1 IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES 2 - - - - - - - - - - - - x 3 BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, : 4 ET AL., : 5 Petitioners : No. 15-423 6 v. : 7 HELMERICH & PAYNE INTERNATIONAL : 8 DRILLING CO., ET AL., : 9 Respondents. : - - - - - - - - - - - - x 10 11 Washington, D.C. 12 Wednesday, November 2, 2016 13 14 The above-entitled matter came on for oral argument before the Supreme Court of the United States 15 16 at 10:03 a.m. 17 APPEARANCES: CATHERINE E. STETSON, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf 18 of the Petitioners. 19 20 ELAINE J. GOLDENBERG, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor 21 General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for 22 United States, as amicus curiae, supporting the 23 Petitioners. 24 CATHERINE M.A. CARROLL, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on 25 behalf of the Respondents.

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1 PROCEEDINGS 2 (10:03 a.m.) 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument 4 first this morning in Case No. 15-423, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela v. Helmerich & Payne International 5 6 Drilling Company. 7 Ms. Stetson. 8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF CATHERINE E. STETSON 9 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS 10 MS. STETSON: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 11 please the Court: 12 The exceptionally low Bell v. Hood pleading 13 standard under which a plaintiff's claims will survive 14 dismissal for lack of subject matter jurisdiction as long as they are not wholly insubstantial or frivolous 15 16 has no application in a Foreign Sovereign Immunities 17 Act. Subject matter jurisdiction bespeaks the court's power to decide a case, and before a court in the United 18 19 States may exercise that power over a foreign sovereign, 20 it needs to decide that that sovereign is not entitled 21 to immunity. "Decide" comes from Section 1602 of 22 Title 28. That phrase "not entitled to immunity comes 23 from Section 1330. What that means in practice is what this Court has explained in Verlinden, which is that a 24 court presented with a Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act 25

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claim against a sovereign must decide at this threshold
 of the litigation, must satisfy itself that jurisdiction
 exists.

JUSTICE KENNEDY: I take it there will be instances, or there could be instances in which the court finds that there is jurisdiction, that there is no immunity, and then as the case develops in the fact finding stages that, you know, I've made a mistake; there's immunity here. That could happen.

MS. STETSON: It could conceivably happen, Your Honor. It generally does not happen for a couple reasons. The first is that immunity is -- unless it is pressed by the sovereign at the beginning, it's considered to be waived. So in circumstances where a sovereign, for example, doesn't raise a factual challenge --

17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In my -- my hypothetical, 18 it is raised; the judge rules against it, and especially 19 in a case like this where there's, I think, a foreign 20 subsidiary that's incorporated in domestic -domestically in Venezuela, then there might be questions 21 22 of the extent of overlapping management and so forth. It seems to me that that might -- if there's an initial 23 finding of no immunity, the judge might, in the course 24 25 of hearing the case on the merits that, you know, really

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there's immunity here. That's -- that's possible. 1 2 MS. STETSON: It's certainly possible. I 3 think the more problematic issue is what happened here, though, which is that the D.C. Circuit completed --4 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: This is the opposite, 6 where they didn't know. 7 MS. STETSON: That's -- that's precisely right, that the D.C. Circuit here concluded that because 8 9 there might be not be immunity, what it said was at this 10 stage of the litigation, it was permitting the claims against the sovereign to go forward. 11 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I think -- I think what 13 you have described sounds to me like the 12(b)(6) 14 standard, that is have you stated a claim that would entitle you to relief under this statute. So to the 15 16 extent that I comprehend your position, it's -- there's 17 no counterpart to 12(b)(1). There's no discrete 12(b)(1), 12(b)(6) standard. It's one and the same. 18 19 It's the 12(b)(6) standard. 20 MS. STETSON: Well, Justice Ginsburg, I'm not -- I'm not sure that this case blends those two 21 22 standards, and that's -- in that way. Here's what I'd 23 say. With respect to a 12(b)(1) motion to dismiss for lack of subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to the 24 FSIA, what the court is required to do then is to turn 25

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| 1  | to what this Court has described as all of those         |  |
|----|--|--|
| 2  | substantive, detailed Federal standards that are         |  |
| 3  | essentially baked into the jurisdictional standard       |  |
| 4  | itself. So for purposes of establishing jurisdiction in  |  |
| 5  | a FSIA case, you certainly would bring, and we did       |  |
| 6  | bring, that motion under section 12(b)(1). But what you  |  |
| 7  | do then is not just to apply this loose Bell v. Hood     |  |
| 8  | standard. What you do is you apply the relevant          |  |
| 9  | substantive Federal standards that are included in those |  |
| 10 | jurisdictional provisions.                               |  |
| 11 | Now  |  |
| 12 | JUSTICE GINSBURG: And how did and how                    |  |
| 13 | would that differ from a 12(b)(6) inquiry?               |  |
| 14 | MS. STETSON: It differs in a number of                   |  |
| 15 | different respects, most importantly procedurally. With  |  |
| 16 | respect to a 12(b)(6) inquiry, of course a sovereign who |  |
| 17 | loses a 12(b)(6) challenge wouldn't be entitled to the   |  |
| 18 | immediate interlocutory appeal.                          |  |
| 19 | JUSTICE GINSBURG: I was                                  |  |
| 20 | JUSTICE ALITO: I don't I don't quite                     |  |
| 21 | understand that. Why would that not be so? If this       |  |
| 22 | immunity is analogous, for example, to absolute a        |  |
| 23 | category of absolute immunity for a government official  |  |
| 24 | or qualified immunity for a government official, those   |  |
| 25 | are also immunities from suit; and therefore, under the  |  |

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1 collateral-order doctrine, an adverse ruling could be 2 appealed.

3 MS. STETSON: True, but -- true, but -inasmuch as immunity is at stake, it -- it could be 4 appealed. But in a way, that proves our point rather 5 than the converse, which is if a right is so important 6 7 that it is entitled to -- the sovereign is entitled to take an immediate appeal, it should be tested with 8 9 something other than the Bell v Hood standard. 10 But more on point --11 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, no. Because you could 12 test -- you could determine jurisdiction under the Bell 13 v. Hood standard, and then you can move to dismiss the complaint under 12(b)(6). And if you're unsuccessful, 14 you could take appeal under the collateral-order 15 16 doctrine. Why doesn't that serve interest just as well, 17 without producing some of the unfortunate -- arguably unfortunate collateral consequences of labeling this as 18 19 jurisdictional, among which is the fact that this Court 20 would have to decide all sorts of questions even if they are not contested by the parties? 21 22 MS. STETSON: So two responses, Your Honor. 23 The first is, with respect to that last point, the questions that the Court has to decide are the questions 24

25 that the sovereign asks it to decide. It is the

1 sovereign's prerogative in an FSIA case to call either 2 the factual or the legal predicates into question. 3 JUSTICE ALITO: But what is the basis for 4 that? They're just -- you may waive immunity, but is there a statutory provision that supports what you just 5 6 said? 7 MS. STETSON: Yes. Section 1330. 8 JUSTICE ALITO: And what does it say? 9 MS. STETSON: It says that a court must 10 decide whether the sovereign is not entitled to immunity before jurisdiction can lie. And that's one of the 11 12 curious things about this --13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Wait. Where does it say 14 that in the text of the statute? 15 MS. STETSON: In the last provision of 16 Section 1330A, that place. 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, the section -- I mean, 18 the question here is -- that seems right. The question 19 is whether a sovereign is entitled to immunity, and I 20 quess I -- I would ask you to look at the statute, and 21 to try to explain to me your reading of the language in 22 the statute. So the statute says "a foreign state shall 23 not be immune... in any case... in which rights in property taken in violation of international law are in 24 25 issue." Right?

