organizations. In FY 2014, Lifeline provided emergency assistance to 153 civil society organizations in 68 countries and territories. It also supported 61 advocacy initiatives that raised domestic, regional, or international awareness of a specific threat or restriction on civil society.

Through a public-private partnership with the Avon Foundation and Vital Voices, we established the global Gender-Based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative. This provides emergency assistance to survivors of extreme forms of gender-based violence. In Iraq, the Initiative has supported nearly 50 Yezidi women and girls who have escaped ISIL captivity. The Initiative provides fast, short-term assistance for the most egregious of GBV cases. These targeted grants pay for emergency medical, psychosocial, legal, relocation, shelter, and other related expenses as quickly as 72 hours after a request is made. Both survivors and those threatened with extreme violence are eligible for assistance.

As citizens turn to digital tools to capture and spread information, we have seen authoritarian governments clamp down on rights of expression. In response, we used HRDF to form and fund the Digital Defenders Partnership with several other governments. Since its inception, the Partnership has provided direct emergency support to 55 organizations and 208 individuals facing digital emergencies, such as a denial of service or malware attack. The Partnership has provided almost 350 organizations with small grants that have allowed them to assess and strengthen the security of their digital systems. Almost 700 individuals have received digital security trainings as a result of Partnership programs. And almost 7 million people have accessed hardware or software that improves their digital security.

DRL used HRDF to establish the Global Equality Fund, a special Gift Fund that allows us to receive funds from like-minded states and private entities in order to protect and promote the human rights of LGBT persons worldwide. Since its launch, we have recruited 10 other governments and 9 private entities to join us. Those partnerships have allowed us to leverage the \$2 million dollars initially invested by DRL into \$20 million of programs. These are protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBT persons in more than 50 countries.

We also enjoy a unique capacity to fund short-term, high-impact programs. In the past year, we pivoted quickly to meet needs identified by our embassies across the world. Since our Fundamental Freedoms Fund was established in 2011, DRL has provided \$19 million to support 76 projects in every region of the world. Our rapid response programs have become an invaluable Department resource. They have

involved more than 85 missions worldwide and provided immediate support to activists and organizations in urgent need. In 2014, we expanded the rapid response model to include a consortium of NGOs that can provide immediate technical assistance on transitional justice issues.

DRL's core focus remains closed societies. In those places gross human rights abuses can occur unchecked and activists can be attacked or repressed with impunity. And in such environments, direct U.S. Government engagement through bilateral assistance or even embassies may not be appropriate or possible. Over 90 percent of our budget goes to programs in such closed or closing societies.

As repressive governments crack down on civil liberties, our programs become ever more vital to answering the administration's call to assist civil society under threat. We work safely and effectively in spaces where others cannot. We adjust our operating procedures and apply best practices we've developed over years of implementing programs in high-risk environments to do so. We find ways to reach out and support civil society activists, by employing methods aimed at protecting the identity of our beneficiaries and reducing their risk of exposure to oppressive governments. Let me be clear that our programs are overt. They are notified to Congress. We acknowledge them publicly. Indeed, we would be happy to provide this committee with a detailed briefing on our closed society programs. But we work hard not to endanger our partners in high-risk environments, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Our support empowers local NGOs and citizens to press for reforms and build foundations for more accountable governance. We support those promoting freedom of association, freedom of expression, and the right to collective bargaining. We support the efforts of human rights activists as they work to build democratic institutions, support access to justice, create independent media, and document human rights abuses. Our programs help advance international religious freedom, labor and disability rights, and transitional justice, and they promote the rights of marginalized people. We counter religious intolerance, anti-Semitism, and violent extremism. In the face of increasingly sophisticated tactics for disrupting activism online, we promote digital security, help activists obtain independent information, and support policy and advocacy projects in countries that seek to restrict Internet freedom.

Governments that protect human rights and fundamental freedoms are more stable, successful, and secure than those that do not. The United States finds stronger partners in governments that reflect and act in the broad interests of their own people, rather than the narrow interests of the few.

We must continue to seek the release of activists and to make progress on issues of mutual concern, such as disability and labor rights. We must continue supporting civil society, and pressing governments to halt arbitrary detentions, and uphold freedom of expression. We must seize opportunities to make an immediate difference in democracies under threat, or countries in transition.

This is the work of decades, not days. As the 2015 National Security Strategy affirms, "America is uniquely situated—and routinely expected—to support peaceful democratic change." Careful stewardship of the resources allocated to DRL enables us to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities in this regard, and we stand ready to do our part.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, committee members, your commitment to human rights is well known, and much appreciated. Thank you, again, for holding this hearing. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you all for being here. We will enter the questions now.

I will begin with Ambassador Russell. Earlier this, I introduced the Girls Count Act, with Senator Shaheen, which promotes programs that will assist with birth registration of both girls and boys. A nationally recognized proof-of-birth system is important to determining a child's citizenship, their nationality, their place of birth, et cetera. The lack of that documentation, of course, can prevent girls and women from officially participating and benefiting from formal economic, legal, and political sectors in their country.

I was hoping you could briefly describe to us—well, I guess, not briefly; however long it takes—the current barriers that girls face around the world in receiving a birth certificate, what you are doing—what we do about that, and how the Girls Act Count could supplement your current work.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Great, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you very much for introducing that legislation.

It is interesting, when I travel, I meet so many girls. It is an issue that I was not as aware of before I started this job as I probably should have been and certainly am now. But, one of the consequences of this is that girls—I mean, it is just—to the name of your bill, they just are not counted, they are not considered in any equations, and it makes it very difficult for them to get to school, it makes it difficult for them as they get older. Sometimes they do not have any paper that supports who they are, what their identities are, so they cannot get loans to start jobs. I met some women who run a little taxicab service in India, and they talked about how so many of the young—they take very poor women, and they get them trained to drive taxicabs. And it is important, because, in India, there is a lot of nervousness about—on the part of women, about using public transportation, so they have these women-only taxicabs. But, how some of these very poor women never have any paper to sort of establish who they are, so they cannot go to a bank, they cannot get a driver's license. So, it is a problem that follows them throughout their lives. And, I think, from our perspective, the efforts to change that are critically important. And it also goes to the—another issue that I know you care about, which is trafficking, which is—again, it makes them very—much more vulnerable to things like that when they do not have any way to establish their identity. So, we are definitely supportive of the notion and very anxious to work with you on that bill.

Senator RUBIO. On a followup note, in 2011, the administration announced its National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security. How would you assess the implementation of this plan? And, in particular, are we assisting with including women in these high-level negotiations?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Well, we are certainly trying. It is a priority for us. And it is—I think it is not always easy, as you can imagine, because what happens in these conflicts is that the people who are negotiating the peace are typically combatants, and they are typically not women. And what we do—USAID does a great deal of this; we are supportive of the efforts, as well—we do training for women so that, once we get them to these tables, they know how to negotiate, they are more effective in these roles. And we have been engaged in this. We are happy to see that there are women in the Colombia negotiations. We are happy that—we believe—the early reports are, in Afghanistan, we have had three women on that, sort of, early process negotiation between the Afghans and the Taliban. So, we—I think that countries are starting to recognize that women have a stake in the future of their country, so they should be involved in the discussions about how the country's going to move out of conflict. But, I cannot tell you that it is an easy battle. It is a constant—it is something that we are constantly working on and trying to engage on the diplomatic side.

Senator RUBIO. Secretary Bennett, I wanted to talk to you about religious freedom. It is not just an American ideal, it is a human one, and protecting these freedoms around the world should be a top priority of our foreign policy agenda. What progress has DRL

made in both protecting and advancing religious freedom around the world?

Ms. BENNETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, I think that—I first would like to say that, from the perspective of the administration and, I think, all of us who are really very privileged to work on these issues, religious freedom is a top priority. The threat that religious minorities, I think, are currently experiencing is of extraordinary proportion, whether it is Christian populations in the Middle East, whether it is—or, it—really, whatever stripe of religious minority is out there, it is under complete pressure and threat.

As to what progress we are making, in terms of protecting individuals, it is hard to measure, very honestly. We have certain types of programs. We have, you know, one—Protecting Belief Fund, for example, which enables us to provide real time, very targeted assistance to individuals who have come under attack, to provide protection or exit capacity for them to get them and their families to someplace safer. So, that is obviously on a very micro level.

But, I would also like to take a step back and talk just a little more on kind of a strategic framework, where our Ambassador-At-Large for Religious Freedom, David Saperstein, and Assistant Secretary Malinowski have joined forces, I think very effectively, to go out and engage with governments—for example, on a recent trip to Iraq—about the importance of promoting tolerance. And they will continue to do so, I think, in a wide number of the global communities with which we are engaged.

Senator RUBIO. You would agree that the—obviously, all religious intolerance is abhorrent. I want to focus, in particular, however, on the plight of ancient Christian communities in the Middle East, communities that existed, and still do, to some extent, in Syria, in Iraq, in Lebanon, and in other parts of the Middle East. Would you agree that they face a challenge today unlike anything we have seen in recent history, in terms of the violence that they have now been exposed to, whether it is the beheadings just recently that we saw once again in North Africa, or just the destruction of entire villages, churches, and otherwise, the—we have reached a crisis point? And is that going to—will that be a priority of our foreign policy in that region as we focus on all of the atrocities that are occurring, but, in particular—this is an aspect I do not hear pointed to enough—is that a priority? And, if so, you know, what have we done or what expressions have been made over the last few months to include that in our conversations as we view those issues in that region?

Ms. BENNETT. Sadly, we do agree that that is a priority. I mean, the level of threat that these communities are experiencing is remarkably intense. We will continue to engage with local communities to try to create, again, as I said, sort of the promotion of tolerant space and also with the relevant governments in that region to articulate the importance of preserving these ancient cultures.

A flashing light, so I think that means I stop? No. Sorry.

Senator RUBIO. Yes, there is a little leeway there. Keep going. That is okay.

Ms. BENNETT. Sorry. I am new to this, as I said.

Senator RUBIO. I understand.

Ms. BENNETT. So, the—but, for our—you know, for our purposes, I think that we look at this in a couple of different ways, both in terms of longer term and the work of decades, not days, in trying to create and foster improved environments in the communities, and the importance of tolerance. And then we look at it also on a very near-term basis. And that includes engaging with—you know, in dialogue with religious leaders in all communities about how to address the very real systemic threat.

