

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2026

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, Chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Hagerty, Cruz, Scott of Florida, Curtis, Shaheen, Coons, and Kaine.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator RISCH. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

This morning we have three nominees to hear.

Before we start, I will say as I always say, I do not think—I do not see any issues here, but we always welcome the public to come to these hearings and watch what we do and enjoy themselves, but we do not allow any communications from the audience in the form of protest or any other method of communicating with either the nominees or anyone at the dais. If that is attempted, the usual will happen: they will be arrested and banned from the committee. So that seems to have slowed that process down quite a bit since I have been Chairman.

We have three nominees to hear today: Peter McCoy to be ambassador—U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro, Daniel Travis to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone, and Nate Morris to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia. The way this works is we will—we are going to have one introduction. Senator Moreno is going to introduce Nate Morris. Ordinarily, I would do the courtesy of giving him the floor, but he has not shown up yet. So with that—

Senator SHAHEEN. So he loses.

Senator RISCH. Yes. So he will wait whilst I give an opening statement and Senator Shaheen gives an opening statement. We will do that; by then, I am sure Senator Moreno will be here. We will give him the floor, then we will turn to the nominees and give you each about 5 minutes to talk with us and tell us what you are thinking.

Please try to keep it to about 5 minutes. If you need more, we are happy to put whatever else you have into the record of the hearing. We will then move to questions from the committee.

So with that, I will start and say thank you to all of you for being here today. I know what a sacrifice it is to take these positions when you have to move overseas. And we also want to thank your families because we know how important it is to have the support of your families because they also make the sacrifices that are necessary to do these jobs.

So we will start with Montenegro. The U.S. has a vested interest in making Montenegro stronger by supporting its government efforts to implement reforms, modernize its national defense, and integrate itself within the transatlantic community. I look forward to hearing how you plan to promote bilateral and regional cooperation that advances U.S. interests and supports Montenegro's ambitions to become a key leader and partner in both the Western Balkans and across Europe.

Mr. Morris, a strong relationship with Colombia is important to achieve our national interests in a prosperous, democratic, and secure Western Hemisphere. Our partnership has contributed to widespread economic growth, as well as safer communities here at home, and in Colombia, and the hemisphere at large. Colombia's internal security is under pressure due to flaws in the 2016 deal with the Communist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the misguided policies of the Petro government. Equally concerning is the negative influence of malign state actors like Russia and China. Mr. Morris, I look forward to hearing how, if confirmed, you would work with the incoming government in Colombia to unleash private sector, continued growth, confront transnational criminal and terrorist organizations, and reduce the malign influence of China and Russia.

And finally, Mr. Travis, Sierra Leone continues to face serious development challenges following years of civil war and disease. The U.S. must remain engaged to counter China's influence and to ensure that Sierra Leone remains stable, democratic, and a true partner to the United States. These issues warrant strong attention from the United States. I am glad to see someone with extensive Africa experience taking up the role, if confirmed.

Thank you again to our nominees for being here, and now I will turn it over to the distinguished ranking member, Senator Shaheen.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to each of our nominees today and to all of your friends and supporters who are here. I have an opening statement, and as you listen to the beginning of the statement, you are going to wonder how that is connected to the portfolio for the job you have been nominated for, but believe me, this is an issue that affects all of us.

Global health security is deteriorating, and diseases we know how to prevent are resurging: measles outbreak impacts, we had a tuberculosis case in New Hampshire this year, and the current Ebola outbreak. Infectious diseases do not respect borders. What happens overseas can quickly become an American problem. That is why there has been bipartisan support for the organization,

Gavi, one of the world's most successful public-private partnerships supporting immunization in low and middle income countries. More than 1 billion children have been immunized, 20 million lives have been saved, and after months of delay, the State Department has finally transmitted a congressional notification to release the funds that Congress appropriated.

Recent announcements are encouraging, but congressional notifications are not the same as obligated funds. So far, the State Department's track record has not inspired confidence. Just last week, State Department officials presenting on global health had to apologize—and Mr. Travis, you will especially appreciate this—after displaying a map that misplaced African countries—pretty significant African countries, including Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent. It was an embarrassing mistake that underscored something that is very important: if the United States is going to lead on global health security in Africa, we need experienced diplomats with the regional expertise to do it well.

Today, we will consider Mr. Travis' nomination to be Ambassador to Sierra Leone. I am pleased that we have a career Foreign Service officer to represent the United States in a country at the forefront of global outbreak preparedness and disease surveillance. Sierra Leone suffered more than 14,000 Ebola cases during the 2014–2016 epidemic. That experience has made it an indispensable partner in preventing the next outbreak before it reaches U.S. shores. We also need to ensure that our diplomats have the resources Congress has previously provided. And so Mr. Travis, if confirmed I hope you will be a strong voice inside the Department on the importance of these partnerships to both Sierra Leone and America's health security.

Mr. Morris, you have been nominated to be Ambassador to Colombia, one of the United States' closest security partners in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia's success is critical to stability across a region facing economic turmoil, migration, and organized crime. In neighboring Venezuela, Maduro has been removed, but the essence of his regime remains in power. If confirmed, following a year and a half of an often politicized and erratic U.S.-Colombia relationship, I hope you will ensure the U.S. is a reliable partner. Cooperating on counter narcotics, investing in economic partnerships, and supporting democratic institutions is critical.

And finally Mr. McCoy, you have been nominated to Montenegro, a NATO ally and a key strategic partner in the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans remain a frontline of strategic competition. Russian influence operations, Chinese economic coercion, and democratic backsliding continue to threaten the region. That is why our bipartisan legislation, the Western Balkans Democracy and Prosperity Act, was so important to cement U.S. leadership in the region. We cannot afford another hotspot for instability.

Bosnia continues to face separatist pressure from Milorad Dodik and persistent efforts to deny the Srebrenica genocide. So if confirmed, I hope you will use the mission to Montenegro to support Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic ambitions and full integration, to reinforce regional stability, and to promote America's economic opportunities on behalf of all American business interests. The United

States has spent more than 3 decades helping build a stable Western Balkans. We cannot afford to send mixed messages now.

I look forward to hearing from each of you. Thank you all.

Senator Risch. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

We will now give each of you 5 minutes, if you would, to enlighten us.

So we will start, Mr. McCoy, with you, please.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PETER MCCOY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA,
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENI-
POTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO MON-
TENEGRO**

Mr. MCCOY. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Montenegro. I am profoundly grateful to the President and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me, and I hope to earn the trust and confidence of this committee as well.

I would like to start with a thank you—a huge thank you to my wife of 16 years, Jennifer, who is sitting behind me. Without her unwavering love and support, I would not be here today. She is a wife, a mother, and an active circuit judge in the State of South Carolina. She is my rock, and I love her more than words can describe. I would also like to acknowledge my three children, Mae Loffin who is 15, Lucy who is 13, Peter who is 12. I am so thankful God has allowed each of these blessings in my life, and again, I am very proud to be their father.

Following up on that, I would like to acknowledge my parents, Peter and Lucy McCoy. This coming October, they will celebrate 50 years of marriage. My mother was a dedicated retired school teacher, and my father is retired from working from a South Carolina paper manufacturing company. From birth, they instilled the values of faith, hard work, treating everyone with kindness and respect, and pride in family. They worked successful careers, putting the education and needs of myself and my brother oftentimes above their own. Again, very proud to be their son.

I have been a practicing attorney for 21 years. I am proud to have served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for 10 years. I was known as a hard worker, an ethical worker, and a consensus builder. I was fortunate at the close of my tenure in the House to be elected by my peers, both Republican and Democrat, unanimously, to serve as the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Following my career in the State House, I was proud to have been nominated by President Trump to serve as United States Attorney for the District of South Carolina. I am currently—in my role right now, I am also the chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Authority. The South Carolina Public Service Authority is a position that is appointed by our Governor, Henry McMaster, and it is the fourth largest State owned utility in the nation.

In closing, I would like to thank the incredible, and I mean the incredible men and women at the State Department. Working with them over the last few months has been absolutely incredible. The time they spent with me shows that they are dedicated public serv-

ants who have their best interests and the country's best interest at heart. It is an absolute honor to learn from them, and I am so thankful for their time that they have given me.