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1 Now, it seems to me that you are reading 2 this statute as if it said that a foreign state shall not be immune in any case in which rights and property 3 have been taken in violation of international law. 4 In other words, you're taking out the "are in issue" 5 6 language and suggesting that the guestion at the 7 threshold is -- is -- is whether the rights and property, in fact, have been taken, rather than whether 8 9 they are in dispute.

10 MS. STETSON: Justice Kagan, I think the --I think the answer has to do with that phrase "are in 11 12 issue" that you've focused on. For a right to be in 13 issue, it actually has to be a right. And as we were 14 explaining to the district court in the D.C. Circuit below, with respect to the parent company who is the 15 16 plaintiff in this case, that parent company possesses no 17 right. The right is not in issue if your right exists.

JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, what -- what is left to be in issue, if you've already decided that there is a right on property and it has -- and that it has been taken in violation of international law?

MS. STETSON: With respect to a claim against a sovereign under that particular expropriation provision, depending on the nature of the claim, if it's grounded in a common law claim, there could be other

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1 defenses that could be raised. But if it's grounded as 2 this one was, which curiously, just tracks the language 3 of the jurisdictional statute, "a taking in violation of international law," it is conceivable if you test kind 4 of the very end of that hypothetical, that you could 5 6 imagine a circumstance where the merits get bound up in 7 the jurisdictional inquiry. The problem with the Respondent's position on that, though, is this Court 8 9 already explained that that is okay. 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: I think I'm just -- I'm just missing what -- and maybe I'm just missing it. But 11 12 this -- it seems it's a funny way of writing this if 13 you're right. If you're right, Congress should just 14 have said, well, a foreign State shall not be immune in any case in which there's a right in property taken --15 16 that has been taken in violation of international law. 17 What is the "are in issue" language doing, except to say that the inquiry is whether there is a 18 dispute about whether there's a violation of 19 international law? 20 21 MS. STETSON: So two things. The first is 22 for there to be a dispute, there has to be a right, and it has to have been taken in violation of international 23 law. The problem with the Respondent's reading -- and 24 25 you can see this at pages 3 and again at 18 and again at

1 24 of their brief, they insert the word "claim" at 2 issue, which of course, the statute doesn't -- doesn't 3 contain.

JUSTICE ALITO: Would it be -- would it be 4 meaningful to say that when a Bivens action is filed 5 6 with jurisdiction predicated on the arising under 7 statute, a constitutional right is in issue? 8 MS. STETSON: It would certainly be 9 reasonable to say that in the abstract, but here's --10 here's the problem with -- with engaging too much on, I think, "are in issue." We have explained why the right 11 must presently be in issue. There must be a right. 12 13 We've also explained why there has to be a "taken in 14 violation of international law." For purposes of expropriation, that is a particularly important phrase. 15 16 The issue with reading Federal 17 jurisdictional statutes, as this Court explained just last term in Manning, is that we're already, for the 18 19 most part, past the point where we are heeling too 20 closely to the text. We look at the dictates of reason 21 and coherence and judicial policy. JUSTICE ALITO: Well, this is a curious 22

23 argument for you to be raising, because your prime -24 your lead argument is that the text indisputably
25 supports your position, is it not?

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1 MS. STETSON: Our lead argument certainly 2 depends on the text. But my point is the text is not --3 JUSTICE ALITO: You just -- you just said we shouldn't pay that much attention to what the text says. 4 5 MS. STETSON: Our text is not our only 6 anchor, is my point. The anchor is, if you get to the 7 point where we are having this intense discussion about "in issue" -- and this has actually come up before in 8 the Alahi case. There was a colloquy between the 9 10 majority and the concurrence, and the concurring Justice said, it must be acknowledged that the words in issue 11 12 don't lend themselves to an interpretation that might be 13 infallible. 14 So what you look at is the context from which that decision came. 15 16 JUSTICE BREYER: So how does it work with 17 diversity? We have a complaint; Petitioner or plaintiff, I'm from Kentucky. Plaintiff, my defendant 18 19 is from Illinois. Okay? Filed. Response: Hey, I'm 20 not from Illinois. I'm from Kentucky too. 21 All right. How does the judge -- what does 22 the judge do? 23 MS. STETSON: The judge in a diversity case will look outside the pleading in that particular 24 25 instance, take evidence as to whether or not --

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1 JUSTICE BREYER: When? 2 MS. STETSON: -- that defendant is or is not 3 from -- I'm sorry. When? JUSTICE BREYER: When? 4 5 MS. STETSON: At the beginning. At the 6 jurisdictional stage. 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. And --8 MS. STETSON: Under 12(b)(1). 9 JUSTICE BREYER: -- that's to determine if 10 there is jurisdiction? 11 MS. STETSON: Correct. JUSTICE BREYER: And you're saying that 12 13 should be the same here? 14 MS. STETSON: I'm saying that it should be the same here, both with respect to the claim we're 15 16 bringing right now, which is to the legal sufficiency of 17 the complaint: Did that parent company have a right? Was that Venezuelan subsidiary's company right taken in 18 violation of international law? 19 20 That sufficiency of the pleading 21 jurisdictional challenge is guintessentially --JUSTICE KAGAN: Your response to Justice 22 23 Breyer suggests that it's not only a question of legal 24 sufficiency -- and I think that the government 25 specifically says this in its brief --

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1 MS. STETSON: Yeah. 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- that you would also have a factual -- any factual disputes addressed at that 3 4 time. So if there are factual disputes, you know, there's -- there's a pleading. It's -- it is legally 5 6 sufficient, but a defendant can come in and say, well, 7 it might be legally sufficient, but the facts are just wrong. And you would have that at the jurisdictional 8 9 stage too; is that right? 10 MS. STETSON: We would indeed. And in fact, the way that this particular set of circumstances came 11 12 about, the parties agreed that in order to avoid what 13 might not be necessary, which was jurisdictional discovery, the parties would -- these defendants would 14 front load the legal sufficiency questions before we 15 16 get to --17 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So if we take --JUSTICE KAGAN: So I'm going to ask you --18 19 I'm sorry. 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Justice Breyer. 21 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I was thinking, I 22 can't get my hands around this case, or my mind around 23 it, because it -- it seems to me it's really about a practical matter. And the practical matter is when 24 should the judge in this kind of case decide whether or 25

not there really is a claim here, a legitimate claim
 they can win on that falls within the category. Rather
 like diversity.

And the answer is, it's a foreign country, 4 5 and sovereignty is at issue. Do it as soon as you can 6 in an ordinary case. But if you have something special, 7 maybe you can't. Judge, you run your own trial, but keep that in mind. We don't want to have foreign 8 9 countries in our courts when there isn't really a -- a 10 pretty good case against them, and maybe a winning case. 11 So decide this thing quickly, decide it up 12 front. But to start talking about jurisdiction and 13 these things, I can't really understand as well as, say, Justice Ginsburg, who taught jurisdiction. And -- and 14 I -- why are we in this? Why don't we just give them 15

16 that practical advice?

17 MS. STETSON: I think that the reason that 18 the practical advice might not be enough is -- is 19 another response to a question that Justice Alito posed 20 to me earlier, which is for purposes of the FSIA, there 21 is a significant difference between a court exercising 22 its power over a foreign sovereign, which is the nature 23 of subject matter jurisdiction, and deciding whether it can exercise that power over foreign sovereign. 24

25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What if the Court has to

1 decide whether it has jurisdiction?

MS. STETSON: It does indeed. So for purposes of this, that means that the foreign sovereign can present itself to the court and can challenge, whether it's on the sufficiency of the pleadings or on the facts, can challenge the basis for that jurisdiction.