One of the—you know, one of the unusual experiences I think that our Office of International Religious Freedom has had over the past 6 to 8 to 9 months has been the very effective relationship that we have crafted with our colleagues in the interagency, in terms of actually defending communities under threat. While this has been less focused on the Christian community in particular, and more on the Yezidi community because of the nature of some of the threats that we have seen, we really do believe that we are making some progress in this regard.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Boxer.

Senator BOXER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Bennett, I wanted to pick up on the Yezidi issue, because my understanding is that the Gender-Based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative has supported nearly 50 Yezidi women and girls who have escaped ISIL. Could you define what that support has been?

Ms. BENNETT. In general, what that support has been—well, I will take a step back. This is a partnership that we established with Vital Voices in the Avon Foundation. The nature of the support has been varied with the individual, but it is, you know, post-trauma counseling, working within the community to find a new place for individuals to reside, to be reintegrated into communities. It is to provide to them some measure of inclusion in the communities in which they are, and, in some cases, actually support to be removed and to relocate someplace. So, it actually has been very dependent on the particular situation of the individual.

Senator BOXER. Now, does your current funding level allow you to provide assistance to meet the needs of vulnerable women survivors of gender-based violence in Iraq and Syria, or is your budget limiting your activities to just Yezidis?

Ms. BENNETT. There is always more, I would say, to be done, but our—because our funding is so flexible in its nature, the way that we fund, in general, is much more on a compressed timeline than that sort of longer term, bigger development assistance projects. And so, that enables us to be very responsive and to shift resources where they are needed, when they are needed.

Senator BOXER. Well, that is good.

I want to talk to Ambassador Russell. Last month, Senator Rubio and I wrote to the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, urging the Chinese Government release five women's-rights advocates who were detained for planning to raise public awareness about sexual harassment in conjunction with International Women's Day. After spending more than a month in detention, the five women were conditionally released. However, according to a Reuters story, one of the women was verbally attacked during an 8-hour interro-

gation by the Chinese police less than 2 weeks after her release. Can you confirm that? This is unacceptable, if true. How can the United States increase pressure on China to uphold its domestic and international commitments to respect the universal human rights of its citizens?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Thank you, Senator Boxer. And thank you very much for that letter, because I did see it, and I think it does make a difference.

The key, from our perspective, is that we—both Ambassador Power and Secretary of State—issued strong statements. And I think, ultimately, all that attention helped. And so, the leadership that you displayed really reinforces that. So, thank you for that.

But, I think the key, going forward, is that we just cannot let up on the pressure, and we need to make sure that everybody understands that we are continuing to watch the situation, that we are aware of what is happening with these women, and that we are not letting—you know, taking our eye off the ball on it.

Senator BOXER. Well, I hope—you can do a followup. It would help. I am sure that the chairman and I could write another letter. But, having someone be released, only to be interrogated for 8 hours—I mean, the word gets out pretty quickly.

Ambassador RUSSELL. It is—

Senator BOXER. So—

Ambassador RUSSELL. I agree totally. And I think, especially given that they are working on domestic violence—I mean, it is truly just inexcusable—

Senator BOXER. Right.

Ambassador RUSSELL. What happened, and—

Senator BOXER. But, would it help if the chairman and I wrote another inquiry, and you could send it off, or you—

Ambassador RUSSELL. I think an inquiry is always great. I think just speaking out like you are doing today, they will know that.

Senator BOXER. Okay.

Ambassador RUSSELL. If you continue to speak out, I think your voices are incredibly important and helpful in this matter.

Senator BOXER. Well, they should know that we care a lot about this.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Yes.

Senator BOXER. And it is just—you cannot say, on the one hand, “We are really letting people go,” on the other hand—

Ambassador RUSSELL. Exactly.

Senator BOXER. You are harassing them and intimidating them—

Ambassador RUSSELL. Exactly.

Senator BOXER. And frightening them to ever open their mouth again.

Ambassador RUSSELL. I agree.

Senator BOXER. That is just not what we do in life, or should not be what we do.

Ambassador Russell, in your testimony, you state that one of your top priorities is addressing the needs of adolescent girls, particularly improving access to secondary schooling. It is so important, because we know research shows that girls who attend secondary school are healthier and more productive members of soci-

ety. And I understand your office is currently developing a comprehensive strategy specifically focused on adolescent girls. Can you tell us a little bit about the strategy, when you hope to release it, and what you hope it will achieve?

Ambassador RUSSELL. I can. And thank you for that question.

I think adolescent girls is one of the issues that is most important to me, personally, and to our office, because, as we have traveled around, we have seen the impact of—all of the terrible things that happen to women around the world are really just horrible for these young girls. And what—the international community and the United States have spent a lot of time and money and effort educating children, and we have really made a dent in the number of primary school kids who are not in school. And we have done a good job on that. But, we are seeing that, at the secondary level, girls are dropping off in alarming numbers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. And the problem for those girls is that they are so much more vulnerable to everything else that can happen to them: gender-based violence, HIV, trafficking, all of it. It just makes them—they are so much more vulnerable. And they are never really in a position to participate fully in their economies. That was the genesis of this.

And I think the idea is that we need to address this—and this is my view about all of the work we do—we have to try to address these issues in a comprehensive way. And that, I would say, has not always been the strength of the international community. We tend to do one thing or another. And we are looking at taking this group of girls—the single most important thing we know we can do is keep them in school, but even keeping them in school—it is not so easy just to build a school; you have to figure out what the reasons are that they are not going to school, why are their parents getting them married off, why are they subjected to violence either in the school or on the way to school. It is a very complicated set of problems. But, we are committed to addressing them holistically. And that is—that was the purpose, and is the purpose, of the strategy.

Senator BOXER. So, just cutting to the chase, when will you have something for us to see on this?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Well, it is—I would say it is almost finished and has to go through the clearance process—

Senator BOXER. Good.

Ambassador RUSSELL. At the State—

Senator BOXER. Well, we will look—

Ambassador RUSSELL. Department.

Senator BOXER. Forward to it.

Ambassador RUSSELL. So, that could be, like, 2 days or 10 years—no, I am just—

Senator BOXER. Well, I—

Ambassador RUSSELL. We will get it done. We will definitely get—

Senator BOXER. Well, remember, the President only has a limited time, so—

Ambassador RUSSELL. Exactly. Exactly.

Senator BOXER. I have one last question, and then I am going to leave it to you.

I wanted to ask this to Mr. Feeley, so he does not feel that he is left out. Latin America and the Caribbean have booming renewable energy markets. In 2013, over \$7 billion was invested in renewable energy in countries including Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, and Panama. The Caribbean wants to break free from its dependence on Venezuelan oil. And, as far as I am concerned, that is a good thing. Chile and Mexico are discovering that solar power is an inexpensive source of power for many projects, and many countries are looking to renewable energy as the way to make bold commitments ahead of the upcoming Paris Climate Conference. What are we doing to promote renewable energy in the region? And what more can we do to help American clean energy companies take advantage of the tremendous growth opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean?

Mr. FEELEY. Thank you very much for that question, Senator Boxer.

We are doing quite a bit. In point of fact, we agree with you completely that this is an area where we absolutely must demonstrate American leadership. The Vice President has launched something called the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative. We held a summit here in January. The focus of this, frankly, as you rightly put, is not necessarily on Venezuela, but it is using technology and using the force of markets to get one of the world's most energy-dependent regions—dependent upon imports—to a place where they can have the same types of reliable, secure, affordable energy that comes from a diversified energy mix, in terms of both generation and distribution.

CESI, as we call it, the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative, has received tremendous welcome in the region. You may be aware that the President just traveled to Jamaica. And, in that trip, the President announced a—for a clean energy finance facility for the Caribbean in Central America. This will be a \$20 million facility that will encourage investment in clean energy projects in the region. It will provide early-stage funding to catalyze greater private- and public-sector investment, and will be working very closely with our colleagues in the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. So, it is on our, sort of, frontal lobe. As they say in Spanish, “[Spanish phrase],” it is right there.

Senator BOXER. I like that.

Mr. FEELEY. And we are going to continue to push it.

Senator BOXER. Mr. Chairman, I am going to leave this to you. I wanted to say, for me, getting them away from having to deal with Venezuela on their energy lifeline is a good thing. Just for the record.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Perdue.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Thank you for holding this very important hearing.

And thank you for your attendance and testimony.

I want to make a comment. Senator Gardner and I just got back from a trip to the Middle East, and we saw five Ambassadors over there, and many staff. I want to tell you how impressed we are with State Department personnel who devote their careers to Foreign Service. And I just want to thank you for your career of con-

tributions. You know, we all seek perfection. And there is no such entity. But, I admire what you guys are doing.

I want to change the topic a little bit to Haiti, briefly. I was very blessed to go on a mission trip, after my first election, last November, to Haiti, to a small town called Grand Goave—it was about 45 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince—to a projects—an orphanage, basically—well, it was an orphanage sponsored by the Good Samaritan Project. I was really troubled. We had about 275 kids there. A significant number of those kids had parents in the location—in the area environs there, southwest of Port-au-Prince, but they had given their kids up to the orphanages because they could not feed them. Now, this is 5 years after the catastrophe there, the earthquake. Their church, their school, their dormitory had all been destroyed. Total—no injuries. A miracle. They were out playing soccer. But, a miracle, nobody injured. But, here we are, 5 years later, and, even with all the money— $3\frac{1}{2}$ million— $3\frac{1}{2}$ billion dollars we have poured into that—and, by the way, you know, I was so proud, at the time that happened, with U.S. support there. The Navy, all the NGOs, all the religious, all the other foundations that were pouring time, money, and people in there. And yet, here we are, 5 years later—I am not criticizing. I just want to know, Madam Ambassador, you know, what—what is your take on what is going on there, particularly as it affects young mothers who are having to give their kids up to these orphanage because they cannot feed them?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Senator, thank you. Thank you for taking that trip. I traveled there, shortly after the earthquake, with the First Lady and Dr. Biden, and was truly shocked at the devastation that I saw, the people living on the streets. And I know that, throughout this time—and I am sure Assistant Secretary Feeley can discuss this more—but, we have made an investment and have had some success, moving forward, but the challenges remain. And what we are very concerned about in my office are the issues that you raise of the violence that these children are facing, the fact that they are not really being well taken care of, and the violence that their mothers are facing in their communities and in their homes. And I think, you know, we—USAID is doing a fair bit of work there, working hard on it, but I do recognize that it is a continuing challenge.