I would also like to thank the late Senator Lindsey Graham. He was an incredible friend and ally to me. I miss his guidance, especially right now more than ever, and I most certainly miss his humor. Senator Tim Scott has been a faithful friend of mine going back to our days together in Charleston, South Carolina. I appreciate his continued counsel and advice. South Carolina is fortunate to have both of their leadership.

Turning back to Montenegro, if confirmed, I am committed to working with you to advance U.S. interests in Montenegro through an America First foreign policy. Montenegro and the United States share an enduring bond rooted in 120 years of diplomatic relations, one that has only deepened in the last 2 decades since Montenegro regained its independence. If confirmed, I will lead our team with three clear priorities: beginning with the most fundamental, the safety and security of all U.S. citizens in Montenegro and our dedicated embassy staff.

With that foundation in place, if confirmed, I will work to expand commercial opportunities that advance U.S. prosperity, building on the intergovernmental agreement concluded in July. The U.S. private sector, the world's foremost engine of growth and innovation, is ideally positioned to partner with Montenegro in infrastructure, security, energy, and technology featured in the Adriatic-Ionian Corridor and other projects. Our mission would strive to level the playing field for U.S. companies, enabling Montenegro to reduce its dependence on strategic competitors such as China.

Beyond economic engagement, if confirmed, I will deepen law enforcement and security cooperation with Montenegro to safeguard U.S. interests. Under my leadership, the embassy would continue to support Montenegro in countering threats from transnational criminal organizations, like those linked to the Western Hemisphere cartels that harm citizens in both countries. Additionally, I would like to leverage 2 decades of collaboration through state partnership with Maine's National Guard to enhance interoperability and streamline defense acquisitions, ensuring Montenegro meets NATO capability targets and meets its Hague Summit spending commitments. If confirmed, I will be a partner with the government to ensure Montenegro remains stalwart NATO ally, helping to secure Europe's eastern flank and promoting stability across the Western Balkans.

Again, I cannot thank this committee enough, Chairman, Ranking Member, for the opportunity to be here in front of you today. It is an absolute honor, and I very much look forward to your questions. Thank you so much.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes

Printed Name:


Peter McCoy

Date:

8/5/20

[The prepared statement of Mr. McCoy follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Peter McCoy

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro. I am profoundly grateful to the President and Secretary Rubio for their trust in me, and I hope to earn this Committee's confidence.

I would like to start with a huge thank you to my wife of 16 years, Jennifer. Without her unwavering love and support, I would not be here today. She's a wife, mother, and active Circuit Judge in the State of South Carolina. She is my rock and I love her more than words can describe. I would like to acknowledge my three children. Mae Loflin (15), Lucy (13), and Peter (12). I'm so thankful God has allowed each of these blessings in my life and I'm so proud to be their father.

I also would like to acknowledge my parents Peter and Lucy McCoy. This coming October they will celebrate 50 years of marriage. My mother is a retired schoolteacher and my father retired from working for a South Carolina paper manufacturing company. From birth they instilled the values of faith, hard work, treating everyone with kindness and respect, and pride in family. They worked successful careers putting the education and needs of myself and my brother above their own personal wants. I'm very proud to be their son.

I have been a practicing attorney for 21 years. I am proud to have served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for 10 years. I was known as a hard worker, an ethical worker, and a consensus builder. I was fortunate at the close of my tenure in the House to be elected by my peers, both Republican and Democrat, to serve as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Following my career in the House, I was proud to be nominated by President Trump to serve as United States Attorney for the District of South Carolina. I am also the current Chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Authority, appointed by Governor Henry McMaster, which is the fourth largest state-owned utility in the Nation.

I would like to thank the incredible men and women at the Department of State. Working with them over the last few months has been incredible. They are all dedicated public servants, and it has been an honor to work and learn from them. I would also like to thank the late Senator Lindsay Graham. He was an incredible friend and ally to me. I miss his guidance and his humor. Senator Tim Scott has been a faithful friend going back to our days together in Charleston SC. I appreciate his continued advice and counsel. South Carolina is fortunate to have had both their leadership.

Turning to Montenegro—if confirmed, I am committed to working with you to advance U.S. interests in Montenegro through an America First Foreign Policy.

Montenegro and the United States share an enduring bond rooted in 120 years of diplomatic relations, one that has only deepened in the two decades since Montenegro re-gained its independence.

If confirmed, I will lead our team with three clear priorities, beginning with the most fundamental: the safety and security of all U.S. citizens in Montenegro and our dedicated embassy staff.

With that foundation in place, if confirmed, I will work to expand commercial opportunities that advance U.S. prosperity, building on the intergovernmental agreement concluded in July. The U.S. private sector—the world's foremost engine of growth and innovation—is ideally positioned to partner with Montenegro on infrastructure, security, energy, and technology, featured in the Adriatic-Ionian Corridor and other projects. Our mission would strive to level the playing field for U.S. companies, enabling Montenegro to reduce its dependence on strategic competitors such as China.

Beyond economic engagement, if confirmed, I will deepen law enforcement and security cooperation with Montenegro to safeguard U.S. interests. Under my leadership, the embassy would continue to support Montenegro in countering threats from transnational criminal organizations, including those linked to Western Hemisphere cartels, that harm citizens in both our countries.

Additionally, I would seek to leverage two decades of collaboration through the State Partnership Program with Maine's National Guard to enhance interoperability and streamline defense acquisitions ensuring Montenegro meets NATO capability targets and meets its Hague Summit spending commitments. If confirmed, I will partner with the government to ensure Montenegro remains a stalwart NATO Ally—helping to secure Europe's eastern flank and promoting stability across the Western Balkans.

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

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. McCoy.
Mr. Travis.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL TRAVIS, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Mr. TRAVIS. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio has placed in me with this nomination, and I am deeply grateful for my family for their support and willingness to take on this challenge alongside me.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family: my wife Kasia, who is here with me today, and our children, Magdeline and Jason, for their unwavering support over my 25 years of service to the United States. Since joining the Foreign Service September 10, 2001, they have accompanied me at postings in seven countries across three continents. Without them, I would not be here.

The United States is resetting its relationship with Africa. We are moving away from aid and dependency toward trade, investment, and mutual benefit. Sierra Leone is a place where that vision can deliver real results, and if confirmed, I intend to make that happen. Sierra Leone matters to American interests in concrete ways. It holds critical minerals essential to American manufacturing and national security. It has significant American commercial investment in telecommunications, energy, and mining, and more specifically is poised to become a significant destination for U.S. LNG exports through the DFC backed Nant Energy project. Additionally, as the outgoing chair of ECOWAS, Sierra Leone's leadership in the region is more consequential than ever at a time when competition for economic, strategic, and diplomatic influence in West Africa is intensifying.

The foundation for a stronger partnership is already being built. American companies have invested over half a billion dollars in Sierra Leone's economy, and we maintain a healthy trade surplus. A landmark health agreement, signed under the American First Global Health Security Strategy, is protecting both Americans' and Sierra Leoneans' lives while demanding accountability and co-investment from Sierra Leone, fostering a freedom from dependency. And a pipeline of American led projects, such as agreement between Acrow Corporation of Pennsylvania to design and build a bridge across the Sierra Leone River connecting Freetown with its international airport, has the potential to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. exports and cement American leadership in Sierra Leone's economic future.

The Administration engages Sierra Leone as a capable commercial partner with shared interests, not as an aid recipient. The U.S. uses direct diplomacy and expects Sierra Leone to take American strategic and commercial priorities seriously in return. When governance falls short and American interests are affected, I will raise

these concerns directly and privately with the Sierra Leonean leadership. That is the basis of a productive relationship and is the approach I will bring to Freetown.

If confirmed the welfare of American citizens, our commercial diplomacy, and our development investments in Sierra Leone, particularly in public health, will be my top priorities. I will work to close transformational deals, open doors for American companies, and ensure that Sierra Leone's energy, infrastructure, and mineral sectors are shaped by an American investment, not by our competitors who play by their own rules. I will use the full range of U.S. Government tools available, including MCC Compact, DFC investment, and bilateral engagement to advance reform that benefits American businesses.