8 And yes, there will be circumstances where a 9 sovereign comes in and makes legal challenges, such as 10 we have made here, and factual challenges such as might 11 be made --

12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It just seems a little 13 bit like an academic exercise to me for the following 14 It appears to me -- and you're going to have to reason: correct me if I'm wrong -- that on the legal question, 15 16 the sufficiency of the complaint, that the district 17 court said, and the court of appeals approved the finding, that there was a sufficient allegations of fact 18 to state a claim. So I don't think that that ruling 19 20 depended on facts; it depended on a legal conclusion. 21 MS. STETSON: Justice Sotomayor, that --22 that is correct in this respect. We decided, along with 23 the respondents, that we would back load any factual challenges to jurisdiction. So for example, the -- a 24 25 typical factual challenge would be you've attempted to

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sue me in U.S. court; I don't have a commercial nexus
with the U.S.

3 These challenges, though -- and you can see this best in the D.C. Circuit's panel opinion -- these 4 challenges are challenges of law to the sufficiency of 5 6 the pleadings. Does a parent company have a right in 7 its subsidiary's property that it can allege here? Does a subsidiary, a Venezuelan company, have a property that 8 9 was taken in violation of international law? 10 What the D.C. Circuit concluded in those circumstances, and what the words it used at Joint 11 Appendix 183 were, "At this stage, those pleadings were 12 13 passable to get past the jurisdictional standards." 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. What more do you want? I mean, it seems as if you're asking us for 15 16 an advisory opinion of what the Court's next step should 17 be with respect to what issues of discovery it should have on other legal issues, not on this one. It's 18 19 already ruled that this complaint is sufficient as a 20 matter of law, that this parent, under international law -- I'm not even questioning whether it's right or 21 22 wrong. I know you say it's wrong and there's a serious 23 issue of whether it's right or wrong. But are you asking us for an advisory opinion as to what the next 24 25 steps are for the court below?

1

MS. STETSON: No.

2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Because we haven't 3 granted cert on a legal question.

MS. STETSON: I -- I agree with that, 4 5 Justice Sotomayor. I'm not asking for an advisory 6 opinion at all. In fact, what you just said about not 7 being sure whether it's right or wrong that the parent company has a right, that's the problem. The problem is 8 9 that when you're talking about jurisdiction at an FSIA 10 case, you can't just decide that the plaintiff might have stated a jurisdictional predicate. You have to 11 decide whether that right actually exists. 12

13 So what the D.C. Circuit did here, applying 14 that low Bell v. Hood standard, is to say there is no 15 precedent that completely and inexorably forecloses the 16 plaintiffs from bringing this --

17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Under the low Bell v. Hood standard, as far as I know, and I think they would 18 19 be -- bears this out, it's not just 1331. That's the 20 general rule, that to get into court -- just to get your toe in the door, all you have to do is -- you don't have 21 to show that you have stated a claim at that point. You 22 23 just have to meet the threshold jurisdictional standard. 24 It's -- it's just very strange. Putting

25 together everything you said, what I come out with is in

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1 order to have jurisdiction, you have to prevail on the 2 merits, which is a -- a facts dispute. They get 3 front-loaded, too. So everything is decided under the 4 jurisdictional head. 5 MS. STETSON: But Justice Ginsburg, the 6 solution, when it comes to preserving that foreign 7 sovereign's dignity, is not to dilute the FSIA's jurisdictional standard. It is, if necessary, to make 8 9 those merits determinations --10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The question is what is the standard? 11 12 MS. STETSON: The standard is --13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it the standard that is -- is not this peculiar to 1331. It is the general 14 standard for how you determine whether you have -- you 15 16 pass the 12(b)(1) threshold. 17 MS. STETSON: But the standard is the standard that this Court articulated in Verlinden, which 18 19 is that you look at the substantive jurisdictional 20 standards that are in the FSIA, and you decide whether or not they have been satisfied. Not whether they may 21 22 be satisfied, which is the Bell v. Hood frivolousness 23 D.C. circuit standard, but whether they have been satisfied. Was there a rate -- right? Was it taken in 24 25 violation of international law? That is the difference

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between hypothesizing jurisdiction and actually deciding 1 2 it. 3 I'd like to reserve my time if I could. 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel. 5 Ms. Goldenberg. ORAL ARGUMENT OF ELAINE J. GOLDENBERG 6 7 FOR UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING THE PETITIONERS 8 9 MS. GOLDENBERG: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court: 10 I'd like to start by talking about the way 11 12 that we read the text of this provision, because I think it's a little bit different than the way that 13 Petitioners read it, but not in a way that changes the 14 bottom line in this case. 15 16 So the statute says "Rights and property 17 taken in violation of international law are an issue." What has to be an issue there are rights and 18 19 property. And as we know from this Court's decision in 20 Permanent Mission, that means that at the jurisdictional stage, you have to figure out whether the kind of right 21 22 that's being asserted falls within the federal law 23 definition of rights and property within the FSIA. 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: And you think it's -- it's 25 taken in violation of international law, and that's also

1 a predicate for what's in issue; is that right? 2 MS. GOLDENBERG: I don't think that "in 3 issue" actually applies to "taken in violation of 4 international law." I think that "taken in violation of 5 international law" is describing and defining the kind 6 of property that you have to be talking about in this 7 case.

8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I quess the question 9 is, though, what's left to be in issue? If you're right 10 that the question of whether there is a right in property is decided at the jurisdictional stage, both 11 12 law and fact, and if you are right that the question of 13 whether that right in property has been taken in violation of international law is also decided, both law 14 and fact, at the jurisdictional stage, then what is the 15 16 issue, the in issue, that's left for the merits?

17 MS. GOLDENBERG: So I disagree with part of 18 what you said. I do think that the question of whether 19 property was taken in violation of international law is 20 something has to be decided at the jurisdictional stage 21 in law, where there's a challenge like there is here, or 22 in fact, if there's a factual challenge. But with 23 respect to rights and property, those can be an issue. So I don't think you need to decide at the 24 jurisdictional stage whether or not the plaintiff 25

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1 actually possesses the right that they claim. 2 So, for instance, if you had a plaintiff who came in and said, I have a deed to this property and it 3 was taken away from me, and the foreign State wanted to 4 come back and say, no, you don't, this deed is a 5 forgery, you never had any relationship to this property 6 7 at all, that would be in issue and that would be 8 something that could be decided at the merits. 9 The rights and property question that has to 10 be decided at the jurisdictional stage is the one that this Court decided in Permanent Mission, which is, is 11 this right that's being asserted here something that 12 13 falls within the definition of rights and property that the FSIA put forward? And so in Permanent Mission, the 14 question was: Is this asserted-lien right a right in 15 16 property, even though it's not a right to possession of 17 the property or to ownership of the property --JUSTICE KAGAN: I quess I'm not 18 19 understanding the distinction. Could you -- in this 20 case, what would be the first question that would be the threshold question as to a right in property, and what 21 22 would be the question that would get diverted to the 23 merit stage? 24 MS. GOLDENBERG: In this case, I think the 25 question mainly is the question about whether what's

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1 being asserted is a right in property. Here, it's a 2 question of whether a shareholder's rights in the 3 company that they own shares in are something that are 4 rights in the property of that subsidiary company, the company that the shareholder has some corporate 5 6 ownership interest in. And that is a legal question 7 that could be answered at the jurisdictional stage. And here, we don't know the answer to that question, because 8 9 all the --

10 JUSTICE KAGAN: And what's the question that 11 would be answered at the merit stage?

12 MS. GOLDENBERG: The question that would be 13 answered at the merit stage here, I don't think there actually would be much dispute on the merits. But, for 14 instance, in a case like this, you could have a dispute 15 16 about whether the plaintiff was actually a shareholder 17 or was not a shareholder. Or in the example I gave before, which I think would be the more common 18 19 situation, whether the person actually had a deed to 20 that property, or whether they didn't have a deed. 21 JUSTICE KAGAN: Yeah, but they --22 JUSTICE BREYER: You're -- actually, I'm 23 getting pushed the other way. I came in on your side, but I swing back and forth. 24 25 MS. GOLDENBERG: Oh, dear.