Senator PERDUE. Secretary Feeley, I would like your comment. But, also, how do you evaluate, you know, the money—not just the money; it is the time, the heartbreak, everything else that we have put into countries like that after the fact to evaluate the effectiveness of what we do in catastrophes like that.

Mr. FEELEY. Absolutely, sir. I would just echo what Ambassador Russell said, and what you said. Haiti is perhaps the most difficult case that we have of persistent underdevelopment in the Western Hemisphere. And it is a testament to the very good people of the United States that, every time I travel through the Miami Airport, I see the brigades of kids in T-shirts from churches and communities. That is all absolutely necessary, but it is not sufficient.

One of the things I think that we have to look at is the manner in which our policy, in addition to our programming assistance to work on the development issues—the education, the child/maternal

health, the basic delivery of services—how our policy toward Haiti is absolutely essential. Supporting elections coming up this year, providing in Haiti what they, frankly, have not had for a very, very long time, which is a regular, predictable, strong democracy, where you have multiple voices from civil society that are included, that has got to be one of the metrics. It is not—nobody in my building, and no Secretary of State, is going to say that we are there yet. All democracy strengthening is never an end zone, it is a constant process. But, I do think that we have, with the elections coming up this fall—we have an opportunity to continue to help that, frankly, blighted country.

I would also say that our assistance has made inroads in making sure that we are addressing the emergency aspects. And, you are right, it is 5 years after. But, there is still food insecurity in Haiti. There are still—you have flown over it—

Senator PERDUE. I am sorry. Food insecurity?

Mr. FEELEY. Food insecurity, meaning that they are unable to feed all their people.

Senator PERDUE. I have another word for that, but—

Mr. FEELEY. And we call it—that is the technical term.

Senator PERDUE. I know. I know.

Mr. FEELEY. The term “hunger,” many—

Senator PERDUE. In your heart. It is a terrible situation.

Mr. FEELEY. It is horrible. And if you have flown over the Dominican Republic and Hispaniola, you can see where the deforestation line is right there. So, our assistance goes to trying to reforest, trying to provide money to small communities, and provide technical assistance so that they can grow sustainable crops, so that they can feed themselves. There is a program that is been very successful, the Global Cookstove Initiative, whereby, in Haiti, as you know, they have got to burn trees to get the carbon to heat their water so they can avoid cholera. Cookstoves—solar cookstoves, the use of technology, all of those things go into it.

We absolutely agree with you that we have to keep Haiti as a priority. We do keep Haiti as a priority in our 2016 request. And we will continue to work with this committee and with, frankly, the very good people of the American religious and civil society communities.

Senator PERDUE. Secretary Bennett, would you follow up on the elections? You brought it up, Secretary Feeley. I would love to hear what the State Department’s doing to influence an open and honest, forthright election process there. Because I agree with the Secretary. I think if you are ever going to solve the problems there, we have got to get a participatory representative government there.

Ms. BENNETT. Thank you, Senator.

We engage very assiduously on this point, both—some of us publicly, but privately in our dialogue with the government and with civil society organizations in Haiti. From the DRL perspective, we do not have a foreign assistance, sort of, niche in Haiti, either if it is their much more basic needs, as my colleagues have identified, that are right at the top of the “urgent” list. But, having a reasonable elections process is absolutely critical to, you know, the prospect of future success. And so, our encouragement in that regard, I think, is well.

Senator PERDUE. Are you optimistic with this next round?
Ms. BENNETT. I think that I will defer to my colleague here.
Mr. FEELEY. I will jump on that grenade, sir.

Sir, the legislative, local, and Presidential elections are going to be held in three rounds, we hope. This is one of those places where diplomacy and the strength of an American diplomatic presence, quite frankly, is worth more than money and funding. The political will to be able to make the hard decisions within Haiti—they have got a terribly, terribly fractious situation with vying and competing parties and within their own legislature. They have got significant logistical—just simply, How do you get Haitians in from places to vote? How do you count those votes? So, I am not going—and the reason I will not do this is because, as you are aware, sir, we have a Special Haiti Coordinator, and so it does not always fall directly to the Western Hemisphere. But, one thing we do do in my purview is, we support election monitoring. It is one of the strongest and best exercises that we undertake in the Western Hemisphere to ensure that elections are as transparent and as well run as possible. And we will certainly be doing that. And I believe that, with MINUSTAH providing the security presence—and, although there is going to be a drawdown at the end of the year, and they are proceeding toward that, we will look to international solidarity and to our hemispheric partners. That, again, is a function of our diplomacy, getting those governments who support free, fair, transparent elections and want to support the Haitian people onboard in this effort.

Senator PERDUE. Well, thank you for your testimony. Thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for calling this hearing.

And thanks, to the witnesses, for your testimony.

The Americas have all the challenges that we have described, but there are some real opportunities now. And one that I think is kind of interesting is that we might be on the verge of two continents without war, with the negotiations in Colombia over the end of that civil war. And for any continent to say that is pretty unusual if you look at the globe today. And for the Americas to say that—I do not know if there has been a period in history where the Americas could say that. What is the current status of the negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC? The United States is playing an important role accompanying the government in those negotiations. But, Secretary Feeley, if you could update us on that.

Mr. FEELEY. Absolutely, Senator. And thank you very much for your personal commitment to the Americas, in the multiple trips that you have taken.

You absolutely put your finger on it. The support for a Colombian peace process remains at the top of the President's hemispheric agenda. As you are aware, we have recently tapped former Assistant Secretary Bernie Aronson to join in at a strategic moment in those talks between the FARC and the Government of Colombia.

Whenever I talk about Colombia, I have to be careful not to get too sentimental, because I worked there in 1992 and 1993. December 3, 1993, Pablo Escobar was taken down. December 5, I was walking with my two little kids and a car bomb went off about six blocks away. That was just [Spanish phrase].

Senator Kaine. Every day.

Mr. FEELEY. That is what it was, and you remember it. Colombia has become a country transformed into a net security exporter co-operating with the Mexicans, cooperating with the Central Americans, to take much of the professionalization of their police and their military and now provide that to countries that are suffering many of the same symptoms—different causes, but many of the same symptoms—that are the product of transnational criminal organizations and the violence they do.

You are well aware that they have closed three chapters in the discussions in Havana. We will be doing everything we can to support President Santos in seeking a successful finish to the negotiations. I think it is very important for the American people—and I thank you for this question so that we can get it out—for the American people to understand this is the longest running continuous insurgency in any country in the world. And the Western Hemisphere, by and large, is blessed not to have state-on-state conflict, not to have the types of ethnic cleansing or sectarian struggles that we see that make the Middle East such a riven area.

So, our job right now is to support the President. There are going to be some very difficult political decisions to be made. You are well aware of the split between President Uribe and President Santos, where there are the hard issues about military justice. And this is one of the areas where I think our commitment to human rights and the rule of law, which has been consistent in Colombia—not necessarily always perfect in its implementation, but held out as a goal—and the inclusion of women in conflict in those discussions is one of the things that we support very strongly.

I will take a guess on this one, because Colombia does come in my portfolio. I am cautiously optimistic, and I would say that I believe the Secretary is, as well.

Senator Kaine. Excellent. Thank you, Secretary Feeley.

And I am going to segue, using Colombia as an example, to the plan for Central American engagement, the President's proposed billion-dollar investment in the Northern Triangle. These are challenging countries with high violence rates, high poverty rates. The Unaccompanied Minors Program demonstrated that. But, in the hemisphere, we could have reason to be optimistic. Colombia went from failed state to security exporter and third-largest economy in Latin America within the space of 15 years. And Mexico now has no net migration to the United States because of improving Mexican economy, even amidst violence challenges. So, there is reason to believe that an appropriate level of support, as we did with Plan Merida or as we did with Plan Colombia, could have a positive impact in the Central American nations.

I visited Honduras with Senator Cornyn in February to go back and talk to friends there and hear about, really, the way that an investment of this kind could be managed to have the biggest bang for the buck. You could waste a billion dollars or you could spend

a billion dollars that would really help put the Northern Triangle on a path similar to the arc that Colombia or Mexico have been on.

So, talk a little bit about what we are doing in dialogue with the leaders of those three nations, and especially with civil society in those three nations, to figure out how—if we were to get that investment through the appropriations process, how would we program it in those countries to have the biggest impact on security and economic improvement?

Mr. FEELEY. Absolutely, sir. And thank you very much for that question. And again, thank you very much for your personal support, your interest, and your expertise in that region.

The new Central American strategy for engagement calls for three basic lines of action: promoting prosperity and regional economic integration, promoting improved governance and fighting corruption in government inefficiency, and enhancing security. Note that I put security last. It does not mean that it is, in order of priority, last; but what it does mean is that we have learned, in working with this committee, in working with American and civil society, in working with our Colombian and our Mexican partners, that you do not go after the types of problems that afflict the Northern Triangle, where you have very weak institutions, where you have serious scofflaws and weak rule of law, where people basically do have the opportunity to commit crimes and get away with them, and impunity levels are high—you do not fix those problems, which are deeply rooted and systemic, by simply going to a security strategy.

You have to do a whole-of-government holistic approach to all of it. That is why our strategy, which—I will be very frank, and I think it is been told before—we had actually begun an Central American strategic review. Roberta Jacobson and I had sat down, had talked to our folks, and wanted to move CARSI. We were, in the, sort of, words of—many people, I think, claim this quote—“never waste a good crisis”—we were shocked, quite frankly, Senator, last year, when we saw the visages of those kids, of those women who were coming north because they had gotten bad information about immigration reforms and things like that. The push factors are incredibly strong. The push factors can only be sort of mitigated by a political will from the countries that are down there, and the leadership and the Presidents and their teams. We believe we have that. We have seen a number of hard decisions already taken by many of them. Honduras has extradited people, with great personal threat to senior leaders and judges. The President in Guatemala extended CSIG, the U.N.’s body that investigates crime and impunity, originally dating from the internal conflict that ended in 1996, and now has developed tremendous expertise in going after precisely the impunity that does ail all three of those countries. El Salvador has an anti-extortion law. They have passed anti-money-laundering legislation.

These are real movements, real changes and reforms that give us the confidence that we are working with people who do have the political will and the commitment, and that they will be putting in significantly more of their own resources. They will be taking the steps needed to do tax reform, to do the types of—in Honduras,

they will be doing special bonds. This is something we learned from Colombia as they did their war bonds earlier.