I am clear eyed about these challenges. Competition for influence in Sierra Leone is real and intensifying. Governance challenges persist, and the resources available to American diplomacy are finite, but I believe that when U.S. diplomacy aligns with private sector opportunity and a clear sense of American interests, we can deliver results that no other partner can match. If confirmed, I will give this assignment—our commercial priorities, the welfare of American citizens, and our development investment in Sierra Leone—everything I have. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Daniel Travis

Date: 8/5/26

[The prepared statement of Mr. Travis follows:]

Prepared Statement of Daniel Travis

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored by the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me with this nomination, and I am deeply grateful to my family for their support and willingness to take on this challenge alongside me.

First, I want to thank my wife and children for their unwavering support over my 25 years of service to the United States. Since joining the foreign service on September 10, 2001, they have accompanied me at postings in seven countries across three continents. Without them, I would not be here.

The United States is resetting its relationship with Africa. We are moving away from aid and dependency toward trade, investment, and mutual benefit. Sierra Leone is a place where that vision can deliver real results, and if confirmed, I intend to make it happen.

Sierra Leone matters to American commercial interests in concrete ways. It holds critical minerals essential to American manufacturing and national security. It has significant American commercial investment in telecommunications, energy, and mining, and, more specifically, is poised to become a significant destination for U.S. LNG exports through the DFC-backed Nant Energy project. Additionally, as the outgoing chair of ECOWAS, Sierra Leone's leadership in the region is more consequential than ever at a time when competition for economic, strategic, and diplomatic influence across West Africa is intensifying.

The foundation for a stronger partnership is already being built. American companies have invested more than \$500 million in Sierra Leone's economy, and we maintain a healthy trade surplus. A landmark health agreement signed under the America First Global Health Strategy is protecting both American and Sierra Leonean lives while demanding accountability and co-investment from Sierra Leone, fostering a freedom from dependency. And a pipeline of American-led projects such as the agreement with Acrow Corporation of Pennsylvania to design and build a bridge across the Sierra Leone River, connecting Freetown with its international airport, has the potential to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. exports, and cement American leadership in Sierra Leone's economic future.

This Administration engages Sierra Leone as a capable commercial partner with shared interests, not as an aid recipient. The U.S. uses direct diplomacy and expects Sierra Leone to take American strategic and commercial priorities seriously in return. Where governance falls short and American interests are affected, I will raise those concerns directly and privately with Sierra Leonean leadership. That is the basis of a productive relationship, and it is the approach I will bring to Freetown.

If confirmed, the welfare of American citizens and commercial diplomacy will be my top priorities. I will work to close transformational deals, open doors for American companies, and ensure that Sierra Leone's energy, infrastructure, and mineral sectors are shaped by American investment, not by competitors who play by different rules. I will use the full range of U.S. Government tools available, including our MCC compact, DFC investments, and bilateral engagement, to advance reforms that benefit American businesses.

I am clear-eyed about the challenges. Competition for influence in Sierra Leone is real and intensifying, governance challenges persist, and the resources available to American diplomacy are finite. But I believe that when U.S. diplomacy aligns with private sector opportunity and a clear sense of American interests, we can deliver results that no other partner can match.

If confirmed, I will give this assignment everything I have. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thanks much, Mr. Travis.

Mr. Morris, I am unhappy to report that Bernie has sent me a note saying that he has been unavoidably detained, so he is not going to be here to introduce you, but if he were, I can assure you he would give you an enthusiastic endorsement. He has already told me much about you, but guess you are going to be on your own this morning, but I feel you are going to be all right. So you have the floor.

**STATEMENT OF NATHANIEL MORRIS, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF CO-
LOMBIA**

Mr. MORRIS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia. I am so grateful to President Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, and Secretary Rubio for their confidence and for implementing an America First foreign policy that puts our country first. Our mission of America First diplomacy is simple: to make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous. I would also like to thank my friend, Senator Bernie Moreno, for his support.

I would like to recognize my wife, Jane, and my son, J.R., who are here today, and also my mother, Miranda, who are sitting right behind me. I am grateful for all their love and support and allowing me to be here today.

I come before the committee as a proud ninth generation Kentuckian. My family descends from Appalachia, where people have fought for everything that they have in hopes that they, too, can achieve the American dream. I was raised by a single mother in a family of union auto workers, people who believe that in this country if you work hard you can build something that matters. I will carry these values into the role of U.S. ambassador. As an American entrepreneur, I founded one of the country's largest waste management companies, grew it from a \$10,000 line of credit to take it public on the New York Stock Exchange. As a founder and CEO, I created thousands of good paying jobs, fought for my team and families, and provided a hundred percent free healthcare for all my employees. Building my company taught me that success depends on accountability, transparency, and especially hard work. Those are the principles I will bring to Embassy Bogota if confirmed.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Republic of Colombia have a history that reaches back to 1823, when the first American envoy to Colombia, a Kentuckian, took the post. If confirmed, I would be the fifth Kentuckian to hold this ambassadorship, and I am proud to carry that tradition forward. It is one of the most strategic posts in the world with the legacy of great American leaders at the helm, including a United States President.

The future of American foreign policy rests on America's dominance in the Western Hemisphere. This is our neighborhood, and I am proud and inspired that President Trump is treating it that way again. The inauguration of Colombia's new administration on August 7 will be an important moment in our relations with this key ally. If confirmed, I will work with the new government on three priorities: One, stopping the flow of drugs and illegal immigration; two, expanding economic opportunity; and three, serving the Americans who live and travel to Colombia.

Approximately 94 percent of the cocaine that is devastating American communities originates in Colombia. Colombia is also a source, destination, and transit country for illegal migration. I will

work with the Trump administration in achieving its goal of a zero tolerance policy toward drugs and illegal immigration. That means strengthening our cooperation on counternarcotics, transnational criminal organizations, supporting Colombia's efforts to improve citizen security, and ensuring that violent criminal networks do not threaten the stability of the region or the safety of the American people.

Colombia is one of the few countries in South America where the United States, still today, is the largest trading partner. I will keep it that way by advocating for U.S. firms and advancing energy security with one goal: creating jobs and long term economic opportunity for the American people. American business and investment will be the first choice over China or any other competitor every single time. I will also prioritize the safety of U.S. citizens in Colombia, ensuring that the embassy remains responsive, professional, and engaged across the country.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I respectfully ask for your support. If confirmed I will serve with integrity, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to the safety, prosperity, and strategic interests of the United States. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

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Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Nathaniel Morris

Date: 8/5/20

[The prepared statement of Mr. Morris follows:]

Prepared Statement of Nathaniel Morris

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee—Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia. I am grateful to President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Secretary Rubio for their confidence and for implementing an America First foreign policy that puts our country first. Our mission of America First diplomacy is simple: to make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

Thank you, Senator Moreno, for the gracious introduction.

I want to recognize my wife, Jane, and our son, JR, who are here with me today. I am grateful for their love and support. I come before the Committee today as a proud ninth-generation Kentuckian. My family descends from Appalachia, where people have fought for everything they have with the hope that they too can achieve the American Dream. I was raised by a single mother in a family of union auto-workers, people who believe that in this country, if you work hard, you can build something that matters. I will carry these values into the role of ambassador.

As an American entrepreneur, I founded one of the country's largest waste management companies and grew it from a \$10,000 line of credit to take it public on the New York Stock Exchange. As a founder and CEO, I created thousands of good-paying jobs, fought for my team and their families, and provided 100 percent free healthcare for all my employees. Building my company taught me that success depends on accountability, transparency, and especially hard work. Those are the principles I will bring to Embassy Bogota, if confirmed.

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- One, stopping the flow of drugs and illegal immigration,
- Two, expanding economic opportunity, and
- Three, serving the Americans who live in and travel to Colombia.

Approximately 94 percent of the cocaine that is devastating American communities originates in Colombia. Colombia is also a source, destination, and transit country for illegal migration. I will work with the Trump Administration toward achieving its goal of a zero-tolerance policy toward drugs and illegal immigration. That means strengthening our cooperation on counternarcotics and transnational criminal organizations, supporting Colombia's efforts to improve citizen security, and ensuring that violent criminal networks do not threaten the stability of the region or the safety of the American people.

Colombia is one of the few countries in South America where the United States is still the largest trading partner. I will keep it that way by advocating for U.S. firms and advancing energy security, with one goal: creating jobs and long-term economic opportunity for the American people. American businesses and investment will be the first choice over China or any other competitor, every single time.