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| 1  | JUSTICE BREYER: But this is what's really                |  |
|----|--|--|
| 2  | bothering me: It sounds, the more I hear you speak,      |  |
| 3  | that there isn't a good thing that we're going to write  |  |
| 4  | in this case that isn't going to get everybody good and  |  |
| 5  | mixed up, because it reminds me of a case where we set a |  |
| 6  | kind of order of battle, as first you have to decide the |  |
| 7  | jurisdiction, and then you decide this. And I've never   |  |
| 8  | received so much criticism from the district judges as   |  |
| 9  | for that case.   |  |
| 10 | MS. GOLDENBERG: Well, also                               |  |
| 11 | JUSTICE BREYER: Because they tell us that                |  |
| 12 | cases differ a lot one from the other. Let us do what's  |  |
| 13 | practical in the circumstances.                          |  |
| 14 | There are three kinds of issues that can                 |  |
| 15 | come up. There's a set of facts. Those facts might be    |  |
| 16 | in dispute. If you find one way, there is the            |  |
| 17 | jurisdiction. Find the other way, there isn't.           |  |
| 18 | There is a second kind of issue: that we                 |  |
| 19 | take the facts as given. Do they, in fact, fall within   |  |
| 20 | the definition of this statute? And that can even exist  |  |
| 21 | in a diversity case. Somebody's from Guam or             |  |
| 22 | somebody you know, that's the kind of does it            |  |
| 23 | really fall within, or is it just possible that it falls |  |
| 24 | within Federal law arising under diversity or this?      |  |
| 25 | And then there's the third kind of case:                 |  |

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1 Are you so far out that it isn't even hopeful that you 2 could get into the court on this? 3 Now, if you take the third, which is where we are, you leave it up to the district judge to decide 4 5 the other two when and if it's most suitable in the 6 case. If you don't, I'm worried. 7 MS. GOLDENBERG: But in that circumstance, you are asserting jurisdiction over a foreign State 8 9 based on a nonfrivolous allegation, and that is 10 something that doesn't respect the foreign State's dignity --11 12 JUSTICE BREYER: Because you are, in fact, 13 asserting jurisdiction over somebody who's from Guam.

Because, in fact, you'd have to go into the birth conditions and all kinds of things. The judge wants to put that off for a while because of other things that might dispose of the case.

18 MS. GOLDENBERG: Understood. But this is a 19 special context in which there is a real dignitary harm 20 to the foreign State if the courts of another country sit in judgment as to something that foreign State --21 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But how often -- how 23 often is that a serious concern? I mean, I understand that the reason you're concerned is that you don't want 24 25 a reciprocal burden imposed on the United States when

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1 it's haled into court in a foreign country. But does it 2 really make a difference to a foreign sovereign whether 3 it litigates these issues under 12(b)(1), as opposed to 4 12(b)(6)? 5 MS. GOLDENBERG: It does make a difference 6 to the foreign sovereign for the reason that I gave. It 7 makes a difference to the United States when we're sued in other courts, whether there's a dispute at the 8 9 jurisdictional stage or later --10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But why is that? Why is that such a significant issue? 11 12 MS. GOLDENBERG: Well, as I said, there is 13 something that is a real affront to a foreign sovereign, 14 or can be an affront to a foreign sovereign if another court sits in judgment of something that foreign 15 16 sovereign has done. And I think that's --17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But it's going to be 18 sitting -- it's going to be sitting in judgment, one way 19 or another. It's just a question whether it's in the 20 context of 12(b)(1) or 12(b)(6). 21 MS. GOLDENBERG: Well --22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I can't believe it 23 makes a difference when the ambassador from whatever country calls home and says, well, I've got bad news, 24 we're being sued in Federal court. But don't worry, 25

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1 it's only under 12(b)(1), not 12(b)(6). 2 MS. GOLDENBERG: It does make a difference. 3 And I think it's particularly sensitive with respect to the expropriation exception, actually. And that's why 4 5 taking in violation of international law is such a critical threshold issue that has to be decided at the 6 7 jurisdictional stage --8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is there a difference in 9 expropriation and conversion? 10 MS. GOLDENBERG: Well, I do think it's an important point that here, the underlying cause of 11 action could be conversion, if someone brought that kind 12 13 of cause of auction which wouldn't overlap exactly with the jurisdictional determination here. You would still 14 have to allege the jurisdictional prerequisites were 15 16 met, the jurisdictional requirements of the statute. 17 In an expropriation case --18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Tell us when the 19 government arrives at this position, because you know we 20 have an amicus brief, people. 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Can you just finish? 22 Expropriation is different because? 23 MS. GOLDENBERG: Expropriation is different because this is a public act of a foreign sovereign 24 25 taken in its own territory with respect to property in

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1 its own territory. And that is something that, in the 2 normal course, is going to be a matter for the courts in 3 that territory to resolve.

4 The very thing that makes it appropriate for the courts of another country to sit in judgment on that 5 kind of act is that there has been a violation of 6 7 international law. And then you look at the nexus requirements in the expropriation exception, and those 8 9 show that the property has some connection to the United 10 States, which makes it appropriate for United States courts to sit in judgment. 11

12 And there actually have been real problems, 13 real sensitivities, real foreign relations concerns that 14 have been raised in this area, stemming from the D.C. Circuit's 2008 decision in the Chabad case, which is 15 16 where the D.C. Circuit first announced the rule that 17 we're considering here. That's an expropriation case against Russia. The D.C. Circuit decided there was a 18 19 nonfrivolous allegation that the property had been taken in violation of international law. 20

At that point, Russia, feeling that it was immune and it hadn't gotten a full determination of its immunity, dropped out of the case, and the district court started imposing sanctions of \$50,000 a day. In response, Russia initiated an expropriation action

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1 against us in Moscow and started imposing \$50,000-a-day 2 sanctions on the United States.

3 So that could happen -- something like that 4 could conceivably happen, even under the standard that 5 we're talking about, that a foreign state could take 6 offense. But this is a very sensitive issue. And there 7 are real concerns here.

8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Jurisdiction in the case 9 of Bank Markazi. When the court issued its decision in 10 that case, Iran filed a suit against the United States 11 in the World Court.

12 MS. GOLDENBERG: There are real reciprocity 13 concerns in this area. And I think Congress was cognizant of those. That's part of the purposes of the 14 FSIA. And so that is the reason why the taking in 15 16 violation of international law, the words "in issue" 17 don't apply to that. It doesn't say whether it is in issue that the property was taken in violation of 18 international law. 19

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then can you --MS. GOLDENBERG: The question is --JUSTICE GINSBURG: Then can you -- I read the dark green brief. It states a strong case in opposition to the position you're presenting by people who were once part of the government. So I would like

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1 to know when the position that you're now taking, when 2 did that become the government's position? 3 MS. GOLDENBERG: I don't know that I can 4 specify a date, but I think it has always been the 5 government's position and the State Department's 6 position that the actual requirements of the exceptions 7 to immunity need to be satisfied at the threshold, as 8 this court said in Verlinden; otherwise, the grant of 9 immunity becomes much less meaningful to the foreign 10 state. 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. Are you 12 arguing -- what's important? A 12(b)(6) --MS. GOLDENBERG: No. I --13 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- standard, or are you in agreement with the Petitioner that all of the factual 15 16 disputes have to be decided? You seem to be saying no 17 to the second. 18 MS. GOLDENBERG: The factual disputes with 19 respect to whether the property has been taken in violation of international law --20 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Exactly. 22 MS. GOLDENBERG: -- if there are any, and if 23 the foreign State chooses to raise those factual disputes, do need to be decided so that you can figure 24 25 out whether you have the right kind of property in the

