

US SECRETARY OF STATE REX WAYNE TILLERSON'S ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS OF THE NEW JERSEY STATE SENATOR ROBERT (BOB) MENENDEZ

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Below are the written replies of the 69th US Secretary of State Rex Wayne Tillerson to the written questions of the New Jersey State Senator Robert (Bob) Menendez during the confirmation hearings.

42. As a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States plays a critical role in maintaining stability in the South Caucasus region through its mediation of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. However, Azerbaljan continues to violate cease fire agreements.

a. What steps will you take to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its actions and any violations of the cease fire agreements and what steps would you take to ensure a lasting and durable resolution to this conflict?

b. The Republic of Armenia and Republic of Azerbaijan recently agreed to increase monitoring and introduce a neutral investigating mechanism to stop further violations. Azerbaijan has since blocked and delayed these measures and continues to target civilians in the region. What steps will you take to ensure the timely implementation of these measures?

The frozen conflict in Nagorno Karabakh is a threat to stability in the region and U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will work with the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a peaceful, long-term solution that allows for stability and prosperity in the region. The first step in this process must be to build trust by ensuring that all agreements between the parties are respectedç

43. As a nation founded upon the principle of democratic self-determination, is it your view that U.S. policy should respect this right for all peoples, including those of Nagorno Karabakh?

The frozen conflict in Nagorno Karabakh is a threat to stability in the region and U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will work with the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a peaceful, long-term solution that allows for stability and prosperity in the region. The first step in this process must be to build trust by ensuring that all agreements between the parties are respected.

44. This year will mark the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The Genocide has been recognized by President Ronald Reagan and25 countries. Pope Francis has also publicly affirmed the Armenian Genocide stating that it is an open wound that must be healed.

a. What steps will you take to end denial of the Armenian Genocide and reaffirm the proud chapter in U.S. diplomatic history that helped save the survivors of the first genocide of the twentieth century?

b. The Turkish government continues to keep laws on the books criminalizing the discussion of the Armenian Genocide. What steps will you take to ensure that all people in Turkey have the right to free speech and will be protected when speaking about the Armenian Genocide?

c. Outside of concerns regarding Turkey's threats of retaliation, do you see any other reason that you might oppose a forthright American affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, a recognition that has been made by previous U.S. administrations?

d. If the government of Turkey were to finally recognize the Armenian Genocide, would you recommend that the U.S. government also formally acknowledge this crime as genocide?

The tragic atrocities of 1915 remain a painful issue in the relationship between Armenia and Turkey, and it is in the U.S. interest to ensure peaceful and stable relations between the two countries. If confirmed, I will support a full accounting of the historical events and an open dialogue between Armenia and Turkey in the interest of regional stability.

45. The United States has spoken clearly about the need for Turkey to lift its more than 20-year blockade of Armenia and establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, both of which are also required under international treaties. Despite Turkey's public commitment to normalize relations without preconditions as evidenced by the signing of the Protocols between Turkey and Armenia under international auspices in October of 2009, the Turkish government failed to do so. What steps would you take to ensure that Turkey ends its blockade of Armenia?

It is in the interest of the United States to ensure a stable and peaceful relationship between Armenia and Turkey. If confirmed, I will support the normalized diplomatic, economic, and civil society relations between Armenia and Turkey in my ongoing discussions with the two parties. U.S. leadership and re-engagement in the region at large will help build the necessary trust to improve relations between Armenia and Turkey.

46. What specific policy priorities would you consider to expand trade and investment between the United States and Armenia?

It is in the interest of the United States to promote mutually beneficial trade between the United States and Armenia. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Trade Representative and other relevant parts of the U.S. government to explore the possibilities to expand trade and investment between the United States und Armenia in a way that creates U.S. jobs and economic growth.

47. What measures will you take to safeguard Christian and other minority communities facing persecution in the Middle East and elsewhere?

The persecution of Christians and other minority communities in the Middle East and elsewhere is a serious issue requiring immediate U.S. engagement and leadership. If confirmed, I will stress the importance of religious tolerance and the protection of religious minorities to our global partners. Religious tolerance promotes stability and should be an important element of our overall strategy for the Middle East as well as other regions.

48. Will you make additional assistance available to Armenia to help address the compelling humanitarian need of accommodating the third largest per capita influx of refugees in Europe fleeing from the continued unrest and violence in Syria?

I recognize the tremendous challenges facing Armenia due to the influx of refugees. If confirmed, I will work with our European partners to ensure cost-effective assistance to Armenia as part of a broader strategy for handling the Syrian refugee issue and protecting U.S. national security interests.

49. What steps will you take to ensure the return of the Armenian Church in Diyarbakir, which Turkey has seized?

Religious freedom and the protection of private property are core American principles that contribute to peace and stability worldwide. If confirmed, I will work with our Turkish allies to ensure protection of religious minorities and their property rights, including the Armenian community in Turkey.

About the author:

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