So, our report—I am sorry—our request is significant. How will we go ahead and spend it? In general, we look to—of the billion dollars, we are looking at 314 million for security, 437 million for prosperity, 248 million for governance.

Let me give you just one example—I do not want to filibuster here—one example of how we will work in each of those areas.

When we talk about working with governance, what are we talking about? We are talking about making government responsible to the people. That means, in many of these countries, and in the Northern Triangle, the leaders themselves will tell you they have to root out corruption. Government corruption is something that absolutely saps the strength of any country that seeks to provide a better future for its people. Take a look at what Honduras has done. They have invited in the Transparency International to set up an office in that country.

In prosperity, what have we got? We have got a number of programs that we will, hopefully, with this—with this Congress' assent, we will be able to fund better—broken down into a number of entrepreneurial activities. There is something called the WEAmericas Program, which is a public/private partnership that seeks to leverage private sector in both regions to create the capacity for women in those countries, wherever we—and we currently do it throughout the hemisphere—we have trained over 20,000 women from 20 countries to step into what we call “the missing middle.” There are plenty of micro entrepreneurs in Latin America, as you well know. They work out of their home, they work in the informal sector, they are not banked, they do not have—they do not pay taxes, they do not have the ability to go to a civil court to settle disputes. How do you take those women and move them? Well, there are a lot of smart people, smarter than me, who were able to figure that out. That is what that program does.

We have something called the Small Business Network of the Americas. This takes the great American ingenuity that we have in small business incubators, whether it is at the University of Texas at Austin, whether it is in small chambers of commerce around the United States, and we link them, both virtually and directly, with small business incubators in Latin America. We have been running this for about 3 years. We would seek to continue that in an effort to push prosperity from the ground up to create opportunities for folks.

And finally, in security. We have been doing this under the Central American Regional Security Initiative, as you well know, for a number of years now. We need to help them professionalize their police. I have to say, I am—sound like Bill Brownfield here—but, it does begin with the police. It is not absolutely sufficient. You have to go beyond. But, until you have community policing, where average Hondurans and Salvadorans and Guatemalans see a cop and do not run away from that cop, you are not going to have security on the ground.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Senator Rubio. Thank you.

Senator Flake.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Feeley, the budget request for FY 2016 includes a request for roughly \$6 billion—oh, I am sorry, \$6 million, gratefully, for converting the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba to an embassy. Just to be clear, that is separate and apart from—you know, this infrastructure that is requested is separate and apart from establishment of diplomatic relations, right?

Mr. FEELEY. That is correct, sir. That comes under the—that would come under what we call our diplomatic and consular programs budget. And we are asking for a roughly \$6 million increase over FY14 to be able to offer the types of services that would be needed when—if and when diplomatic relations are reestablished.

Senator FLAKE. Right. Those types of services, I am interested what you expect to be providing that you are not providing now with the Interests Section. The assumption there will be more American travelers down there, some will be doing more business that will be allowed. Can you just give some sense—

Mr. FEELEY. Certainly, sir.

Senator FLAKE. Of what we will be doing?

Mr. FEELEY. As you are aware, we are the largest diplomatic mission in Cuba. That is a tremendous surprise to many people. The fact that we do not have formal diplomatic relations does not mean that we do not have a full diplomatic mission down there. It is currently called the U.S. Interests Section. We have been in there since 1977. It was built in 1953. And, quite frankly, there is no more room at the inn. It does not fit, it does not support active diplomacy in the way that we need it to.

So, we would be—the services we currently provide are consular services. These would be the standard American citizen services, requests. Several months ago, you—or actually, it is about a year ago now—you might recall there were some American fugitives who took a sailboat down there. We worked with Cuban authorities to be able to find them and to bring them back to face justice in the United States. The consular section works with the Department of Homeland Security very closely to implement the Cuban Family Reunification Program in the 1994–95 Migration Accords. We have political and economic reporting that we do from down there. These are the people who go out and meet with independent Cuban civil society actors. An average of 2-to 300 encounters a week—they write the cables, they inform us as to the reality on the ground, they do the support activity for many of those brave individuals. We also have got law enforcement liaison down there.

So, I can go on. I do not want to take up too much of your time. But, more or less, it looks like a lot of other embassies that we have in the region, but we do not have formal diplomatic relations.

Senator FLAKE. The current Interests Section sits right along the Malacón. I think it is about 47,000 square feet. Is that going to be expanded, or simply refurbished or brought up to—

Mr. FEELEY. It is a very good question, sir. Right now, we are still, as you well know, in the midst of negotiations to establish diplomatic relations. That is a process, and that will take some time. And, honestly, I cannot tell you when that will happen. When it does happen, we do not anticipate, certainly in this calendar year,

that we will be requesting any funding or assistance. It will be basically a revenue—or, I am sorry, a cost-neutral exercise.

But, in our years, as our diplomatic activity ramps up, as we keep human rights, and as we keep the promotion of democracy and promoting a peaceful, democratic transition on the island, we would anticipate that we will need upgrades. For example, we do not have a fleet of cars. Most embassies—and you know this. When you travel, the U.S. Embassy provides transportation assistance, security assistance for visiting Senators and congresspersons. We need to do that. We do not have—and you know this—we do not have the IT infrastructure that we need to run a modern 21st-century Embassy in Havana. And so, we would need that.

So, we do not have any requests in to expand our personnel at this time. It would be primarily for the types of physical upgrades that would take a 1953 building and make it something that is adequate for 2015.

Senator FLAKE. We have about 50 FTEs there now.

Mr. FEELEY. That is correct, sir. We have approximately 50 U.S. direct-hire personnel, and the rest are Cuban employees who come from PALCO, which is the government service provider that provides diplomatic personnel to all of the embassies in Cuba.

Senator FLAKE. Right.

Mr. FEELEY. Another anomalous, nontraditional diplomatic situation, as you are well aware.

Senator FLAKE. There has been at—the administration has requested \$20 million for the Cuban Democracy Fund or to promote democracy and human rights. I am sure you are aware—and some of this is not directly related to the State Department; it is USAID—but, we have had some issues there. It was—Alan Gross was recently released after 5 years in prison there. He was there on a USAID-funded project. There have also been stories in the media—the fake Twitter accounts, HIV clinics as front for other activities. What is going to be done in the future to ensure that at least those who are on the—the end users, I guess, or participants in Cuba, are aware that they are—of the program that they are participating in? My concern has been—well, a couple of concerns. One, that you have some Cubans who are put at risk—considerable risk—if it is found out—and they may not even know that the program that they are participating in—are we going to have better transparency, moving ahead, than we have had in the past in these programs?

Ms. BENNETT. Thank you, Senator. I think that is a really good question.

Yes, the administration requested \$20 million for FY16. And I think, in Assistant Secretary Jacobson's and Malinowski's testimony, they did commit that we would not cut back on these programs, simply because of the importance we attach to advancing the space for human rights in Cuba.

I cannot speak for my colleagues at USAID. We do have a very collaborative relationship with them. But, I would just say, here—and perhaps we should have, perhaps, a more private conversation about what some of these programs entail to protect the people with whom we do work. But, to the extent that we will continue

to manage our programs in Cuba in a manner that does protect human rights activists from further reprisal.

Senator FLAKE. Okay. I—

Ms. BENNETT. These are very, very brave people, and we are committed to ensuring both their safety and that they continue the important work that they are doing.

Senator FLAKE. Well, I think it is important that we not only protect them, but protect the reputation of USAID in other areas of the world in which they work. And if it is assumed that these may be semi-covert or discreet or whatever you want to call it, that does not serve us very well in other areas. And so, I will be following up on this. I have already had discussions with USAID. But, we cannot allow to go on in the future what has gone on in the past in this regard.

And, Mr. Feeley, you wanted to add something?

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, Senator. I just wanted to say, as you are well aware, these programs did come to an end in recent years. We have not engaged in any programs like ZunZuneo or the others.

I simply would like to make a plea—well, a thanks and a plea to the members of this committee. I have had the enormous privilege of meeting a number of these very brave people, having Berto Soler come up, of having Rosa Maria Paya come up, of—I have gotten to know Yoani Sanchez quite well. What they all tell us is that, when we are very publicly supportive of their work, it does provide them with—not a complete shield, but with a little bit of protection from some of the activity. Now, we are well aware that there are many activists who are detained. Short-term detentions have gone up. That is absolutely intolerable, and we will continue to cry out against that as we go forward. Your continued support, from this committee and from your colleagues in the Senate, is enormously helpful.

Yoani Sanchez said to me one time, she said, “You have no idea how helpful it is to have the names of individual Senators and congresspersons being bandied about on the Mesa Redonda, which is their nightly talk show. And, while they may not be taking those names in the most favorable of terms, it does provide a measure of international solidarity and protection for them. So, I thank you for that, and I would encourage all of you to continue that with us.”

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

My time is up.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Markey.

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

The U.N. Committee on Enforced Disappearances has raised serious questions about Mexico. Reportedly, 26,000 people disappeared just since 2006. There has not been the kind of focus by the Mexican Government on this issue that satisfies the families or, I think, satisfies the world community. We are, in your budget, receiving a request for \$80 million for security cooperation with Mexico—a multiyear security partnership. And that is meant to fight organized crime, it is meant to accomplish a lot of goals. But, I think one of the goals that we should accomplish, as well, is dealing with this disappeared persons question, 26,000 people.

So, how can we leverage this funding in order to make sure that the Mexican government gives us the answers that we want? Some people have said that there should be a publicly available Web site, where all the names are up, and their status. Should we make that a condition of our \$80 million assistance? What can we do, you know, to pull back the curtain and to use our clout in order to get the answers for these families?

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

You put your finger on exactly what is one of the most difficult challenges in our relationship with Mexico. Mexico is a strategic partner, and Mexico's transformation, much like Colombia's, has been stunning. And we have the entire commercial side of our activity that is in direct benefit of the American people through trade and through commerce and through family exchanges, et cetera. Where we are still in a process very much of helping Mexico in a new paradigm of cooperation under the Merida Initiative, where we are in terms of this request for 80 million, which is, specifically, the INCLE funding that we would be asking, is very much where you are, sir, to use that, in conjunction with effective diplomacy and partnership, to make sure that Mexico is able to investigate the people, not just in a Ayotzinapa and Iguala and Tlatlaya and the other places where some of these horrific disappearances occur—

Senator MARKEY. So, what conditions should we attach to our funding that could effectively ensure that the Mexican government is creating the transparency, which—

Mr. FEELEY. Well, there are—

Senator MARKEY. It needs to make sure that this secret system is ended? Only if we apply our clout—

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MARKEY. Is there ever going to be an answer?