I will also prioritize the safety of U.S. citizens in Colombia, ensuring the embassy remains responsive, professional, and engaged across the country.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, I respectfully ask for your support. If confirmed, I will serve with integrity, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to the safety, prosperity, and strategic interests of the United States. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you so much.

We appreciate all of your willingness to serve and some interesting appointments, no question.

We are going to do a round of questions now with 5 minutes each. I am going to start, then I will recognize Senator Shaheen, but let me start.

Mr. Travis, first of all, you come to us with a pedigree that we do not see frequently before this committee, and we are glad to have you, and that is an important assignment the President has given you. I want to focus for just a moment on the history of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and tell me about your thoughts on where it is and what you can do to help make it work.

Mr. TRAVIS. Thank you for that important question, Senator.

At the beginning of the Trump administration, when the decision was made to reassess all of our foreign assistance, I took the lead for the Africa Bureau on helping to assess the Millennium Challenge Account compacts in Africa. And I am very pleased to say that Sierra Leone came out on the top of our list as being well aligned with President Trump's priorities for the continent. The compact in Sierra Leone is focused on electrical distribution. From what I understand it nicely fits onto a chain of U.S. investments, from an LNG port and refinery to another DFC investment—DFC, pardon me—supported investment in power production. So these three projects together, if carried out and brought online in time, will essentially double the power available for the people of Sierra Leone and especially for the businesses and investment we hope to have there.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that.

Mr. Morris, let us talk for a minute about Colombia. President Petro signed the famous MOU to join China's Belt and Road Initiative, obviously not in our best interest and certainly with us pressing them the other way, but he made that decision, and here we are. What are your thoughts on that? What do you think the chances are of getting that reversed?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the question.

I have been very encouraged by the president-elect and his commitment to withdraw from that MOU, and I believe, obviously, that I think all nations have to make a decision that if—it is either the United States or China on who they want to do business with. I think we have an extraordinary opportunity to open the Colombia economy once again. For the last several years, they have been very challenged because of the leadership that has been in place. But I am very hopeful of the new president-elect and obviously our ability to make investments that I think will be in the best interest of the United States and the long term security of both countries.

Senator RISCH. I appreciate that. Obviously, it is an important country, and it has been much on our mind because of the Petro administration and those kinds of things. So thank you for your willingness to serve there.

Mr. McCoy, Montenegro is in an important place, but they have got some real problems with corruption and organized crimes these days, and their judiciary and their law enforcement institutions are in desperate need of reform. Got thoughts on that?

Mr. MCCOY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and that is a fantastic question.

And really, I would like to start with the winds that I think are moving in the right direction for Montenegro with the election of a new president in 2023, the election of a new prime minister in 2023. I think the country is moving in the right direction in terms of wanting to do the right thing, and one of those right things is

tackling corruption or tackling issues of crime with inside the country.

Mr. Chairman, the law enforcement, I guess, total population that they have in country is roughly 3,300 folks, right? You do not have a whole lot of people that are there on the ground working to defend. They are good people, they are hardworking people, they want to do the right thing when it comes to prosecution, when it comes to tackling corruption, but that is where they need a little bit of help and assistance and guidance. Mr. Chairman, my background as a former U.S. attorney, having worked with a lot of different law enforcement agencies, whether it is on the State level or whether it is on the Federal level, I think would be a fantastic fit if I were fortunate enough to be confirmed and be on the ground in Montenegro to be able to assist.

I will tell you, the INL program that the country is using right now to the maximum ability I think is fantastic. The INL program is working to help give the tools, give the resources, give the advice when it comes to having the local folks there prosecute, work cases up, and be able to move cases forward. Having that ability to do that, I think, has worked wonders. So far, we have seen a huge increase, Mr. Chairman, in some prosecutions that have happened in the country, not only when it comes to crimes of conspiracy, such as drug conspiracy, but also on the white collar realm and dealing with cryptocurrency issues that are kind of unregulated there as well. So we are seeing that, and the numbers that they are bringing to the table in terms of prosecutions are growing. They also have a criminal justice advisor who is on the ground that works heavily with the INL—and again, I think the role that person plays is fantastic—who works directly with prosecutors, works directly with judges, helps advise, helps lead, and helps show how to build cases and move cases forward.

So Mr. Chairman, I think things are moving in the right direction there, and again if I am lucky enough to be confirmed I want to be right there in the middle of that to help and assist any way that I can.

Senator RISCH. Thanks so much.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you.

Mr. McCoy, I want to follow up on that a little bit because I completely agree. I think INL does really good work and has been particularly helpful in countries like Montenegro that are fighting corruption.

One of the influences in Montenegro that I think contributes to that corruption is Russia. They have—as I am sure you are aware, have long sought to influence political developments in the country. In 2016 Russian intelligence allegedly supported a coup to try and prevent Montenegro from joining NATO. So as you think about that challenge of Russia—disinformation, misinformation, influence operations—how can the United States help Montenegro to fight back against those kinds of influences?

Mr. MCCOY. Ranking Member Shaheen, that is an excellent question, and obviously, historically you take a huge interest in the area, you know a lot about the history that has happened there, and in the past, there was significant Russian influence not only

in the government, but also in the community, in the culture, always there. But I will tell you what makes me proud about Montenegro and what they have done so far in moving away from that and turning away from that influence, is the joining of NATO. Russia did everything they could, everything they could to exert pressure, to apply problems, to create problems, to kind of push Montenegro away from doing that. Montenegro stayed strong. They were steadfast in their pursuit of NATO. They joined NATO. They did so successfully, and frankly, Senator, I think they are doing a fantastic job of being a contributing member of NATO, and I want them to increase that and continue to do that.

But again, since that happened, you have seen a significant decrease in Russian influence, at least monetarily, in the country. I have read a statistic that their, I guess, influence money-wise in the country is down as much as 75 percent since that has happened, and that is a fantastic—

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, and are putting it all in Ukraine.

Mr. MCCOY. Well, and I will tell you, to Montenegro's credit, they have done everything they can to support Ukraine. They have sent what they can monetarily, as well as troops, in defiance of Russia there, Ranking Member Shaheen, which I think, again, is a huge positive in the culture turning in the country and showing that they want to do the right thing and not have this tie to Russia. So Ranking Member Shaheen, obviously there will always be work to do there and always influence to be had there, but if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed and I can get on the ground there, that is certainly something I would want to make a priority—a continued priority.

Senator SHAHEEN. I was also pleased to see the agreement between the United States and Montenegro to accelerate opportunities for U.S. companies. I think it reflects the intent of legislation that Congress passed in the last session, the Western Balkans Democracy and Prosperity Act, to increase economic ties in the region. I think it is really important to ensure that those commercial deals are free and open to competition and not just go to people with ties to powerful interests in the United States. So will you commit to advocate in impartial way on behalf of all U.S. companies that are interested in investing in Montenegro?

Mr. MCCOY. Senator Shaheen, again another excellent question, and if you do not mind, I would love to talk a little bit about the agreement that you mentioned earlier on, too.

Senator SHAHEEN. Please.

Mr. MCCOY. The IGA that was formalized and signed at the end of this month, right—it just happened; it happened actually, while I was in the ambassador school over the past 2 weeks—I think is an exceptional piece of legislation. I think it opens the door, and not just a little, but widely, to have a U.S. conversation, a U.S. seat at the table in terms of helping with energy, infrastructure, jobs, transportation, all of the above that can come in and have a direct impact on Montenegro in a helpful way.

I think two of the prime issues that kind of came out of that Adriatic-Ionian corridor, you know, from the IGA, as you are looking at the ability for billions of dollars to flow through that corridor, hopefully if things get up off the ground in the future, also

looking at cargo checkers. Something as small as cargo checkers were part of that as well. And I think that is a phenomenal way to show Montenegro our interest in the country, but likewise, how we can produce and bring together United States businesses, again, not picked or chosen by anybody, but giving everybody a fair chance, Senator, to come in and compete for the area.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. McCoy. I am pleased to see that you share my interest in the Western Balkans and particularly in Montenegro. Thank you.