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1 case. 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel. 3 Ms. Carroll. ORAL ARGUMENT OF CATHERINE M.A. CARROLL 4 5 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS 6 MS. CARROLL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 7 please the Court: 8 The jurisdictional test under the 9 expropriation exception turns on what is, quote, "in 10 issue" in the suit. In other words, what is the dispute 11 about? 12 That language contrasts starkly with 13 language that Congress used in an analogous provision of 14 the FSIA Section 1610(a)(3). And, Justice Kagan, this goes to your earlier discussion regarding the meaning of 15 16 "in issue." 17 Section 1610(a)(3), which is reprinted at page 28 of the Addendum to the blue brief, Section 1610 18 19 is the section that governs immunity from attachment and 20 execution, and it includes a provision for expropriation cases. That language says there's -- that there's an 21 22 exception to immunity where there's been a judgment, quote, establishing that "rights in property," quote, 23 24 has been "taken in violation of international law." 25 So when Congress wanted to make the fact of

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1 a taking in violation of international law a 2 jurisdictional fact that must be resolved at the outset, 3 it knew how to say that, and it used those words in 4 1610. 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's not the 6 outset. That's a question of execution of a judgment 7 that's already been in place. 8 This is the issue we're talking about here, 9 is sort of the commencement of -- of litigation. 10 MS. CARROLL: That's correct. And Congress used very different language in 1605(a)(3). 11 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Are you saying that 13 immunity issues are not generally jurisdictional? 14 MS. CARROLL: No, we are saying the 15 opposite. 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Immunity issues generally 17 are jurisdictional, are they not? MS. CARROLL: Exactly. The subject matter 18 19 of the court turns on the immunity standard. They are 20 one in the same standard, and that's why all of the 21 court's body of jurisprudence on what does it mean for a 22 court to have jurisdiction over a particular subject matter are relevant here in this case. 23 24 To be sure, there are some kinds of 25 jurisdictional inquiries such as citizenship of the

1 parties in a diversity case; for example, where the 2 facts have to be established at the outset. 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: And you say that for the commercial nexus, right? 4 5 MS. CARROLL: Exactly. The commercial 6 nexus --7 JUSTICE KAGAN: So what is the difference? MS. CARROLL: The difference here is that 8 9 other kinds of jurisdictional provisions don't require 10 the establishment of a fact. They simply require that the plaintiff has asserted a particular type of claim. 11 12 We think the language --13 JUSTICE KAGAN: In other words, you're 14 saying the commercial nexus language, you have to establish the fact early on --15 16 MS. CARROLL: You have to -- yes. 17 JUSTICE KAGAN: -- at the jurisdictional phrase because of the way that's written in the statute. 18 19 MS. CARROLL: Yes. Correct. 20 JUSTICE KAGAN: Because it doesn't have the 21 language. 22 MS. CARROLL: And -- correct. That's 23 correct, and I want to be very clear. The -- there was 24 a reference earlier that our -- our position suggests that a court has to decide whether there might or might 25

1 not be immunity. We don't think that's correct, and 2 that's not the position we've asserted. 3 The Court certainly does, must, assure 4 itself at the outset that an exception applies. The question is, what is the standard that defines --5 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. And the 7 other -- the other statutes you're talking about and the ones set forth in your red brief just seem to me to 8 9 avoid the question, which is whether there's a different 10 approach in the foreign sovereign immunity. 11 Our ambassadors have to go to these other 12 countries and say -- or their ambassadors, you're being 13 sued. You have to come into our courts, even though you're a sovereign. And we don't want you dragging us 14 into your courts, but you have to come in our courts 15 16 because someone has raised a claim that is not wholly 17 insubstantial or frivolous. That's a very low standard in that context. 18 19 MS. CARROLL: Mr. Chief Justice, the 20 Petitioners and the government have cited no other sovereign immunity context in which the standard they 21 22 are proposing applies. To the contrary, as we noted in 23 our brief in suits under the Tucker Act, Bell v. Hood is the applicable standard. The Petitioners cited Land v. 24

25 Dollar in their reply brief. Just two years after that

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1 decision in the Larson case, this Court held that --2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you're talking 3 about the United States sovereign immunity --MS. CARROLL: That --4 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- in -- in the 6 United States courts? 7 MS. CARROLL: Exactly. Where the court held that Bell v. Hood was the applicable standard. So the 8 9 question is why in this one particular area alone would 10 Congress have written a standard that departs from how jurisdictional inquiries are determined in every other 11 12 context including --13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Because there's extreme sensitivity with reference to suing foreign sovereigns. 14 15 MS. CARROLL: Well, I appreciate that 16 question because I think it calls out the implications 17 of the position being advanced by Petitioners and the United States. Because of the mini trial that it 18 19 requires at the outset on the question whether this 20 sovereign has violated international law, under their view, if, as is the case here, the defendants are 21 22 asserting other merits-based legal defenses to the 23 claim, for example, a defense under the act of State doctrine, the court cannot get to those defenses until 24 25 it has decided whether there's been a taking in

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1 violation of international law. The implications of that are -- I think speak for themselves. 2 3 When a court has to say, first, I have to decide has there been a taking in violation of 4 international law, I think, yes, this sovereign has 5 6 violated international law. Now I have jurisdiction to consider whether under the act of State doctrine it's 7 8 not appropriate for me to inquire into the validity of 9 the foreign sovereign's actions. That makes no sense. 10 Under our view and under the application of Bell v. Hood in any other jurisdictional context, the 11 sovereign defendant --12 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry. Why does 14 that make no sense? I mean, you -- you establish jurisdiction, and there's an additional defense. Other 15 16 than that, there's no jurisdiction. I don't see why --17 MS. CARROLL: Well, from the -- from the perspective of protecting the dignity and comity of the 18 19 foreign sovereign that has taken U.S.-owned property in 20 violation of international law, to say that the first 21 decision a court must make is to label the defendant, if 22 the claim holds up, a -- a violator of international law 23 before it can consider any other defenses that might not require that determination I think is not consonant with 24 25 a view that protects the dignity of the sovereign

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1 defendant.

JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Carroll, I -- though I have a good deal of sympathy with the way you read the language, but it does seem to me it gets you into one big problem.

6 So, you know, take a case where there is an 7 arguable claim that there's been a violation of 8 international law, so you would satisfy the Bell v. Hood standard, but then the actual claim that's being made is 9 just a straight conversion claim. So you've -- you've 10 gotten to the merits, but in the merits stage all you're 11 12 talking about is this conversion claim. And so you 13 could be adjudicated guilty even though nobody has 14 decided, in fact, whether you violated international law. And that seems as though it cannot be right. 15 16 MS. CARROLL: Well, I -- I think it probably 17 can't be right, but the reason that it's not right has nothing to do with whether Bell applies. 18

19 Under our view of this statute, Congress and 20 the executive were reacting to a very specific set of 21 problems, and they adopted a very specific solution. 22 They were looking at the Cuban expropriations and other 23 notorious expropriations of property that were affecting 24 U.S. interests where sovereigns were using those 25 expropriations to gain an unfair advantage in the