Mr. FEELEY. Well, there already restrictions on past-year Mexico funding, as you are aware, dependent upon human rights reports that we routinely submit and we work with both appropriators and with authorizers to ensure that we get the best answers that we can.

I think it is important to understand and to signal, here, that, in the case of Iguala, which is a horrible tragedy and which we made our repulsion, frankly, at what had happened very clear, it appears to be, in the investigation, where they have got—where the Mexican authorities have got over 100 people detained, they have got a number of—whom they believe to be the intellectual authors and the actual people who carried it out, those Guerreros Unidos—they have got them in a judicial process. We—every time we talk to them—and we just had Secretary Malinowski, we just had Deputy Secretary Blinken in Mexico, we raise it with them, and the Mexicans know very clearly—

Senator MARKEY. Is it unreasonable to request a publicly accessible database of all of the names of the missing? Is that an unreasonable request for the United States to make of the Mexican Government as part of our—a transfer of \$80 million to them?

Mr. FEELEY. My understanding, sir, is that the Mexicans have been working on—in the Ministry of Government—on getting databases. This is—and I cannot give you a specific status report on their efforts. But, I would point to their—

Senator MARKEY. So, you are saying they are going to put up a database with all the names of all of the missing? Is that what you are saying?

Mr. FEELEY. I cannot say that, sir.

Senator MARKEY. Well, I think that is the question. You know, should we—

Mr. FEELEY. It is a good question.

Senator MARKEY. Should we condition our funding on them putting the names up?

Mr. FEELEY. Yes.

Senator MARKEY. Twenty-six thousand people. You know, we are still talking about Argentina, from 30 and 40 years ago, huh? We are still trying to come to grips with that. This is the here and now. This is—

Mr. FEELEY. Well, as you know—

Senator MARKEY. This is 20 years post-NAFTA.

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MARKEY. This is with a request for us to be cooperating with them. This is with children on our borders last year in a partnership with them. Should we not be requesting that transparency?

Mr. FEELEY. We request transparency in a number of ways. And if you take a look at the recent anticorruption law that was passed to—

Senator MARKEY. No, I am talking about a database.

Mr. FEELEY. Information.

Senator MARKEY. I am saying, "Put the names up there"—

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MARKEY. "Mexican government. Let us see, tell—prove to us that you have a government that is willing to come to grips with the actual names listed, that the families can see, that questions can be asked about." Can we do that as a government?

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, in general, having maximum flexibility to spend and work, in coordination and in consultation with the Senate, maximum flexibility to decide how we will spend our money with the Mexicans, is what every administration seeks, and we are no different.

What I would say is this. We have developed what I call—and I have had the privilege of working in Mexico on two separate occasions. And the history of cooperation with Mexico on human rights, on democracy, on transnational organized crime is one that has, indeed, taken a quantum leap forward—

Senator MARKEY. And I appreciate that. I am dealing with a specific—

Mr. FEELEY. The one specific thing—

Senator MARKEY. Dealing with this—

Mr. FEELEY. I got it.

Senator MARKEY. 26,000 missing persons. And that is—

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MARKEY. That is all I am dealing with. Everything else is—

Mr. FEELEY. I hear you.

Senator MARKEY [continuing]. Not part of this conversation. I just want to get an answer to that. A Web site, a—something that is transparent, something that actually would bring accountability.

You know? Why do we not just ask the Mexican Government to do that, and condition the funding on that? I mean, talk about crime, talk about a suspect area, where you are wondering—

Mr. FEELEY. Sure.

Senator MARKEY [continuing]. How much can we trust a government on the rest of their cooperation when they will not even list the names of the people who have disappeared. And—

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, that is something we will take back—

Senator MARKEY [continuing]. Conditions under which they disappeared?

Mr. FEELEY. Let me take that back.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Mr. FEELEY. One thing I would point out, and you know this from your experience with other countries. Those numbers are very difficult to pin down because of the very nature of disappearances. How many are reported? How many are not?

Senator MARKEY. That is the problem.

Mr. FEELEY. And that is—

Senator MARKEY. What I am saying is—

Mr. FEELEY [continuing]. And in the Ministry—

Senator MARKEY [continuing]. If there was a Web site, then people could say, “Hey, the name is not up on that Web site. I want my family member up on that Web site, too.” There would be a mechanism that would then be publicly, you know, listed that would give those families, you know, the reason to say to human rights groups, “They are not putting my family member’s name up there, as well,” huh?

So, I just think that, from our government’s perspective, it is kind of a simple thing to do, but I think it would be a powerful tool that would be used by families who believe they have been abandoned, believe they are just nonpersons, huh? Just having your name up there, it is like having a loved one’s name on the Vietnam Wall.

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MARKEY. It is just—it is recognition. You know, you can touch their spirit, at least. You know? It keeps hope alive in a family.

So, I would just say to you that I think that is a powerful opportunity for the U.S. Government to act, and to act in a way that I think would empower people to say to their government—

Mr. FEELEY. Thank you, sir.

Senator MARKEY [continuing]. “Please give us the answers to our family.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad to be back. We had the President of Armenia. So, I appreciate the opportunity.

Let me ask Ms. Bennett. Earlier this year, this committee, under the leadership of Chairman Corker, took a very strong interest in

ending modern slavery, highlighted by an important hearing on February the 4th. On April 22, the Senate voted, 99 to 0, to strengthen domestic penalties against human trafficking and to provide additional protections for victims. On the same day, Congressman Smith held a House subcommittee hearing examining the State Department's trafficking-in-persons report and emphasizing the need to maintain the integrity of the tier ranking system.

Later that very same day, a strong 16-to-10 bipartisan vote, the Senate Finance Committee, accepted my amendment to the trade promotion authority bill to prohibit expedited congressional procedures for trade deals with countries ranked Tier 3 on the TIP report. Of course, Tier 3 is among the worst countries.

So, do you believe that we should be in the midst of providing fast track for countries that are the worst offenders in human trafficking?

Ms. BENNETT. Thank you, Senator.

I think the administration is deeply committed to preventing and eliminating all forms of trafficking in persons throughout the world. And I can just say that some of what I have seen in my own previous incarnations overseas in my Foreign Service capacity, it is—I mean, it is simply horrific. And so, we engage—

Senator MENENDEZ. We can agree to that. So, you and I are in agreement on that. My question, which could be a simple yes or no, is, Do you believe that we should be fast-tracking countries that have the worst record, under our own reports, in terms of human trafficking?

Ms. BENNETT. I think it is a fair point that economical engagement is a tool in our toolkit, and we are certainly following the amendment closely as it is under discussion, as the House and the Senate work through the bill.

Senator MENENDEZ. But, we have used economic engagement, and other countries have not moved off the list as a result of economic engagement.

Let me ask you this. The State Department's 2015 TIP report is due to be released next month. In the State Department's own words, it, quote, "is the U.S. Government's principal diplomatic tool to engage foreign governments on human trafficking." Now, all of us who share a deep concern about the scourge of human trafficking depend on the integrity of that report for the truth about where the trafficking is worse and what must be done about it. Is the issue, human trafficking, important to your work in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor?

Ms. BENNETT. Yes, it is important to our work in the Bureau. I will just note that the trafficking-in-persons structure, the office that authors the report and advances this foreign policy priority programs, is actually separate and is not under my purview. That said, we work quite closely with them. And the—you know, and we work very hard to, sort of, deconflict, I would say, where they can provide some assistance that perhaps we cannot, and vice versa. We work very collaboratively.

Senator MENENDEZ. So, is there—and I understand, technically it is in—

Ms. BENNETT. Right.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Secretary Sewall's ambit. But, is the accuracy, the reliability, the integrity of the TIP report important to the Department?

Ms. BENNETT. It is, absolutely. This is a process that is—you know, that every embassy in our world is vested in.

Senator MENENDEZ. Do you have any reason to doubt the integrity of the reporting process?

Ms. BENNETT. I do not, although I am not involved in it this year in quite the same way that I have been in prior incarnations, but—

Senator MENENDEZ. But, based upon your prior experience, do you believe—

Ms. BENNETT. No, I do not.

Senator MENENDEZ. Based upon your prior experience, are the rankings subject to political pressure, in light of other priorities?

Ms. BENNETT. My experience does not suggest that, but I cannot speak more broadly.

Senator MENENDEZ. Okay.

Mr. Feeley, as you know, Cuba and Venezuela are ranked Tier 3 in the TIP report, the worst ranking, which indicates they do not comply with the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act's minimum standards, and are not making significant efforts to do so. So, is the integrity of the TIP report important to your section of the State Department?

Mr. FEELEY. Undeniably yes, sir.

Senator MENENDEZ. Are you confident of the integrity of the report?

Mr. FEELEY. I believe that we work with our embassies and with our DRL and our trafficking-in-persons colleagues to produce the very best report that we can with the information that we have—

Senator MENENDEZ. So, even though Cuba is a Tier 3, one of the worst traffickers—Voyeur magazine had, a couple of years ago, “the sexual hotspot of the world”—even though, in fact, it is a Tier 3, we are in the midst of giving them a series of concessions even though they are among the worst traffickers in the world.

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, the approach that the administration has taken to restart diplomatic relations with Cuba is in no way a reward for any perceived good behavior. We agree completely with you and Senator Rubio and many members who believe that the Castro government is a single-party state that clearly wants no part of democracy and which has systematically abused the human rights of its people. What I would say is that, with regard to TIP, the previous Tier 3 rankings, we believe that they have been justified, based on the specific criteria of the TIP law.

Senator MENENDEZ. Yes. Well, let me just say that—so, you have a country that is a Tier 3 ranking, you have a country that violates U.N. Security Council resolutions in shipments of arms to North Korea, for which it not even a slap on the wrist. You have got a country that just accepted—it was in the midst of receiving another shipment of arms, in violation of international law, that was probably headed for the FARC. You have a country that has Joanna Chesimard, a convicted terrorist on the FBI 10-most-wanted list of terrorists in the world, who killed a New Jersey State trooper. And

I know we are not, you know, rewarding them for that behavior, but we are certainly not making progress on any of it.