Mr. Morris, Venezuela, as you know, has served as a sanctuary for training, for arms trafficking, for cross-border attacks against Colombian security forces over the last few decades, and particularly under Nicolas Maduro. Their incoming president has said that he will conduct relations with Venezuela via the United States. What is your understanding of what the relationships are between the incoming president and key actors in the Maduro regime?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, thank you, Ranking Member Shaheen. I cannot speak for the president-elect and the conversations that he has had and the dialogue that has taken place, but what I will tell you is I believe a strong Colombia is in the best interest of the region and the hemisphere. And I think, as a U.S. ambassador, one of the things that I can do, as someone who is coming from the private sector, is to help create and foster more economic opportunity, which the Colombian people have been suffering for several years because of that lack of opportunity. And I think that that is one of the key things that we can do as a country in the region and the hemisphere to bring about more security, more safety for the Colombian people and also for the United States.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to the nominees.

Mr. Chair, before I ask a question or two, I would like to introduce into the record an article that is dated today in the *New York Times*, "U.S. Revokes Visa of Top Brazilian Diplomat, Dialing Up Tensions."

Senator RISCH. It will be entered in the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this document.]

Senator KAINE. As committee members know, there is going to be a vote on the floor today on the nominee to be United States Ambassador to Brazil, Daniel Perez, who I voted for, very, very excited to vote for him. I think he will do a good job. But the U.S.-Brazil relationship, which should be a good relationship, is really bollocked up right now, and I hope members of the committee might help figure out a way to unstick this unnecessary tangle.

The challenge began in April 2025 with the President's announcement of Liberation Day tariffs against virtually every nation in the world, including Brazil, and the professed reason for the Liberation Day tariffs was that other nations were ripping us off as measured by trade deficits. Brazil, we do not have a trade deficit.

We have a \$40 billion annual trade surplus with Brazil. They buy a lot more stuff from the U.S. than we buy from them. And so given that we have a trade surplus with Brazil, well, why put tariffs on Brazil?

Well, it later became apparent when the President added tariffs that the tariffs were being added to punish Brazil's political leadership. The current government of Brazil was prosecuting a friend of President Trump's, the former president, Bolsonaro. And so the President then added even more tariffs against Brazil using the IEEPA statute that the Supreme Court later struck down. How is it an emergency for the United States if the nation of Brazil is prosecuting somebody in accord with their own system of justice? And then this has now led to a set of back and forths. There were some U.S. diplomats who were going to be assigned to Brazil. Brazil would not allow them to enter. Brazil has raised questions about whether ambassador nominee Perez—and I suspect he is going to get the votes today to actually be the ambassador—they are sort of slow walking him coming in. So now we have retracted the visa of the Brazilian ambassador of the United States.

This is no way for two big nations with really important economies, who have got a lot in common, who have been friends in the past, it is no way for us to treat each other, so I am hoping that cooler heads may prevail on both sides. We can figure out what we can do here on the U.S. side, and Brazilians can figure out on their side because I think we need a confirmed ambassador, and I think Mr. Perez will be a good ambassador. We just need to get him there, so I hope we can untangle this knot.

Mr. McCoy, I want to ask you a question. Really I think you are in some ways very uniquely suited to this position. The most uniquely suited are the career, you know, State Department FSOs, but the political appointees have an important role. As a—the U.S. attorney, you had a great track record. One of the things that I particularly appreciated is, in the aftermath of the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, when you were then the U.S. attorney, your social media account had you say this: "Let me be perfectly clear. Federal crimes were violated today at our nation's Capitol building. Anyone who traveled from the District of South Carolina with intent to aid this travesty or commit acts of destruction will be prosecuted by our office," and I appreciated that. It matched in tone what I heard your friend, Senator Lindsey Graham, say on the floor that same day, and I appreciated that you were so clear about it.

You are going into a country that is a NATO member, and that is fantastic, but would also like to join the EU. And one of the obstacles for Montenegro joining the EU, and you have already been asked questions about this by the Chairman, has been a history of corruption that needs to sort of get resolved prior to the likelihood of EU accession. Because you have prosecuted corruption cases, and this has been an area—you know, you cannot dictate the domestic politics, obviously, of another nation, but I think you do have a unique skill set in having, you know, prosecuted corruption and been a strong advocate for the rule of law to help advise, encourage Montenegro in this path to tackle corruption. And you have already responded to this a bit, but I wonder if you have more

to say about how your unique skill set could assist in that endeavor.

Mr. MCCOY. Thank you, Senator, and I greatly appreciate the question, Senator, so thank you for that. And as a point of personal privilege as well, if you do not mind, when I did come up to Washington, DC, to start the process, to learn and meet folks to be U.S. attorney, I encountered you in the hall, Senator, and we actually had a fantastic conversation, and I know you may not remember, but I will never forget it.

Senator Kaine. I remember you are a Hampden-Sydney grad, and that goes a long way with me, so.

Mr. MCCOY. Yes. Yes, sir, and I was, and we had that discussion. So again, Senator, that is something that stands out into my mind, and again I will never forget it, and I thank you for giving me that time.

Senator, you are right. This is my background. It is what I love to do. It is something that I would love to be able to help with. I mean, this is something that is in my wheelhouse. I think it is something that I can help others with, but Senator, you cannot do it alone. You cannot do it without the good folks that are there in country right now, the local law enforcement in the country right now and being able to have that working relationship and working through INL, working through a criminal prosecutor that is on the ground there.

And again, Senator, we have talked a little bit, again, at very high levels about the budgetary issues with the INL, and hopefully I will learn more about that if I am lucky enough to be confirmed, but I think it is such an outstanding program, Senator. I think we have to utilize that. We have to use it. We have to work together. I would love to have as many as possible, one, two, three, four, five FBI agents or DEA agents on the ground as well, so in our office working together as well to kind of help advise and see this through.

Senator Kaine. Great. Thank you.

Mr. MCCOY. Yes, sir.

Senator Kaine. And if I could, Senator Scott, I know you are up next, but just a quick word of just a suggestion for Mr. Morris.

You know, you are not confirmed yet and you do not assume any duties until you are, but here is a piece of advice. The U.S.-Colombia relationship, really beginning with the Plan Colombia toward the end of the Clinton administration—so Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama, President Trump first term, President Biden, President Trump second term—it has been a very steady relationship, even though at the presidential level, whether—you know, I have just gone through a lot of Presidents of different parties, or I could go through the Colombian presidents, left, right, left, right, left, right. While there has been some churn at the political level, I would really encourage you to spend time with SOUTHCOM because the mil to mil cooperation between the U.S. and Colombia has stayed very continuous, very steady, and very reliable, even as things at the top might be changing.

And I think one of the first things I would urge you to do, and maybe you have already begun this dialogue, is spend some time with SOUTHCOM to get a sense for what that mil to mil relation-

ship has been like because I think it has been real solid. I am sure there is more we can do, obviously, but I think you will be encouraged when you see the degree to which that relationship has been a very mature and steady one.

And with that, I will yield.

Mr. MORRIS. Thank you, Senator, for sharing that.

Senator Kaine. Yes.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA [presiding]. I think I am supposed to recognize myself, but first off, I just wanted—what Senator Kaine said is a pretty big deal. We have got to figure out how to build these relationships better, and I want to recognize both Senator Shaheen and Senator Kaine both of them care about Latin America, and they put a lot of effort into it. And we, you know, as we all think about this, we have a lot of opportunities right now, but there are a lot of challenges in Latin America. And part of it is we just got to keep figuring out how it is a win-win in all these countries, from Brazil to Colombia to Venezuela to Cuba, all of them, so it is an exciting time. So congratulations on—each of you. You are going to have a ball. These are great jobs because you are going to be able to actually accomplish something, which is really nice.

So Mr. Morris, you have some background in Colombia—

Mr. MORRIS. I do, yes.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Yes. You want to talk about your background first?

Mr. MORRIS. Absolutely.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Why do you care about Colombia?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, first and foremost, I am so proud of Kentucky's tradition with Colombia. If confirmed, I would be the fifth Ambassador from Colombia—or from Kentucky to go to Colombia, so our State has had a long tradition with the Colombian people and the nation. I recognize the important strategic relationship that Colombia has played and the relationship with the hemisphere, and how the two countries have worked together.

