

Statement of S. Paul Kapur
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 10, 2025

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to join you as President Trump's nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. I appreciate the trust and confidence that the President placed in me by nominating me for this role. I am also grateful for the unwavering support of my family and friends. A number of them sit behind me today, including my wife and three of my five children. Others, I know, join us in spirit. I thank them all.

Appearing before you, I can't avoid the feeling of having come full circle. I was born in New Delhi, to an Indian father and an American mother. Although I visited India often during my childhood, I grew up in the United States as a thoroughly American kid, never imagining that my career would someday return me to the place where I was born. But I became interested in studying the region in graduate school and soon was working on it as a scholar and as a government official. In my scholarly capacity, I wrote books and articles about South Asia's security environment and U.S. policy in the region. In my official capacity, I taught military officers about the region, led U.S.-India strategic engagement projects, and covered South and Central Asia on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. Now, if confirmed, I will lead the State Department bureau responsible for this critical part of the world. Appearing before this committee today really does return me to my beginning.

The United States' relationships with the countries of South and Central Asia hold great promise. With effective policy, they can flourish and enable us to achieve Secretary Rubio's goal of making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Let me speak briefly about these relationships and their opportunities.

I begin with our partnership with India. The United States and India share a host of common interests: ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region, which is not dominated by China; expanding bilateral trade, building our economic relationship so that it is more symmetrical and profitable; facilitating technology sharing and innovation; and ensuring access to the energy necessary to fuel our economies. If confirmed, I will work to further advance U.S.-India relations and put our partnership on course to realize its tremendous promise.

On Pakistan, if confirmed, I will pursue security cooperation where beneficial to U.S. interests, while seeking opportunities for bilateral collaboration in trade and investment.

South Asia recently avoided a costly conflict, with the Vice President and Secretary Rubio intensely engaged on the issue. If confirmed, I will continue to promote longstanding U.S. security interests with India and Pakistan through the pursuit of peace and stability, and the fight against terrorism.

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, and Bhutan are important for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Sri Lanka and Maldives are located along major oceanic trade routes, while

Bangladesh boasts the largest economy in the region after India. If confirmed, I will advocate for enhanced U.S. cooperation with these nations to bolster our security, counterbalance China's influence, and expand trade.

In Afghanistan, if confirmed, I will support President Trump and Secretary Rubio in bringing home our remaining detained Americans. I also will work to ensure that the country never again becomes a launching pad for terrorism threatening the homeland.

Finally, in Central Asia, the United States seeks to advance the sovereignty and territorial integrity of regional states – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. If confirmed, I will leverage the C5+1 process as well as bilateral formats, and pursue cooperation in areas including energy, critical minerals, counterterrorism, the fight against transnational crime, and the development of physical and digital infrastructure.

The opportunities in South and Central Asia that I have just outlined hold tremendous promise. If confirmed, I will pursue them energetically, to realize their potential and to enhance the safety, strength, and prosperity of the American people.

I thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and Committee for your time, and the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.