Let me ask you one last question, which is a broader question than beyond Cuba. In our democracy programs, I am sadly concerned. We have never in the world—our democracy programs have ever—being rejected by a totalitarian government or a repressive regime, that that has subverted the very essence of our democracy programs. And yet, there is a suggestion that somehow because a country does not like it or we did not tell them everything about our democracy program, which we work with a lot of groups in the world in which we do not tell them, the country that does not like the fact that we are trying to promote democracy on their country, that we would subvert it. So, I hope we do not go down that road, because then I, for one, will lead a charge, as much as I am the biggest supporter, and have been for 23 years, of our democracy programs, if we are going to start subverting it to a country that does not like it, and therefore, we are going to start changing what we are doing, then, to be very honest with you, that is a slope for which there is a lot of consequences. A lot of my friends who do not seem to have a problem with—you know, with what goes on in Cuba, but are very strong about places in Burma and other places in the world; yet, if you are going to start subverting democracy programs because a country rejects it because they are totalitarian, then that is a slippery slope, and I hope we do not get to that, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Senator Menendez.

Secretary Feeley, let me touch on a couple of points here. And I do not know if any of the other members have any followup questions.

I wanted to first touch on Colombia, the negotiations going on with the FARC. Has the Santos administration asked for Simon Trinidad's release or temporary release for purposes of participating in the peace negotiations?

Mr. FEELEY. Mr. Chairman, the Colombians have not asked us to release Simon Trinidad.

Senator MENENDEZ. Are you prepared today, on behalf of the administration, to state that the release of Mr. Trinidad from U.S. custody is a part of any future deal between Colombia and the FARC is off the table?

Mr. FEELEY. Senator, as you well know, Mr. Trinidad is incarcerated in the United States for very serious crimes. And I have to be honest, I am not—I cannot make final decisions that will be made by my superiors. What I will tell you is that our extradition relationship with Colombia is one of the most fruitful. I was privileged to participate in the beginning of it, before they had extradition of Colombian nationals, and President Santos and his negotiating team know what an incredibly serious tool this is and the priority that we make keeping our extradition relationship strong with Colombia.

Senator RUBIO. But, you can say that, as of this moment, you are not aware of any efforts to either release or temporarily release Mr. Trinidad.

Mr. FEELEY. What I can tell you, sir, is, I am not aware of any effort.

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

I wanted to—I agree with this project, the Central American strategy and the billion dollars, obviously. But, here is what is important. How are we going to measure progress? Do we have benchmarks set for how we are going to measure success, what the project is going to look like? Because you touch an interesting point. And I have talked about this often. Whether it is the migratory crisis that we have now seen or some other issues regarding the Northern Triangle countries, there are entire parts of those countries that are not under the writ of the government. In essence, they are controlled by transnational criminal groups that terrorize the populace, and, quite frankly, are driving people out of there, for fear of their own safety and, of course, lack of hope in their own future. So, the idea that we would get involved in an alliance for prosperity, or I guess this is called the—I have met with the Presidents of all three countries, and their Foreign Ministers. This plan for prosperity is a good idea, but how are we going to measure success in these programs? What are the metrics?

Mr. FEELEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for that question, and thank you for raising the importance of metrics.

I said in my testimony that we have to be accountable and we have to work with you. I think one of the things that we—before we began this effort, we looked to see if we could get some signals of measurable progress, the demonstration of political will. It was the assessment of the President and the Vice President that we did have indications—certainly not getting us over any goal line, but we did have indications from them. I mentioned some of them earlier. If you take a look at Honduras, they have dropped their murder rate. Still way too high, but they have dropped it 22 percent in the last year. If you take a look at what, in Honduras, they did in the Ministry of Public Security, they published a huge glossy that indicated almost where every lempira went, in terms of their spending.

Go over to El Salvador. I mentioned earlier the antiextortion law. Take a look at what we did with El Salvador, in terms of our MCC compact, their second one, for \$277 million. There were a number of things that the Salvadorans had not done, in terms of making their domestic legislation regarding anti-money-laundering up to international FATF standards, the Financial Action Task Force things. We worked with them through our diplomacy, and we were able to get them to a place where we were able to approve that.

You put your finger on it. Metrics are absolutely important. Now, having said that, I will also say, you can look at a whole bunch of statistics on inputs and not necessarily get the outputs that you seek. I used to tell people, when they would come and visit us, as you did in Mexico, that the—you know, what does success look like? I cannot sit here and tell you every single thing, but I can tell you that how a country presents itself and how the people of a country feel about their government, about their mayors, about their police, about their justices, and the building of that confidence, is extremely important. May be difficult to measure, but

we can use polling and things like that. But, metrics is absolutely on the forefront of our efforts, here.

Senator RUBIO. Well, I would just add that, obviously, the \$1 billion will not be enough to finish the plan. There is—I would imagine there are out-year planned—assuming that there is success with the plan, there would be future years for continued implementation.

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, we—right now, I can only speak, as you can appreciate, for FY16, but—

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

Mr. FEELEY [continuing]. If we look at our history in Colombia and we look at our history in Mexico, I would say there is no substitute in this hemisphere for strong American leadership, technical assistance, and the leveraging ability that we bring, both in terms of the programming, as well as in terms of the political and diplomatic support.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. I want to examine the \$6 million for changes to the Interests Section into an embassy.

In May 2014, the State Department's Office of Inspector General released a report, following an inspection of that facility. The report included, by the way, a classified annex that—with key judgments, which I have reviewed, and recommendation on how to improve the security and functionality of the Interests Section. Can you tell us, here in this setting, without, obviously, going into any of the details in the classified annex, what—how many of those recommendations have been acted upon?

Mr. FEELEY. I cannot tell you specifically. I owe you that answer, sir.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. Can you tell us, then, how much of this money will go toward addressing those portions? And of—even—it can be a written update or a response, classified if necessary, on what the State Department has done or plans to do to the Interests Section, and how many of their recommendations, particularly of the ones in the classified annex to the report, have been addressed. That is an important point that the committee needs to understand, is, how many of those things in that report, both the open portions of it and especially the classified portions of it, are going to be addressed with these \$6 million that you are asking for?

Mr. FEELEY. I owe you that as a takeback, sir.

[The written reply to the above information requested follows:]

Mr. Feeley. The Office of the Inspector General's report on the U.S. Interests Section in Havana identified key areas of concern and we are working to mitigate those concerns. The classified annex contains several key judgments that we are also addressing. We would be happy to discuss the budgetary implications of implementing the recommendations and progress on following through on the recommendations in a classified setting at your convenience.

Mr. FEELEY. As I mentioned, in general terms, what I can say here in this setting is that the additional \$6.6 million that we would be seeking for D&CP—diplomatic and consular program funding—is basically for necessary modernization. But we owe you a more specific answer.

Senator RUBIO. Physical upgrades.

Mr. FEELEY. Sir.

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

Mr. FEELEY. There are no FTEs, as we call them—full-time employments. We do not anticipate expanding the number of diplomats that we are sending down there in the short term. And so—

Senator RUBIO. Okay. Well, let—because you talked about—these are all going to be updates to the facility, and that is important, in terms of—not just in light of that report, but, in general, the functions that you are talking about providing there. But, beyond it, you talked about—there is no IT capability or advanced IT capability, there was no cars.

And that leads me to my following point. Let us talk, first, about personnel. You talk about FTEs. This employment of Cuban personnel provided by the Cuban Government, there is no doubt in your mind that these employees just are not random people that applied for a job, that a significant portion of them, if not all, have strong links to Cuban intelligence.

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, what I would say to that is that we and every other diplomatic mission deal with the circumstances that we find on the ground. This is not ideal, this is unique. There are—I am not sure if there are other places in the world where the host government provides your local employment—your locally employed staff.

Senator RUBIO. Or even—that, in and of itself, raises a tremendous flag, does it not? We are going to have an expanded embassy capability on the—in this country, a nation that we know has made the United States a priority of intelligence-gathering, a country that we know expenses—despite their poor budgetary condition, spends a significant amount of money on intelligence activity. And they provide us employees, and I guarantee you that not a single one of them is just a plumber or a janitor. Every single one reports back to the government. And I just think that is a major red flag, in terms of expanding an embassy capability, where, in fact, we are—probably require us to expand the number of Cuban employees working—employed by the government. People—I do not know if the American people realize this, how many—what a large number of, basically, Cuban Government employees work inside of our consular facility and will be working inside of our Embassy in Havana. That is a huge problem.

Let me ask you something else, because, as part of upgrading this—do we have commitments from the Cubans that we will be able to bring in new, modern equipment and supplies?

Mr. FEELEY. Senator Rubio, that is one of the issues that we are discussing with them. And I am—my boss is the lead negotiator. And, quite frankly, I am not able to provide you, in this setting, with a status of where we are with regard to access by our lead officials or the importation. As you can appreciate, these are conversations that are at the core of our diplomatic conversations, and nobody is prejudging the outcome.

Senator RUBIO. Well, let me ask you this. Will the embassy—or the Interests Section now, embassy later—be able to receive regular secure shipments, unmolested by the regime?

Mr. FEELEY. Once again, sir, one of the issues we are discussing with them, and I am not in a position today to be able to tell you yes or no, categorically.

Senator RUBIO. Well, again, that is a huge area of concern.
Mr. FEELEY. Huge priority.

Senator RUBIO. We are being asked to invest money in an embassy in Havana, but we are going to have to hire Cuban agents to work in the embassy, we are—and there is no guarantee, as of yet, that we are going to be allowed to bring in any equipment we want to upgrade the embassy. Because we are being told this would be an embassy just like any other embassy in the world, except it will have Cuban agents working inside of it, we will not—and we have no commitments yet that we will be allowed to bring our own equipment, and we have no commitments yet that we would be allowed to bring secured containers of equipment into the embassy. Other than that, it is just like every other embassy, I suppose.

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, I think that there is—the embassies—

Senator RUBIO. It will have a door and a window, but it will not have our own computer equipment, our own employees, or a secure—

Mr. FEELEY. I understand.