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| 1  | commercial marketplace. And they wrote a statute that    |
|----|--|
| 2  | said, we want the courthouse doors to be open to those   |
| 3  | kinds of claims; a claim of a taking in violation of     |
| 4  | international law, or a tort claim, the gravamen of      |
| 5  | which is an assertion that the defendant violated        |
| 6  | international law or the defendant's title is no good    |
| 7  | because the property was taken in violation of           |
| 8  | international law. All those are within the scope.       |
| 9  | JUSTICE KAGAN: Do you sorry, I'm sorry.                  |
| 10 | MS. CARROLL: Sorry. A suit that does not                 |
| 11 | actually press a claim of seeking a remedy for a taking  |
| 12 | in violation of international law we think should not be |
| 13 | brought under this statute. This is not the tort         |
| 14 | exception.   |
| 15 | JUSTICE KAGAN: I see. So you think that's                |
| 16 | necessarily a merits issue.                              |
| 17 | MS. CARROLL: We do. Whereas I I                          |
| 18 | understand the Petitioner's and the government's         |
| 19 | position to be that this is simply a jurisdictional      |
| 20 | fact. So long as the plaintiff can show that this        |
| 21 | property was taken at some point by someone from someone |
| 22 | in violation of international law, that opens the door   |
| 23 | to any kind of claim at all so long as it somehow        |
| 24 | implicates   |
| 25 | JUSTICE BREYER: I don't know that that's a               |

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1 different issue, I think. Suppose in a diversity case, 2 A says, I'm from Kentucky. And B says -- and he says B 3 is from Illinois. B files an answer: No, I'm from 4 Kentucky. No diversity. 5 Doesn't the judge normally make that 6 determination right then and there? 7 MS. CARROLL: Yes, with respect --JUSTICE BREYER: Well, then why should it be 8 9 any different here? 10 MS. CARROLL: Because this is not a jurisdictional fact like the citizenship of the parties. 11 12 It's a --13 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, so what? I mean, the reason you do make that right at the beginning, I have 14 always thought, was not a mystical thing. It's because 15 16 you don't want to haul somebody across the country in 17 different places when there isn't even diversity jurisdiction. 18 19 Here, though, the reasoning isn't quite the 20 same. They say, try it out at the beginning whether there is at least a claim here, real claim, that they 21 22 did seize the violation -- they did seize the property, 23 violation of international law. That way we don't bring China or someplace all the way over to the United States 24 25 and cause all kinds of problems without there really

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1 being something. So do it at the beginning, Judge, 2 don't wait till the end of the case. 3 MS. CARROLL: Justice Breyer, Rule 12(b)(6) 4 exists for precisely that purpose, and nothing would have prevented these defendants from proceeding on --5 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So what difference 6 7 does it make? And here I'm --8 MS. CARROLL: Yes. 9 JUSTICE BREYER: -- I'm not asking an 10 argumentative question. I don't know. 11 What difference does it make whether you 12 move under 12(b)(6) or move under 12(b)(1)? 13 MS. CARROLL: I think probably the only 14 significant difference it makes is the difference that Justice Alito referred to earlier, which is the 15 16 implications of taking merits issues and calling them 17 jurisdictional, and those implications are at least 18 among the following: 19 Number one, the arguments can't be weighed. 20 Ms. Stetson is relying on a -- a version of the waiver 21 doctrine that although we as plaintiffs in an FSIA case 22 might be happy with, is not how courts have applied it 23 and not how they've asserted it below. If the sovereign 24 is asserting its immunity, then the court cannot find 25 that immunity has been waived. It must find

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1 jurisdiction under another provision. 2 JUSTICE BREYER: Do we have to -- can we say 3 that -- can we just say -- can we say, look, I guess we couldn't, but -- but I don't care whether it's 12(b)(1) 4 or 12(b)(6). Judge, what you ought to do in such a case 5 6 is try out right at the beginning of the case if it's at 7 all possible whether you have a basis here, the plaintiff, for getting this foreign country into our 8 9 courts. 10 MS. CARROLL: But the consequence of calling it 12(b)(1) is that it is treated as a subject matter 11 jurisdiction question. That means serial interlocutory 12 13 appeals over every new statutory theory -- even if we're 14 just looking at legal sufficiency, defendants can serially raise new statutory arguments that then go up 15 16 and down. 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's go back to Justice Alito's question. 18 19 Why I'm confused by this case is I think 20 both the State Department and your adversary are upset that the court found that there was a viable legal 21 22 argument that a parent could have property interests in 23 the -- in the possessions of a subsidiary. 24 Is that your understanding? 25 MS. CARROLL: With respect, I -- well, I

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1 don't have an understanding about the motivations of why
2 they are upset.

3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I agree.

4 MS. CARROLL: But with respect -- with 5 respect to what the dispute is in the case, what their legal challenge is to the parent's claim, is not about 6 7 the character of the rights as rights in property. The 8 arguments that were made and decided below were the 9 following: The defendants contended that the only 10 property that was taken was property belonging to the subsidiary. The parent doesn't have standing to assert 11 12 those rights. The parent does have its own rights, for 13 example, they own shares in the subsidiary. Their 14 position was not that those rights are not property rights, but that those rights were not taken. 15

16 So there was no dispute about whether those 17 rights at issue are quote/unquote property rights. The dispute is do these two plaintiffs, can they proceed to 18 bring a claim of a violation of international law as a 19 20 result of the uncompensated, discriminatory taking of 21 their property. That is a merits question. And the 22 Court has made clear that in jurisdictional statutes 23 that turn on the nature of the claim, rather than a factual showing, Bell v. Hood is the governing standard 24 25 across those contexts, even when sovereign immunity --

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| 1  | JUSTICE ALITO: The basis of that, what do                |
|----|--|
| 2  | you think you would have to prove? That property was     |
| 3  | taken on the merits, property was taken in violation of  |
| 4  | a customary international law standard, or that having   |
| 5  | established that as the jurisdictional predicate, that   |
| 6  | there was a conversion under the law of whatever         |
| 7  | jurisdiction is chosen?                                  |
| 8  | MS. CARROLL: Our claim is a claim for a                  |
| 9  | taking violation of international law, which has long    |
| 10 | recognized that expropriation must be compensated, they  |
| 11 | must be for a public purpose, and they cannot be         |
| 12 | arbitrary and discriminatory. Those are                  |
| 13 | well-established principles of international law.        |
| 14 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Property of a                     |
| 15 | domestic citizen?  |
| 16 | MS. CARROLL: Our argument on that issue is               |
| 17 | that the Venezuelan incorporation of the subsidiary does |
| 18 | not bar the claim in a situation where the foreign       |
| 19 | sovereign itself deemed that subsidiary to be a foreign  |
| 20 | company, treated it that way, and took its property on   |
| 21 | that purpose. The the court of appeals looked            |
| 22 | closely at that issue. It said the only cases we can     |
| 23 | find there aren't very many, but the ones that are       |
| 24 | out there support this claim. The restatement and other  |
| 25 | commentary support this claim. And Petitioners, quote,   |

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have cited no other contrary authority that forecloses 1 2 the claim. 3 They took a close look at it. If 4 Petitioners wanted to proceed right away to a 12(b)(6)determination, they could have chosen to do that. 5 6 Instead, they wanted --7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Took a close look at it? It was -- I thought it was under the Bell v. Hood 8 9 standard. 10 MS. CARROLL: They -- they did apply Bell v. Hood, but I would submit that the analysis that the 11 12 Court adopted, I think going back to Justice Sotomayor's 13 earlier observation, was a -- a fairly robust 14 determination. And --15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And we did -- we -- we 16 did say -- I forgot the name of the case -- that if 17 there's a 12(b)(1) question and a 12(b)(6), and you think the 12(b)(6) is easy, you still have to decide the 18 19 12(b)(1) first. So you can't substitute the 12(b)(6) as 20 the -- has a claim been stated for 12(b)(1). You have to have the jurisdiction decided first. 21 22 MS. CARROLL: That's -- that's the holding 23 of Your Honor's opinions for the Court in Sinochem and 24 Rudolph, following up on Steel Co. And what those cases 25 recognize, fundamentally, is that determining the legal

1 sufficiency of allegations, even forgetting resolving 2 factual disputes, which Ms. Goldenberg and Ms. Stetson 3 both conceded would have to be resolved at the threshold. But this Court has said, resolving those 4 kinds of claims, even when limited to legal sufficiency, 5 is, itself, an exercise of jurisdiction. In the -- in 6 7 the Court's words, it's vital to establish jurisdiction 8 first before getting to those issues.