I think the opportunity economically and to continue to promote safety and security is always paramount, and that is something I think that is so important to get right about this relationship. But I have got friends in Colombia that I have met through business, a former head of state there. I have also got family that have great ties there. So Colombia is something that has always been near and dear to my heart, and I am very enthusiastic, if confirmed, to serve the American people in that capacity, but also help the Colombian people and help their economy.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Well, Petro has been despicable. You know, he has done the Belt and Road Initiative with China. He has not been a great friend of the United States. When I was Governor of Florida, I think a lot of people up here had probably a bigger impact, but we got the Free Trade Agreement done, and by the time I left as Governor I did a lot of trade missions there. I think they were our second biggest trading partner to Canada for the State, and so it is a big deal for Florida. So how are you going to fix all the problems that Petro caused?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, Senator, I think, first and foremost, security is always paramount and stopping the flow of crime: illegal immigration, drugs. But I think the best thing that I can do in the role

of U.S. ambassador, as someone who is coming from the private sector, someone who created thousands of jobs, is to let the world know that Colombia is open for business again. And my grandfather, who worked in an auto factory for over 50 years, he ran a local union, he used to tell me that if you got a job, it solves a lot of problems, and I believe that as well. And I think one of the great things I can do for the relationship between the U.S. and Colombia is to continue that trust and rebuild a lot of that trust that has been lost over the last several years with the private sector, and get them enthusiastic again to invest and to want to work in Colombia long term, not just for short term projects, but how do we build long term, sustaining relationships that are going to make all the difference?

And I believe Colombia has shown that it is the capital of Latin America in many different ways. And I think we need strong leadership from America to help continue that and continue on the relationship that we have had such a cherished relationship with them for a very long time.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thanks. Mr. McCoy, so Montenegro's a small NATO ally. What do they bring to the table, and what are you going to do to help make sure they do their part with regard to the alliance?

Mr. MCCOY. Senator, great question, and they are a small country. They are one of the newer members to NATO, but what I can tell you is they are bringing a strong people, and they are bringing a strong commitment. They want to do the right thing. Obviously, the President has put an emphasis on making sure that NATO countries can secure and defend themselves at all times. So that is a huge priority for us, Senator, is being able to have a country secure and defend itself at all times. Part of that is a system of being able to use roughly 5 percent GDP in a country to be put toward that. I will tell you, Montenegro is making a significant stride in doing that, Senator, and it is very important to what they are doing. They take the qualifications and the chips that they need to kind of knock off in terms of follow, in terms of doing the right thing, they take it exceptionally seriously, and that is something they will continue to do.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Mr. Travis, China has been, you know, with their Belt and Road Initiative and other things, they have had an adverse impact to our relationships in Africa. So how are you going to change that?

Mr. TRAVIS. Thank you for the question, Senator.

China's ever growing presence and influence in Sierra Leone is a top concern for me mainly in three areas: first, in their continued dominance of the critical minerals area, also in illegal fishing, and then last, their increasing investment in Sierra Leone media. When it comes to critical minerals, I was very happy to see that recently, the government of Sierra Leone canceled a \$300 million mining contract for a Chinese company that they felt was not going to benefit their people. I think that is an excellent signal from them and something that I hope to encourage deep looks at deals and making sure that they are getting what they deserve out of them.

For my part, if confirmed I will do everything I can to ensure that we have a better value offer. I think we are already on the

way with our power projects there, which will help Sierra Leone move up the value chain in mineral processing, something they want to do and China does not want that them to do. The other thing, I think, is to pay closer attention to what they are doing in the media space. They are copying things we have been successful with in the past, and I think we need to go to our strengths and make sure that we respond and compete as best we can.

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Congratulations, all of you, for your nominations. You are going to do a great job.

Senator HAGERTY [presiding]. Senator Curtis.

Senator CURTIS. Thank you.

Mr. Morris, Colombia, as you well know, hosts one of the largest U.S. embassies in the world with important mission to counter terrorism, drug trade, and migration, a very serious job. As a candidate, you used some pretty heated rhetoric against one of our colleagues, and the job of candidate, we all know, is very different from that of a diplomat. So I would like to give you a chance to spell out how you are going to transition from a heated campaign to a diplomat? For the role—you will be advancing in that role the interest of the United States broadly, and representing all Americans, not really yourself, and occasionally actually hosting Senators and Members of Congress who you may passionately disagree with. How will you ensure that your personal political views never interfere with that responsibility?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, thank you, Senator, for that question. It is great to be before you.

Certainly, I have had a lot of different jobs throughout my career. I am very proud that I am an entrepreneur. I took about \$10,000 on a credit card and built a very large company, creating thousands of jobs and obviously have interacted with lots of different types of folks throughout my career and led them in many different ways.

Being a candidate and being a diplomat are radically different positions, as you know. And my belief is, is that as someone who has been a leader in the private sector, bringing that same type of leadership that is going to include everyone at the embassy and all Americans and their interests in this relationship with Colombia. So I recognize that being a political candidate is a much different job than a diplomat, but what I can tell you is that in my role in the private sector, I had to wear many hats, and I have had many experiences, and I want to draw upon all those experiences in the post at Bogota if confirmed.

Senator CURTIS. So with your hopeful diplomatic hat on, is there anything that you would like to say to rectify or have you taken any steps to rectify a perhaps damaged relationship?

Mr. MORRIS. Senator, what relationship?

Senator CURTIS. I am talking about—and I will read them if you would like—

Mr. MORRIS. No, that—

Senator CURTIS [continuing]. Some of the harsh words you have said against one of my colleagues, and if you do not know what those are, I am happy to read them.

Mr. MORRIS. Well, Senator, what I would say is that obviously campaigns are very spirited. They are contrast—

Senator CURTIS. That is right, and you are no longer in a campaign. You are here as a diplomat, and you will be working with all of us and our colleagues. You do not have to do it, but I am simply giving you the chance to say, you know what, I can be a diplomat, and if I had an opportunity, I would do some things differently. I do not want to put words in your mouth. It is your opportunity to do whatever you want.

Mr. MORRIS. Well, thank you, Senator. I appreciate that.

Look, I am very proud of the campaign that we ran, and I think that, obviously, getting the nomination from the President was one of the great honors of my life. But I think the way that we exited our campaign as well tells you everything you need to know about my character——

Senator CURTIS. No regrets?

Mr. MORRIS [continuing]. Bringing people together and——

Senator CURTIS. No regrets? Nothing to say? That is all I am asking.

Mr. MORRIS. Senator, I am very proud of the campaign that we ran.

Senator CURTIS. All right. It is hard for me to see that you have not taken off your candidate hat. You are still acting like a candidate.

Mr. MORRIS. Senator, again, I remain very proud of everyone that worked on our campaign, the campaign that we ran, and I think we were met with tremendous enthusiasm from Kentuckians and from people all over the country.

Senator CURTIS. OK.

I yield my time.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you.

I would like to turn to Senator Cruz, please.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations to each of the three nominees.

Mr. Morris, I want to congratulate you for your excellent judgment in marrying a Texan, and I will say, like me, you vastly outkicked your coverage. So I know you can be really dang persuasive, and the post you have been nominated to is a very important one.

I want to talk to you first about illicit gold mining. Illicit gold mining has become one of the largest sources of revenue for criminal organizations and terrorists across the Western Hemisphere. For some groups, it is a more significant source of revenue than drugs. They use the proceeds to purchase weapons, expand territorial control, and undermine our allies throughout the region, all at the expense of American national security. The situation in Colombia has become particularly challenging. The ELN, the FARC, and other criminal organizations operate across the Colombia-Venezuela border and profit from illicit gold mining in both countries.

Earlier this year, this committee advanced legislation to explicitly link our sanctions and anti-money laundering authorities to target illicit gold. We should use every financial tool available to disrupt these criminal revenue streams. Please walk us through the role that illicit gold mining plays in financing the ELN, the FARC, and other dissident groups and other criminal groups operating in Colombia today, and if confirmed, how do you intend to approach it?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, Senator, thank you so much for the question. It is great to be before you.

First and foremost, I think with any industry, you have got to understand the rules of the road, and I believe that the new president has an incredible opportunity to reset the way that this industry is operated for many years, many, many times off the grid in the dark ages. Bringing technology, transparency, and accountability to the industry I think is paramount. There is no excuse to let any criminals get access to the funds, whether it be in any industry.

And one of the things that I can tell you, my experience in the private sector, is sunlight is the greatest disinfectant. And I think that the accountability and the transparency that I believe this new president will provide is going to begin to shore up and clean up an industry that has been very tough for a long time.

