

Statement for David J. Kostelancik
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Albania
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
March 30, 2023

Chairman Van Hollen, Ranking Member Ricketts, Distinguished Members of the Committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today. I am honored to be the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Albania, and I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress to advance U.S. interests in Albania.

I want to start by recognizing those who have made it possible for me to be here today. First, I want to honor my wife, Trish, for her love, commitment, and support for over 30 years of marriage. I want to thank our three sons - Tim, Dan, and Ben - for the sacrifices they have made growing up with frequent moves and the demands of life in the Foreign Service. I want to thank my sister Kathi and brother Ken for their steadfast support every step of the way. Our parents are no longer with us, but their examples of hard work and sacrifice still inspire us.

I am a career Foreign Service Officer with over 30 years of experience. It has been my privilege to work on broadening and deepening our bilateral ties with a range of partners and allies. I have served in Albania, Turkey, Russia, Hungary, at NATO and the OSCE. Much of my career has focused on supporting close relationships between the United States and Allies and partners as well as defending and advancing respect for human rights. I have also always prioritized the welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad, and if confirmed I will continue to do so in Albania.

From 1992-94, I had the unique opportunity of serving in Albania as the first Political/Economic officer assigned to the newly re-opened U.S. embassy after a 52-year break in diplomatic ties. I found myself in a rapidly changing country, whose citizens rejected decades of communist dictatorship and enthusiastically embraced democracy and freedom. I traveled throughout Albania and saw the hope that sprang from people's desire for liberty - to revive the dormant links between our countries and transform expectations for a better future into reality.

Fast-forward 30 years. Albania's progress as a relatively young democracy is astonishing. Today, Albania plays an active role in supporting U.S. global priorities. Albania is a NATO Ally and contributes humanitarian and military assistance where needed. Serving as a rotating member on the United Nations

Security Council, it has been a close U.S. partner and our co-pen holder on resolutions to hold Russia accountable for its war in Ukraine. In July 2022, Albania opened European Union accession negotiations, a major step toward EU membership and a reflection of Albania's progress on democratic and judicial reforms. There is still a great deal of work to do, however, and if confirmed, I will focus on the following three priorities.

First, I would continue work with Albanians to strengthen democratic and judicial institutions. President Biden identified fighting corruption and organized crime as part of our National Security Strategy, an essential endeavor in the Western Balkans. We will work with Albanians to further their efforts to make their judicial system more equitable and trusted. We need to continue providing guidance and resources for Albanians to succeed in their EU ambitions.

Second, I would build on our defense partnership bilaterally and at NATO. My work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has reinforced for me the importance of allies. Iran's cyberattack against Albania in 2022 showed the need to develop a multifaceted approach to investing in our allies' defensive infrastructure and training. I am proud of our coordinated response to Iran's attack and, if confirmed, look forward to working with Congress to address critical emerging threats and to show the world the United States stands with our Allies.

Third, I would continue strengthening the business climate in Albania. Albania needs our help developing an economic ecosystem that creates jobs and opportunities in both our countries, eliminating corruption that limits quality of life. We can serve U.S. interests by promoting a rules-based and transparent marketplace in Albania.

U.S. partnership and assistance are vital to Albania as it implements domestic reforms, attracts foreign direct investment, contributes to regional stability, and remains active in global matters. Albania's progress on these objectives advances U.S. national priorities. If confirmed, I would build on 30 years of hard work in, and with, Albania.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I would be pleased to take your questions.