Senator RUBIO [continuing]. Method of delivering material. I mean, this is a big issue of concern, and one we are going to be debating as we get into this whole funding issue. Because, irrespective of how you may feel about an opening towards Cuba, if we are going to have an embassy, it should be a real embassy, not an embassy that is mined with Cuban intelligence officials, unable to upgrade its equipment, and unable to bring in, in a secure way, both documents and material for the use of the embassy. And I understand it is not your decision to make, but I am—

Mr. FEELEY. Sure.

Senator RUBIO [continuing]. Just pointing to the fact that that is going to be a major problem—

Mr. FEELEY. Well, and it is a major priority for us. If you take a look—we are attempting to reestablish diplomatic relations—we are not there yet, as you well know—under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic and Consular Relations. The overriding principle of that is that there is reciprocity. In many embassies around the world, we do not have 100 percent perfect reciprocity, and we have to deal with the circumstances that we have. The fact that we have PALCO employees in the Interests Section, currently, is one that is an inherited state of affairs. But, I absolutely do take very seriously—and I know my boss does, and you have spoken with Roberta Jacobson and with the Secretary on this—we do take very seriously the issues you have raised about shipments, about movement, and about our ability to conduct relations—diplomatic relations in a country where we have not had them before—

Senator RUBIO. Well, again, I am—

Mr. FEELEY [continuing]. Where we have not had them for—

Senator RUBIO. No, I understand. But, I guess my point is, as this was represented to the committee, it should not be represented as an embassy just like any other we have around the world. I think it is important that if, in fact, this is an embassy that is going to have Cuban intelligence agents working in it, unable to upgrade equipment unless the Cubans allow it, unable to bring in cars unless they allow it, unable to upgrade our technological capa-

bilities, and unable to securely deliver documents and other type equipment into the facility, it is not just like every other embassy. It is—and that is an important thing to point out.

Beyond it, on the personnel issue, is there plans for the embassy to be able to have the capacity to host members of Cuba's pro-democratic opposition?

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, as you are well aware, we currently offer free Internet to independent civil society members. We get upward of about 300 people a week who come in. We absolutely have regular contact with all of those folks across the wide spectrum of independent civil society people in Cuba. They are not a monolithic group, as you know well. And we will absolutely—one of the issues that we are discussing is to allow for our people to be able to go out and meet with those folks without fear of reprisal.

Senator RUBIO. Well, so you will continue the programs of allowing pro-democracy activists and others to come into the facility, use the Internet, assuming we can get the equipment in there, and all sorts—so, that is the good news.

But, let me ask you this. And you talked about being able to go out and reach out to people. Is there—is it our intention to create the equivalent of a response team at the embassy that will be able to visit dissidents when they are jailed, when they are beaten, when they are harassed? Has there been conversations about creating a group of individuals working for the U.S. Government that will be able to go out and interact with these dissidents when they are arrested, when they are beaten, when they are jailed—out in the country, not simply in our facility?

Mr. FEELEY. Once again, Senator, as I have not been party to the negotiations, I, unfortunately, am not able to give you a specific answer to that specific question.

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

Mr. FEELEY. But, it is a priority that future diplomats of the United States in an embassy are able to reach out and speak freely with independent members of civil society.

Senator RUBIO. Well, you also talked about, in the past, that facility's been used for issues of fugitives, the Interests Section that, in the past, has sent teams there to seek out fugitives. You talked about the importance of an—a U.S. embassy having law enforcement liaisons working from the facility, correct?

Mr. FEELEY. That is correct, sir.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. And—

Mr. FEELEY. And, in point of fact, the Cubans have agreed to a law enforcement working group with us.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. And does that mean that they have also agreed to open the case of Joanne Chesimard to be returned to the United States? Has that been discussed at all?

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, I am from New York, and I am the—I am from a family of cops and firemen. And I remember when Warner Trost was killed. And I know that his family has cried out for justice. And I know that there are many other fugitives from American justice and international justice there. It is the administration's policy that, through engagement that is diplomatic, that allows our law enforcement people to speak to one another, we will pursue, at

every level that we can, the return of fugitives. I cannot guarantee any outcome, sir.

Senator RUBIO. No, I understand. I—

Mr. FEELEY. But, I can tell you it is a priority.

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

And again, I just want to go back to this point, because it is going to be part of our conversations. This is a budget oversight hearing, not a—

Mr. FEELEY. Sure.

Senator RUBIO [continuing]. Policy one, per se, although it—budget and policy overlap. And we are going to be asked to fund a new embassy in Havana. But, I think it is important for members to understand, before they approve that funding—and I think it is important for the State Department to understand, before they come here and ask for that—we need to understand exactly what we are funding. And that is why I asked you these questions.

Are we funding a building that, in essence, continues to be limited, but just has the name "embassy" on it, or are we going to be funding a building where we will have our own personnel, our own equipment, our ability to send material in securely without interference from the Cuban government—in essence, a real embassy—or is it just going to be the current Interests Sections filled with Cuban agents, unable to upgrade technologically, and just costing more money? And that is an important point that we are going to have to have a conversation about as we get closer to that.

I wanted to end with a couple more points. And Senator Menendez touched upon this, because this is important. You know, on February 28 of this year, a Chinese flag vessel was intercepted in Cartagena, Colombia, en route to Cuba, carrying 15 containers of heavy weaponry hidden as a grain shipment. This is the second time in 18 months that the Cuban military has been caught smuggling weapons internationally. Has the State Department made any statements regarding this matter?

Mr. FEELEY. I am going to have to check for you, Senator.

[The written reply to the above information requested follows:]

Mr. Feeley. Since the Colombian investigation of the incident is still ongoing, the Department of State has not made any public statements to date. We believe that it would be premature to speculate on the incident, though we take the matter seriously and continue to consult closely with our Colombian partners. We appreciate the Colombian Government's efforts to ensure safe maritime transportation throughout the region, particularly for ships that enter populated ports, and transit the Panama Canal.

Mr. FEELEY. We were very well aware of the case. I am trying to recall if we have made any statements about it. As you are aware, from the Chong Chon Gang incident in the Panama Canal, the provenance and ultimate destination of an awful lot of shipping on the high seas is not always completely clear at the outset. We have spoken to our Colombian partners on that. But, I owe you a better response as to whether or not we have made public statements on it. We have certainly consulted with our Colombian partners.

Senator RUBIO. Well, I think this is a critical point, because weapons between China—weapon sales between China and Cuba are not otherwise sanctioned internationally. So, why would they

hide this weaponry in grain if, in fact—that, alone, should raise alarm as to what exactly they are doing.

Which brings me to perhaps my final point, and that is, according to the memorandum of justification for the recission of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism that was shared with Congress last month, the Cubans reject, "Cuba rejects and condemns all terrorist acts, methods, and practices, in all its forms and manifestations. It likewise condemns any action intended to encourage, support, finance, or cover up any terrorist act, method, or practice."

Can my office be provided a copy of the communication between Cuba and the United States in which Cuba committed to these words that I just read?

Mr. FEELEY. Sir, I am not authorized to get that. I will certainly take it back—to give you that assurance—I will take back the request.

Senator RUBIO. Well, we will make that request, as well, of the Secretary of State. Would that be the appropriate individual?

Mr. FEELEY. Yes, sir.

Senator RUBIO. It also states that the governments of Spain and Colombia have no objection to the recision of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. I would also put in the request for those documents.

Mr. FEELEY. If those documents exist, sir—

Senator RUBIO. Okay.

Mr. FEELEY [continuing]. We will certainly—

[The written reply to the above information requested follows:]

Mr. Feeley. The Government of Cuba provided us with written assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future, consistent with the requirements of the relevant statutes. While the written diplomatic message is private, we have shared the content of the assurances with Congress. In the assurances, Cuba reiterated its commitment to cooperate in combating terrorism, rejected and condemned all terrorist acts, methods, and practices in all their forms and manifestations, and condemned any action intended to encourage, support, finance, or cover up any terrorist acts. The Government of Cuba further committed to never supporting any act of international terrorism, and never allowing its territory to be used to organize, finance, or execute terrorist acts against any other country, including the United States.

The Government of Cuba also addressed its support for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) during the peace processes and provided assurances that it would never permit FARC and ELN members present in Cuba to use Cuban territory to engage in activities against Colombia or any other country. The Government of Cuba provided assurances that it would never permit Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) members living in Cuba to use Cuban territory for that organization's activities against Spain or any other country.

Cuba has also made a number of public statements condemning terrorism, including President Castro's December 2014 speech rejecting terrorism and his January 2015 statement of outrage against the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in Paris.

The Government of Colombia communicated to the United States it has no evidence that Cuba has provided any political or material support in recent years to the FARC or ELN that has facilitated, supported, or promoted the planning or execution of terrorist activity in Colombia. The Colombian Government believes the Government of Cuba plays a constructive role in the peace negotiations and has no objection to the rescission of Cuba's state sponsor of terrorism (SST) designation.

For those two ETA members for whom Spain has requested extradition, Cuba and Spain have agreed to a bilateral process to resolve the matter, which is now underway. The Government of Spain told the Department that it accepts this process as a sign of Cuba's willingness to cooperate on this issue, and that it has no objection to the rescission of Cuba's SST designation.

Senator RUBIO. And I guess my final question is one related to the democracy programs on the island. And, you know, we have heard some criticism here—Senator Flake—but, others have, as well—that these programs as some sort of a covert program. I think it is important to point out that—and I think Senator Menendez touched upon this—but, these programs—these were not weapons program, correct?

Mr. FEELEY. No.

Senator RUBIO. These were not—what—programs to hand out explosives on the island. These were programs to basically help individual Cubans become empowered by having access to social media, having—as reported in the media, that is what they were—to have access to social media, access to the Internet. Does not the fact that that, in and of itself, is considered subversive, tell us everything we need to know about that regime?

Mr. FEELEY. Our human rights funding hedge has been supported from this committee for many years, does, in fact, seek to empower the Cuban people. Our strategy, our strategic end state in Cuba, has remained the same from December 16 to December 18. It is to promote a peaceful democratic transition on the island of Cuba, led by Cubans, so that they will become a democratic, prosperous, and secure country and join the rest of the countries of the hemisphere. My colleagues in DRL, my colleagues in USAID have engaged in those programs, with the goal of doing exactly that. And there have been many people who have benefited from that. And there have been many lessons learned along the way. As my colleague from DRL said, providing democracy assistance in restrictive environments is one of the most difficult tasks we do as diplomats.

Senator RUBIO. So, those programs remain a priority.

Mr. FEELEY. Those programs remain a priority, sir.