Senator CRUZ. When Gustavo Petro was elected, I went down to the Senate floor to outline the threats that he posed to American national security interests, many of which were subsequently confirmed. Colombia has long been one of America's key security partners in Latin America, and renewed ties with Israel would reinforce that partnership and promote U.S. interests across the region. In addition to directly undermining America across the hemisphere, Petro also—and I would say almost ostentatiously—sought to undermine our allies. For example, about Israel, he compared Israel to Nazi Germany. He refused to condemn Hamas's terrorist attack in which dozens of Americans were killed and taken hostage. He severed Colombia's longstanding diplomatic relationship with Israel, and he joined South Africa's case before the International Court of Justice, which the United States has consistently identified as a threat to not just the sovereignty of our allies, but our own sovereignty.

I am encouraged that Colombia's incoming administration is preparing to reverse nearly every major element of that policy. The president-elect has said that he has pledged to restore full diplomatic relations with Israel, establish Colombia's embassy in Jerusalem, and officially withdraw from the ICJ case. My hope is that Colombia replicates that behavior with the full range of our regional and global allies and partners. Talk about the opportunities you see emerging in Colombia, specifically as they relate to renewed bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral cooperation.

Mr. MORRIS. Absolutely. Senator, thank you again for the question.

You know, Colombia has been through a tough couple years, and I think growth has been stagnant because of that. I think the ability to build relationships and to have trust among nations all over the world has compromised Colombia because of leadership that you just outlined. But again, as United States ambassador, one of the best things I can do is help convene and facilitate opportunities to rebuild that trust, rebuild that cooperation between Colombia and the United States, but also all nations that really rely on that relationship and need that relationship to be effective in the hemisphere. And I think that really starts with roles like the U.S. ambassador and the new president that is coming to office this week.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Cruz, and I am going to stay on that line of questioning, Senator Cruz, because I think you did a great job of highlighting some of the concerns that we all had under President Petro. But with president-elect de la Espriella coming into office August 7, I think there is a real opportunity for a reset.

I will just add to what Senator Cruz said. I spent 3 ½ hours with President Petro back in 2023, going through what the opportunities might actually look like in Colombia were they to cooperate with us. I reminded him of the role I played when I was serving as Commerce Secretary in Tennessee. We call it something different there, but we really converted our State from an agrarian economy to a manufacturing economy in one generation. We moved from a cash crop called tobacco into an area that now has Tennessee at the forefront of economic development, but we did that by making certain that Tennessee was a great home for capital investment. It has taken 15 years. Tennessee is at the forefront now, but that effort started out by creating a set of circumstances that attracted capital.

So my question to you, Mr. Morris, is, given your extensive background in business, how do you see your role in attracting American capital to a country that has been so hostile to this point, at least it was under President Petro, and how do you intend to reset relations under this new president who offers such great hope?

Mr. MORRIS. Thank you, Senator. It is great to be before you today.

We know that capital always goes where it is safe, it is celebrated, and there is transparency and accountability for every dollar that is put into a State, a country, a company, whatever it might be. The private sector has certainly shown me that time and time again, and I believe in a situation in revitalizing an economy like Colombia, it really begins with leadership, and it begins with leadership from the United States, particularly in the role of U.S. ambassador.

I think we have a unique opportunity, a unique platform to show business why Colombia is going to be a great bet for many years to come. And what I think the United States should be interested in in that relationship is a long term economic plan together to continue to allow American businesses to invest in Colombia with certainty and security. We have a number of methods in the government which we have done that, whether it be the DFC or other measures. But these are things that I think are going to give great confidence to the private sector to say that, America, we understand private sector can solve a lot of challenges. It is going to make us safer, more secure, get us off the coca trade that has devastated many aspects of Colombia and also American society, and also provide opportunity for Colombians that have not had a chance to participate in economy.

I mean, this is an economy, about 75 percent of it is local, so it has been offline, off the grid. And we have the ability to—I believe through private investment and infrastructure to bring these people online and show them new economic opportunities that they can have, which I think will have a long term impact on the rela-

tionship between the two countries, but also allowing the United States to continue to thrive with American industry and their investment in the region.

Senator HAGERTY. I think, and this goes for all three of the candidates today, sometimes to be an—often I should say, to be an effective ambassador, you have to be willing to give tough medicine and a tough message to your host country. In this case, I want to raise another concern—I am going to stay with you, Mr. Morris—regarding Colombia and their relationship with the CCP.

Under President Petro, Colombia joined China's Belt and Road Initiative. China has made massive inroads into Colombia. I would like to get your perspective on the national security issue that that might raise and type of messaging you are going to provide to help the Colombian government and the Colombian people realize the risk that they are undertaking with China.

Mr. MORRIS. Thank you, Senator.

As I think we have realized, the Belt and Road Initiative has compromised the sovereignty and security of America all over the world, and I think—in particular with Colombia, I think the Colombian government needs to make the decision if it is the United States or China. I do not believe that it is productive to have both of us in the country investing. And I am very encouraged by the new president and his commitment to remove Colombia from that MOU with the Belt and Road Initiative. I think that is an incredible step to showcase where allegiances lie and to continue to celebrate the cherished relationship that the two countries have had and the economic cooperation that has gotten great results over the years.

So I am very encouraged by that, but again I believe this is about long-term economic sovereignty and security, and getting off the Belt and Road Initiative—

Senator HAGERTY. One more—

Mr. MORRIS [continuing]. Is one of the key steps in that.

Senator HAGERTY. One more point on this. Again, I see a great opportunity for a reset here and certainly an opportunity to turn things around with this new regime so that Colombia can become actually a shining example of what it looks like to cooperate with the United States and address the concerns that we have highlighted under President Petro.

But there is something that has been going on under President Petro that has been quite disturbing to me. It has come to my office, probably others on this committee. It has to do with a U.S. investor group. It is called Sea Search Armada, and they have gone through the entire process of locating and finding the *San Jose* shipwreck there off the shore—off the coast of Colombia. The Colombian Supreme Court has recognized their rights, yet the Colombian government has chosen to ignore that, another situation where U.S. investors are being treated poorly in a country where I think we need to see a turnaround. So I would just like to get your commitment to work on trying to resolve this situation as well with the Colombian government.

Mr. MORRIS. Absolutely, Senator. You have my commitment.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, and I will also encourage you as well to look at our energy security opportunities. You touched on

them at a high level, but I think energy security with Colombia will be a great opportunity to advance our mutual interests.

Senator Shaheen, I understand you might want to ask a few more questions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes. Thank you.

I have two more questions for Mr. Travis because in its Third Country Agreement with the United States, for which the U.S. provided \$1.6 million, Sierra Leone committed to upholding its international legal obligations, including not sending vulnerable individuals—migrants—back to countries where they would face torture, persecution, or death. There is now credible evidence that Sierra Leone is violating this commitment. So if confirmed do you commit to reporting back to this committee on the implementation of that Third Country National Agreement and to also raising with the Government of Sierra Leone any violations that they may be doing of that agreement?

Mr. TRAVIS. Thank you for that question, Senator.

I have seen media reports on what you are commenting on. If confirmed I can assure you that I will advocate that the government of Sierra Leone, that they comply with all of their agreements with the U.S. Government, to include Third Country National Agreement, to the letter.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

In your statement, you talked about the finite limits of U.S. diplomacy, but after the 2023 presidential election in Sierra Leone, the previous ambassador played a key role in brokering an agreement for national unity between the ruling party and the opposition party, and that ushered in key reforms. As you look at that agreement, what still needs to be done under that agreement to ensure that Sierra Leone's next election does not result in another wave of violence?

Mr. TRAVIS. Thank you, Senator.

Yes, the agreement that Ambassador Hunt helped to negotiate, I think, is a very important one. My understanding is that they have come up with 80 recommendations out of that agreement. I am not familiar with the specifics of how much progress they have made, but I understand that they are not near half. So you can be assured that if confirmed I will make progress an important priority for me, working with our partners who helped to negotiate that agreement, and the government and civil society, to make sure that we get where we need to go. As you know, the violence of Sierra Leone's civil war is like a cloud over all Sierra Leonean politics and civil life, and so I think we will have strong commitment from both sides on the political fronts in Sierra Leone to move forward.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, and I want to commend all of our panelists today. It is quite an honor to be nominated to represent the greatest country in the world to any nation, and I think you all take that responsibility on very seriously. You have done an impressive job today, and I could understand why you have been nominated to serve.