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: And if I could go back to 10 Justice Breyer's question. I hate to ask you to repeat 11 yourself, but if I could understand your -- your view of 12 why it matters, is one 12(b)(1) motions, it's -- it's 13 not clear whether one can waive defenses? And what 14 else?

15 MS. CARROLL: So there's the waiver issue, 16 which is the sort of the opportunity for the defendants 17 to continually come up with new theories. Which has occurred in this case when we went back down to the 18 19 district court on remand from the district court, new 20 jurisdictional arguments were made at that time that 21 hadn't been made previously. There's the court's 22 obligation to consider issues sua sponte. This goes to 23 the Court's subject-matter jurisdiction. And as the 24 Court observed in Verlinden, when there has not been a 25 waiver of sovereign immunity, the court must assure

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1 itself that one of the other exceptions applies. And to 2 do that when there are arguments that have been made by 3 the sovereign, or even when there are just doubts in the 4 case, the court must resolve those, because it goes to 5 subject-matter jurisdiction.

6 All of those issues then become the subject, 7 potentially, of interlocutory appeal. And so you end up with a system where these issues are raised, legal 8 9 issues going to the merits, but their whole ball of wax 10 is now being put into the jurisdictional determination, going up and down, back and forth between the district 11 12 court and the circuit. I really am not sure how that 13 serves the sovereign's interests when it means that all 14 of that has to be done before we can get to the straightforward legal merits determinations that -- that 15 16 the court could decide once it concludes that it has 17 jurisdiction.

And I suspect it's for that reason that when 18 19 Congress wrote this language, even though the Bell v. 20 Hood standard had been long established, far before the 21 FSIA was written, Congress didn't write anything in this 22 statute to suggest, we want this one kind of 23 determination, and this one determination only, to be done in a way that differs from how any other kind of 24 jurisdictional determination of this type is made. 25

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JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, it's always a little difficult for one party to tell the other party it doesn't really know its best interests, which is what you're saying. And -- but -- but isn't, part of it is Venezuela said, we don't want to be labeled as violator of international law?

7 MS. CARROLL: I'm -- I'm sure that they don't. I'm tempted to say a lot of things in response 8 9 to that, but I think the -- the most straightforward 10 response is that the Bell v. Hood standard is the one that, I think, is best addressed to that concern, 11 12 because rather than requiring the full-up adjudication 13 of this defendant's status as a violator of 14 international law, it simply applies the same jurisdictional determinations that apply in suits in the 15 16 United States under the Tucker Act, and says, now that 17 we've assured ourself of jurisdiction, what 12(b)(6) arguments would the defendant like to make? 18 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What discovery would you 20 need if they brought this as a 12(b)(6)? If they came 21 in and said, there is no customary international 22 property right of a parent in a subsidiary's property? 23 What discovery would you be entitled to if they took -if they brought a 12(b)(6) motion? 24 25 MS. CARROLL: So I want to be clear about

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1 the discovery necessary under the commercial nexus 2 requirements, and the discovery necessary to show a 3 violation of international law. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm asking a different 4 5 question. What discovery would you seek, or would you be entitled to have, on what disputed issues of fact to 6 7 determine the legal question? 8 MS. CARROLL: Well, the defendants have 9 never moved under Rule 12(b)(6). 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I understand. 11 MS. CARROLL: So I'm not sure what 12 arguments, specifically, they would make. If they were 13 making factual arguments --14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's the one that they proposed to the district court, which was whether 15 16 H&P-IDC has standing to assert a taking in violation of 17 international law on the issue of Venezuela's expropriation of H&P-V's property. 18 19 MS. CARROLL: So that argument was framed as 20 a legal argument. I don't know that it would require 21 any discovery at all. That's why deciding jurisdiction 22 and proceeding to 12(b)(6), I -- I think, you know, 23 again at -- at risk of saying what's good for the other 24 side, I think would serve the comity's interest that's 25 being asserted here, as opposed to a situation where --

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1 let's say you have an expropriation complaint, and maybe 2 the facts of the case are that there was a payment of some compensation, but the question is whether it was 3 4 adequate compensation as international law requires. And maybe even just on the face of the pleadings, or 5 maybe the defendant puts in a factual dispute on that 6 7 score. What that requires, then, is that the court has to have essentially a mini trial on what is the 8 9 valuation of this property. What's it's going concern 10 value under the discounted cash-flow model? What was the value of the compensation provided? Is that 11 12 adequate? All of that has to be decided up front, with 13 the end result being either --

MS. CARROLL: You mean under Petitioner's view, with the end results being either I have no jurisdiction, even though I just conducted this whole trial, or I have jurisdiction but it's jurisdiction only to rule for the plaintiff.

A court under this position -- under their position can never find that it has jurisdiction to issue a merits -- a merits decision in the defendant's favor. That is an unusual jurisdictional rule, and it's not consistent with how Congress and the Executive Branch, when they were looking at these sorts of situations, and wanting to provide an open door to say

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we're not opening the courthouse door only to winning
 claims.

3 They're saying there has been a problem of foreign sovereigns taking property, for discriminatory 4 reasons or without paying for it, using that property to 5 6 gain advantage in the marketplace, and we want the 7 courthouse doors to be open to that. There's no 8 indication in the text, in the structure, or anywhere 9 that says that's supposed to depart from how these 10 decisions are normally made.

And I want to address the Permanent Mission case which Ms. Goldenberg averted to where she, I think, correctly acknowledged that the only issue in that case was the character of the rights in issue as guote/unguote property.

16 There was no issue in that case about 17 whether the plaintiff's claim had any merit to it. The defendants in that case had argued, among other things, 18 19 that they weren't obligated to pay the tax. And the 20 court said, no, we don't address merits questions. The court did consider the character of the -- of the rights 21 22 asserted as rights in property. But because that didn't 23 implicate the merits of the claim, the court had no 24 occasion to consider whether Bell v. Hood applied. 25 And as I mentioned earlier, there is no

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1 similar dispute here in this case because there's not 2 really any dispute about the fact that the parent-owned 3 shares, that those are property rights, and that the allegation is that the entire value and benefit of that 4 5 property interest has been completely destroyed by the defendant's conduct. 6 7 So Permanent Mission simply doesn't speak to any of those -- any of those issues. 8 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about Verlinden? They cite that many times. 10 11 MS. CARROLL: They do, and I -- and I am 12 happy for it, because I think Verlinden supports our 13 position. Verlinden describes the FSIA correctly as a 14 comprehensive, substantive regulation of the amenability of foreign sovereigns to sue in U.S. courts. It sets 15 16 out venue provisions, service of process rules, 17 limitations on damages, rules about attachment of property, and so on. It also imposes substantive 18 19 provisions requiring a connection between the conduct 20 and the United States. That's how the personal 21 jurisdiction elements work. And it also, in this 22 Court's words, include provisions, quote, governing the types of actions for which foreign sovereigns may be 23 24 sued and held liable in U.S. courts. 25 That's exactly what we think is the right

| 1  | reading of this provision, which is it's a provision     |
|----|--|
| 2  | that says if an expropriation and its legality under     |
| 3  | international law are what's at issue, that's what the   |
| 4  | suit is about, and if the commercial nexus requirements  |
| 5  | are met, then the Court has jurisdiction to decide the   |
| 6  | case one way or the other. And the plaintiff might not   |
| 7  | win, but the Court has jurisdiction to decide it. It     |
| 8  | has jurisdiction over the subject matter, and that's all |
| 9  | that's required for the claims to go forward.            |
| 10 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And the if                        |
| 11 | there's a dispute about the commercial nexus, that's     |
| 12 | decided at what stage? 12(b)(1) or 12(b)(6)?             |
| 13 | MS. CARROLL: We believe that has to be                   |
| 14 | decided at 12(b)(1) because it is a factual requirement  |
| 15 | just as, for example, a waiver requirement. But it's     |
| 16 | not unusual to have a jurisdiction provision that        |
| 17 | combines both of those types of elements.                |
| 18 | The diversity statute is one, you know,                  |
| 19 | where the citizenship of the parties has to be           |
| 20 | established. And if there's doubt about it or a dispute  |
| 21 | about it, the Court must decide at 12(b)(1). But, for    |
| 22 | example, the amount in controversy need not be fully     |
| 23 | resolved at the outset.                                  |
| 24 | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's really               |
| 25 | all we're talking about here, and whether the the        |