Senator RUBIO. And, under no circumstances, as far as you know, will those programs ever be weakened or watered down or eliminated in an effort to gain further concessions or the favor of the Cuban Government.

Mr. FEELEY. Senator Rubio, I can only speak to the FY16 request. The FY16 request requests the same amount of funding as in the past, \$20 million.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINES. Just briefly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary Bennett, we are—I am going to follow up on a line of questioning from Senator Menendez. An issue that is of great moment right now is the discussion over trade promotion authority and, ultimately, a—the idea that a transpacific partnership deal would follow. To what extent has your Bureau been engaged in discussions with the U.S. Trade Representative about labor protections as part of either a trade promotion authority or a transpacific partnership deal?

Ms. BENNETT. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Through the TPP negotiations—I mean, we really are seeking strong and enforceable commitments on fundamental labor rights. Our International Labor Affairs Office within the Bureau is vectored into that. I cannot give you specifics, without taking it

back and continuing this, on precisely what stages of negotiations and whatnot they have injected, you know, their views. But, we have been involved in—you know, what we can do to, you know, advance elimination of forced and compulsory labor, child labor, commercial sex, of course—I mean, a whole variety—

Senator KAINES. Yes.

Ms. BENNETT [continuing]. Of angles in that regard.

Senator KAINES. I think I am going to submit a question for the record on this, because I would like to get specifics about the Bureau's engagement with USTR on this point.

I am generally pro-trade, but I do think the labor protection elements are very important, given the—you know, the nations we are dealing with. We do not want to disadvantage American workers. And the degree to which your Bureau has interacted with USTR would be something I am interested in. So, I will submit that one for the record.

Ms. BENNETT. Sure.

Senator KAINES. Let me just—Secretary Feeley, just follow up with you. And I would second comments made by the Chairman about the Central American Engagement Plan, the need for metrics. You talked about the—sort of, the three pillars of investment: prosperity investments, governance investments, and security investments. And they are very critical. I will just kind of put on the record: A lot of this violence in the nations that are corrupting their institutions, affecting both the security and governance pillars, and the prosperity, too, is driven by the drug trade. This is a committee that has, not only the Western Hemisphere as its jurisdiction, but transnational criminal activity. The drug trade is not coming to Honduras because Hondurans consume a lot of drugs. The drug trade is coming to Hondurans because—Honduras—because Americans consume a lot of drugs. It is our consumption of drugs, whether it is heroin now raised cheaply in Mexico or whether it is cocaine, as you indicate, raised in Peru—it is our consumption of drugs that has turned a nation that is a real ally of ours into a transit point, and the amount of cash that we are willing to spend for drugs basically just corrupts the institutions of a nation that has a 65-percent poverty rate. They have a responsibility to improve their own institutions, but they have a real challenge of improving them to the degree that we might want to see as long as U.S. dollars by—driven by a U.S. demand for drugs is corrupting their institutions so badly.

And so, you know, as I see—in Virginia, whether it is, you know, opioid overdoses in rural Virginia or methamphetamine problems in, you know, other parts of the State or—and we see it all over the country—I mean, all over the country, we are seeing this drug problem—unless we get a handle on the demand side here and do things really to fundamentally change the equation of the demand side here, you know, we can extradite more and more people, we can arrest more and more people, we can, you know, pay for trainings of police or security officers, but we will not see the outcomes that we want in Central America unless we own our own responsibilities.

When kids from violent neighborhoods were arriving at our border and then surrendering to the first American they saw in uni-

form, and, you know, there was some attitude of kind of, you know, blaming the countries, but, I mean, to some degree, they are arriving at our doorstep because we are the source of some of the problem. So, those nations have got to own responsibility for their institutional improvements. We have got to own our responsibility. And it is U.S. cash that is corrupting these countries, these poor countries, because of the demand for drugs. And we have got to get a handle on that. And there is no silver-bullet answer to it, but we have got to own that as a responsibility.

Mr. FEELEY. Senator, I'll—just very quickly—I could not agree more. I think that it is not in the State Department's bailiwick, which tends to deal more with the law enforcement and supply side, but this administration, the Obama administration, has trebled the amount of money that we spend on—out of—and my good friend Mike Botticelli, the Director at ONDCP, has trebled that.

This was, quite frankly, in diplomatic terms, sort of a watershed moment, when President Obama and former Secretary Clinton told the countries of the region, "We are co-responsible for this." And we agree, we do have to own it. It is not in our bailiwick or operational purview, but we could not agree more with you. And it is one of the reasons why, within that cooperation that we do with these countries, we include demand reduction, because what we, sadly, see many times is the—sort of the curse of geography. As the drugs move up through the isthmus, many times the drug traffickers, who are, you know, pretty rapacious individuals, will pay off, in product, and try to use supply to create their own demand.

So, I thank you very much for your support and recognition that, in the United States, we have our co-responsibility, as well.

Senator KAINÉ. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Thank you all for being here with us today. It was a 2-hour hearing, and I appreciate your patience, your service to our country.

Ms. Bennett, it was not bad at all, was it? [Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. No?

Ms. BENNETT. It was delighted, thank you. [Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. Sure.

The record is going to remain open until the close of business on Thursday, May 7.

And, with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF JOHN D. FEELEY TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BOB CORKER

Question. The United States is encouraging trade facilitation and capacity-building around the world by working with regional organizations, such as the East African Community (EAC) in Africa, APEC in Asia. These agreements promote harmonization, economic integration, coproduction and other cross-border initiatives. The United States has encouraged similar initiatives in the past through trade and development policy such as CAFTA, ATPA.

- ♦ What initiatives has this administration undertaken to continue to encourage economic integration and trade developments in the Western Hemisphere region

as a whole, and in subregions such as Central America, the Caribbean, and the Andean region?

Answer. The administration has embraced economic integration and trade promotion initiatives in the region established by prior administrations (e.g. NAFTA, CAFTA, four bilateral free trade agreements) and continues to implement their provisions to ensure a level playing field. We are likewise pursuing a broader, ground breaking initiative—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—that in the Western Hemisphere includes Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Peru. It represents a significant opportunity to integrate the Americas in the rapidly expanding Asia-Pacific economy and create new export markets for goods and services produced in the Americas.

We are also implementing trade capacity-building programs through initiatives such as Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas, the Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA), and Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas). Under this initiative, the United States has supported customs and border workshops which have leveraged public-private partnerships to modernize procedures in Central America, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Uruguay.

The SBNA builds connections between U.S. and regional institutions providing counseling, training, financing, and other support services to small and medium businesses. Through the WEAmericas initiative we have worked with the regional partners to certify businesses as women-owned and integrate women entrepreneurs into global supply chains by connecting them with direct trade opportunities.

In Central America, USAID is improving trade facilitation and market access for agricultural value chains by reducing trade costs across borders, promoting public-private dialogue on trade facilitation, and harmonizing trade and investment laws, regulations, and procedures.

Our energy initiatives in Central America and the Caribbean also aim to foster conditions for economic integration. Connecting the Americas 2022 promotes access to electricity through enhanced interconnection, power sector investment, and renewable energy development, which will increase competitiveness for trade and investment. Vice President Biden announced the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative in June 2014 to work with the Caribbean to diversify and integrate their energy sectors.

Leadership on economic integration extends past our borders. Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru established the Pacific Alliance in 2012. The United States became an observer in July 2013 and supports the efforts by the Pacific Alliance countries toward integration, lowering barriers to trade and strengthening economic ties. The United States has proposed cooperation on regulatory matters, trade and travel facilitation, research institution partnership, and entrepreneurship.

Question. In both the U.S.-Colombia and U.S.-Peru free trade agreements, there is a reference to regional integration, building on the supply chains that were created as a result of previous U.S.-Andean trade agreements (i.e., ATPDEA). Namely, the agreements includes a section in the textile chapter, specifically on regional cumulation which states: “In the light of their desire to promote regional integration, the Parties shall enter into discussions, within six months of the date of entry into force of this Agreement, or at a time to be determined by the Parties, with a view to deciding, subject to their applicable domestic legal requirements (such as a requirement to consult with the legislature and domestic industry), whether materials that are goods of countries in the region may be counted for purposes of satisfying the origin requirement under this Chapter as a step toward achieving regional integration.”

The U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreements entered into force on February 1, 2009. The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement entered into force on May 15, 2012.

- ◆ Has the United States entered into discussions about regional cumulation with Peru? With Colombia? If not, has a later date been determined by the parties? Have there been discussions about setting a date? Can you explain why these discussions have not taken place? Would you say that the delay in the discussions is due to a policy decision or to simple negligence?

Answer. Discussions of cumulation with Peru and Colombia have taken place on several occasions, including at the most recent U.S.-Peru Free Trade Commission meeting and during bilateral meetings in Colombia in late 2014. As we explained in those meetings, any agreement to provide such cumulation between Peru, Colombia, and the United States would require extensive consultation with stakeholders, the renegotiation of bilateral Trade Promotion Agreements (TPAs) with each country, and the passage of implementing legislation. We also discussed the “short supply provisions” contained in the agreements with Peru and Colombia. These provide a well-defined administrative process for expanding the use of nonoriginated inputs

which are not available from producers within either TPA. U.S. trade officials stand ready to work with each government to facilitate use of these provisions.

RESPONSES OF JOHN D. FEELEY TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. Respect for international labor rights must be a fundamental focus of any trade deal to ensure American workers are not disadvantaged in the global economy.

- ♦ To what extent has the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) worked with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to promote labor protections as part of Trade Promotion Authority or a Trans-Pacific Partnership deal?
- ♦ Please provide specific examples of DRL's engagement with USTR.

Answer. DRL has consulted closely with USTR at the highest levels throughout the TPP negotiations. DRL's objective is to ensure that our TPP partners reform their laws and practices so that they are consistent with the International Labor Organization's fundamental labor rights, including adopting laws on minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health. In the course of our consultations during trade negotiations, we have specifically identified where partner countries have fallen short of international standards and steps that need to be taken to bring laws and practices in line with international standards. When TPP negotiations are concluded, we expect our negotiating partners will undertake specific, concrete steps to bring their labor laws and practices into conformity with international standards. The Department is now working with USTR and other USG agencies to ensure that there will be appropriate labor capacity-building plans in place for TPP partners who do not yet meet their obligations as members of the International Labor Organization, including obligations outlined in the 1998 "ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work."

