

Statement of Michael George DeSombre
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 15, 2025

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen and distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for their trust and confidence. I appreciate the time that the Members and staff of this Committee have spent with me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with each of you.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my wife and four children for their support of my desire to serve our great country. My wife Jean and I met, and married, while in law school and have been married for over 32 years. Jean has always been my inspiration and together we have built our respective professional careers while together raising four wonderful children – Winnona, Gabrielle, Michael Ray and Phoenix. Unfortunately given the challenges of our large multi-career family, only my daughter Winnona and my son Michael Ray are able to be here today.

I also would like to thank my parents Eugene and Nancy for their support. Mom and Dad were not able to make it here in person but I know they are watching the live stream back in Chicago.

Since a young age I have been motivated to serve our country. I believe that my experience in legal, economic, strategic and diplomatic matters over the past 35 years is directly relevant to the position for which I have been nominated.

I am excited to have the opportunity to work in the most consequential region in the world. I have been a student of strategic issues since the late 1980s when I received my Masters degree in East Asian Studies focused on China's military and foreign policy. I built on my academic background in my professional career, as a transactional attorney and diplomat. I have seen firsthand the tremendous opportunities for America in Asia as well as the challenges presented by China's economic and military modernization while living and working in Hong Kong and China over the past 28 years

As head of Sullivan & Cromwell's acquisitions practice for Asia, I have advised many Western corporations on complex transactions involving many different Asian countries. I

have lived or worked in many of the countries within the EAP region and have advised clients on high-stakes negotiations in those countries.

I was very honored to have had the opportunity to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand in 2020 where I led an outstanding interagency team on behalf of the American people.

If confirmed, I will apply my background in law, commerce, strategic issues and diplomacy in Asia to implement the President's foreign policy priorities in the Indo Pacific. I will ensure that all foreign policy decisions follow the Secretary's test: does this make us safer? Does this make us stronger? Does this make us more prosperous? I believe our Indo-Pacific policy will entail a focus on three primary priorities. First, to promote U.S. strength and security by working closely with our allies, partners and friends in the Indo Pacific to enhance deterrence and counter malign activities by our adversaries. Second, to promote U.S. prosperity through robust commercial diplomacy and reciprocal trade relations with all countries in the Indo Pacific. And third, make the United States safer by eliminating the flow of fentanyl and illegal immigrants into our country from Asia and ensure that all countries accept back their citizens that are illegally in our country.

When training corporations how to negotiate in Asia I recommend a style of "Hard on the Issues, Soft on the People." Hard on the issues means in this context an unwavering commitment to focus exclusively on what is good for America – putting America first. But soft on the people means that it is almost always useful to develop personal relationships to help achieve the best results on the issues. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary, I commit to spend substantial time travelling the region to develop the necessary relationships to achieve results for the American people. I also am committed to leading the various embassies in EAP with a high-touch method. Consistent with my practice in the private sector, if confirmed, I would speak personally and often with Ambassadors in the field to directly convey the President's and Secretary's foreign policy priorities and provide frequent opportunities for unfiltered feedback and information flow from the field.

In addition to promoting U.S. diplomatic and security interests, if confirmed, I will focus on expanding commercial opportunities, which, in turn, will reinforce our national security efforts. This was an area of my focus as Ambassador and, if confirmed, I will ensure that all of the Embassies in EAP have strong commercial diplomacy teams which we will support from here in Washington DC.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the Committee—I approach this nomination with a sense of excitement and responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward

to working with you to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous by addressing issues facing our nation in one of the most consequential regions of the world.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.