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1 issues set forth in the statute are ones that should be 2 decided at the early stage or not. And -- and whether 3 it's -- there's a commercial nexus, you say, well, that's just -- that's part of the jurisdictional 4 provision, so it has to be decided at 12(b)(1). I don't 5 6 understand why that answer doesn't apply in this case as 7 well. 8 MS. CARROLL: To be clear, they are all 9 jurisdictional requirements, and they must all be 10 decided up front. 11 The question is, what is the nature of the 12 requirement in this language about what's in issue? Is 13 a right in property is the taking in violation of 14 international in issue? That is the type of jurisdiction requirement that is not a factual 15 16 requirement in the sense of citizenship of the parties. 17 It's more like the jurisdictional provisions that this Court has considered under the Sherman Act or the 18 19 Exchange Act, which grants jurisdiction over violations, 20 or the criminal laws which grant jurisdiction over 21 offences, or --22 JUSTICE ALITO: Does the issue of diversity 23 or the issue of commercial nexus overlap with the merits 24 of those claims? 25 MS. CARROLL: No, they don't. And that's

another distinction between that kind of jurisdictional requirement and the kind of requirement that simply goes to what -- what have you put in issue? What's the case about?

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, what if 6 there's a dispute about the shareholder status of the 7 rights and property issue? There may be rights and 8 property, but we think you own only 49 percent of the 9 shares. And the plaintiffs say, no, no, they -- they 10 own 51 percent, so they have a right in property. 11 That's a factual dispute that is decided where?

MS. CARROLL: That is a factual dispute that was -- would be part of the merit. If the point of the argument was because of the amount of shares you own, which of course is not an issue here because the parent is the sole shareholder --

17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no, I know.18 It's a hypothetical.

MS. CARROLL: But if the argument is because of the amount of shares you own, you don't own enough to be able to succeed and be entitled to relief on the claim that you've alleged, that's a merits determination.

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it's -- well,
 or it's a jurisdictional determination because you only

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have jurisdiction if you have rights and property, and you'd only have rights and property if you own 51 percent instead of 49 percent. Why isn't that like somebody coming in and saying, I'm not a citizen of Kentucky?

6 MS. CARROLL: Because the statute doesn't 7 say you must show you have rights and property. It says 8 that you must show that rights and property are an issue 9 in the suit. What's the suit about? It's about an 10 assertion by the plaintiff that their rights and 11 property were taken in violation of -- of international 12 law.

13 The -- the argument that Petitioners has 14 made -- are making now is not a new one. It's an argument that was made to this Court in the Binderup 15 16 case under the Sherman Act in the 1920s. It's an 17 argument that was made to this Court in Bell v. Hood in the 1940s. It's the same argument, Justice Ginsburg, 18 that's been made in the whole Steel Co. line of cases. 19 20 And consistently, the Court has recognized that 21 jurisdiction is vital before a court can decide that 22 type of issue.

JUSTICE BREYER: So in your view, on the Chief Justice's hypothetical, before -- your view is they move under 12(b)(6) right away and they would say

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you aren't entitled to relief because you only own 1 2 49 percent? 3 MS. CARROLL: Right. And nothing would have 4 stopped them from doing that. 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, except that a 6 lot of district judges don't like moving under 12(b)(6) 7 right away. They like to have further development before they -- before they decide whether there's a 8 9 claim or not. 10 MS. CARROLL: I'm -- I can't say that that's been an -- an issue in this case where there's been fair 11 12 amount of agreement among the parties and the courts as 13 to what order the issue should be decided in. 14 The -- the petitioners here have asserted a challenge, a factual challenge to jurisdiction under the 15 16 commercial nexus requirements. They said even though 17 PDVSA is named as the expropriating entity in the decree, and even though PDVSA initiated the eminent 18 19 domain proceedings, nonetheless, we assert as a factual 20 matter that actually we've shifted ownership and control 21 of the property to some other PDVSA entity, and that 22 entity doesn't engage in commercial activity in the 23 United States, and so, therefore, there's no 24 jurisdiction. 25 And as a matter of fairness, of course we're

1 entitled to examine the -- the factual basis of that 2 assertion. That's the only discovery that has gone on 3 so far in the case, and it happened because the 4 Petitioners chose to make that factual argument. They didn't have to. They could have just said, we think we 5 6 have a great legal argument on the merits, and so we're 7 going to move under 12(b)(6) to dismiss the action for 8 failure to state a claim.

9 They have never brought that claim. To this 10 day, there is no pending motion to dismiss for any of the grounds that -- that they have asserted for failure 11 12 to state a claim, only under 12(b)(1). And of course, 13 the Rule 12(b) -- the office of Rule 12(b)(1) is very 14 different from the office of Rule 12(b)(6). 12(b)(1) implicates all of the concerns of shoving merits issues 15 16 into the determination, and for that reason, we think 17 there's no reason to construe this language to have that 18 consequence.

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
20 Ms. Stestman -- Ms. Stetson, you have a
21 minute.
22 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF CATHERINE E. STETSON
23 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
24 MS. STETSON: Ms. Carroll describes this
25 case as a subject matter jurisdiction case like any

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| 1  | other. What this Court has already said in Altmann is   |
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| 2  | that the FSIA is sui generis. Here, subject matter      |
| 3  | jurisdiction isn't just about jurisdiction over a class |
| 4  | of cases or a type of case. It's jurisdiction over this |
| 5  | sovereign standing in front of the Court. That is the   |
| 6  | difference between 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6). 12(b)(6)      |
| 7  | requires that court to have taken jurisdiction, to have |
| 8  | exercised its power over that sovereign. Before that    |
| 9  | happens, it is the sovereign's prerogative to test      |
| 10 | jurisdiction.   |

In answer, Justice Breyer, to your order -order of battle question, the sovereign sets the order of battle. This is -- the only order that this Court needs to give is the one that it already gave, frankly, in Verlinden, which is courts apply the substantive detailed FSIA standards to determine jurisdiction, not just to hypothesize it.

18 The difference between this case and the Tucker Act is that in the Tucker Act, the jurisdiction 19 20 depends on a claim against the United States. That's 21 the language that's missing here. And in both the 22 Tucker Act and in this case, there is, of course, an 23 immediate appeal. The reason that an immediate appeal 24 is tolerated under Section 1291, that narrow class of 25 cases where that qualifies, is because this right is so

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| 1  | important that it cannot be left for later. That's the |
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| 2  | difference.  |
| 3  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.             |
| 4  | The case is submitted.                                 |
| 5  | (Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the case in the             |
| 6  | above-entitled matter was submitted.)                  |
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