We are going to be adding any letters of support that the committee may have received to the record today, and for the information of the members of the committee, which is just the two of us right now, but your staffs are here, the record is going to remain open until the close of business, Thursday, August 6, in order for members to submit questions to the record.

[The information referred to above was not received at press time.]

Senator HAGERTY. With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. PETER MCCOY BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Do you support Montenegro's aspirations to join the European Union?

Answer. Whether Montenegro pursues European Union membership is a sovereign decision and one for the citizens of Montenegro to make through their elected leaders. If confirmed, I will remain committed to strengthening the bilateral relationship between the United States and Montenegro, regardless of its EU status.

Question. In 2021, you spoke out against the violence on January 6th, tweeting: "Let me be perfectly clear: Federal crimes were violated today at our Nation's Capitol building. Anyone who traveled from the District of South Carolina with intent to aid this travesty or commit acts of destruction will be prosecuted by @USAO_SC."

Do you stand by your comment that Federal crimes were violated that day?

Answer. I stand by my statement that I condemn all acts of destruction and violence.

Question. Do you stand by your assessment that January 6th was a "travesty"?

Answer. I stand by my statement that destruction and violence of any kind is a travesty.

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. Over the past 7 years, I have traveled extensively in Europe and the Caribbean. I was an elected South Carolina House Member for 10 years. In 2019, I traveled with House members to Greece to interact with their parliament. I am the current chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Authority, the fourth largest State-Owned Utility in the Nation. We interact with persons with interests related to energy all over the Country and some who have interests overseas. As United States Attorney, I oversaw four offices statewide with over one hundred and fifty employees. If confirmed, I plan to work with the incredible men and women at the Department of State daily. All these experiences, as well as working with career foreign service officers with invaluable institutional knowledge, will help aid my ability to fulfill Ambassadorial duties if I am confirmed.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in the U.S. relationship with Montenegro?

Answer. The United States has no greater priority than the protection of American citizens—from ensuring the safety of individual American travelers abroad to bolstering homeland security through bilateral law enforcement cooperation. Fortunately, the United States and Montenegro have a strong law enforcement partnership strengthened by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement's programming. If confirmed, I would continue to deepen that partnership and seek additional support from the interagency to produce results for the safety and security of the United States. Montenegro is a valued NATO ally and, if confirmed, I will work to build Montenegro's capacity to become a more active and capable partner in strengthening Western Balkan security and stability and defending NATO's Eastern Flank. Moreover, if confirmed, I will also focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment through our recently concluded Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to increase opportunities for U.S. companies in the Montenegrin market. I will

advocate for Montenegrin companies that want to partner and invest in the United States. Through the commercial law development programming (CLDP) envisioned in the IGA, I will promote U.S. exports, and fight for transparency and the rule of law as Montenegro improves its business environment. I will also press for greater energy diversity and efficiency that will further Montenegrin and European energy security. Finally, if confirmed, I will also focus on actively engaging the Montenegrin public to build support to advance our mutual national interests.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Montenegro?

Answer. Montenegro's principal security and economic threats stem from strategic competitors seeking to undermine U.S. interests. Chinese investment in the country's critical infrastructure, energy production, and telecommunications and IT systems poses significant risk to U.S. and NATO security. Additionally, Montenegro must increase investment in—and develop a clear plan to meet—its NATO capability targets.

If confirmed, I will work to mitigate foreign economic coercion that erodes U.S. and allied security in Montenegro. The U.S.-Montenegro Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) offers a strong opportunity to provide trusted U.S. vendor alternatives to Chinese companies, allowing Montenegro to direct select or sole-source procurement to U.S. firms for strategic infrastructure, digital/tech, security, and energy projects in its national interest. I will also prioritize helping Montenegro diversify its energy supplies—reducing regional dependence on Russian energy, expanding opportunities for U.S. businesses and investors, and advancing commercial projects that support U.S. economic interests.

Finally, I will encourage Montenegro to meet its NATO defense spending commitments and ensure those resources strengthen NATO deterrence and collective defense. More broadly, I will leverage the embassy's political, economic, public diplomacy, and security cooperation tools to advance U.S. interests while reinforcing Montenegro's role as a strong and reliable ally.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. America First Foreign Policy is working with other Countries to show how American technology, innovation, military, energy initiatives, and family values can be shown as a shining example worldwide. It is policy implemented by President Trump through Secretary Rubio to promote a safer, stronger, and more prosperous America.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Montenegro?

Answer. If confirmed, I would implement an America First foreign policy by ensuring our relationship with Montenegro delivers tangible benefits to the American people. Through our Economic Dialogue MOU and the IGA, I would work to expand opportunities for U.S. businesses, workers, and investors by promoting U.S. exports, reducing barriers to trade and investment, and supporting major commercial opportunities for U.S. firms. Second, I would encourage Montenegro to meet its NATO defense spending and capability commitments. I would also deepen law enforcement ties to counter local transnational criminal organizations connected to Western Hemisphere cartels that harm America with illicit drugs and violence. Third, I would support efforts to wean Europe off adversarial energy suppliers and expand opportunities for U.S. companies.

Question. In Montenegro, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. The United States is working closely with Montenegro to counter Russian and Chinese efforts to undermine U.S. interests, economic coercion, and cyber threats. The United States and Montenegro cooperate closely through NATO and our bilateral security relationship to support Montenegro's efforts to build modern defense capabilities and strengthen critical infrastructure. Economically, the U.S. Government supports opportunities for U.S. companies through the recently negotiated Intergovernmental Agreement. The U.S. Government also works to level the playing field for U.S. ventures through CLDP programming that helps Montenegro develop investment screening laws and trusted vendor national security procurements. The United States is also supporting Montenegro's work to diversify its energy sources and bolster its energy security. Finally, the U.S. Government supports continuing educational exchanges and other public diplomacy programs that foster an informed public that is resilient and clear-eyed about Chinese and Russian influence and that positions the United States as an important partner for Montenegro. If confirmed, I would continue these important efforts.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to People's Republic of China (PRC) influence operations and infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes. I understand the government approved the U.S.-Montenegro Inter-governmental Agreement on August 5, and Embassy Podgorica has already begun highlighting opportunities for U.S. companies. There are currently two potential cornerstone projects: replacing Chinese Nuctech cargo scanners and constructing the Adriatic-Ionian Corridor. The Corridor—featuring a highway, energy pipeline, and secure fiber-optic communications lines—will connect NATO allies across the Balkans. The IGA also allows for the government to select U.S. companies for future opportunities in technology and critical infrastructure including cybersecurity, telecommunications, and digital infrastructure. Finally, continued defense modernization offers opportunities for U.S. suppliers while strengthening NATO interoperability and enhancing collective defense.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States. This includes working closely with Congress on foreign policy.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under my management.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Montenegro?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advance human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in a manner that is respectful of Montenegro's sovereignty while remaining clear about America's values and interests. I believe that the United States is most persuasive when we lead through partnership rather than public criticism. I would engage regularly with Montenegrin government officials, members of parliament, businesses, and religious leaders to better understand and, as appropriate, influence developments on the ground.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid.

Answer. I believe that such aid is best used when both helping people in dire need and advancing U.S. interests. Montenegro does receive some support, which is soon sunset, through the Department of War. The U.S. Department of State does not provide humanitarian aid to Montenegro. Within Montenegro over recent years, DoW Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) programming was utilized to renovate multiple schools and hospitals which was essential in building up additional national resiliency and domestic capacity via U.S. "soft power." This assistance also provided critical tools to multiple firefighting and rescue organizations amidst the most devastating wildfire season in the Nation's history and additional capacity which led to rescuing lost American citizens and other foreign nationals in Montenegro. Finally, this assistance was also utilized to provide medical equipment and supplies to multiple hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic, which strained even the most advanced medical systems across the world.

Question. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. The U.S. Department of State does not provide humanitarian aid to Montenegro. I believe that such aid is best used when both helping people in dire need and advancing U.S. interests.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with all appropriate institutions to advance U.S. interests in Montenegro and more broadly.

Question. What should be the determining factors in whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. I believe that such aid is best used when both helping people in dire need and advancing U.S. interests.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. The President and his Cabinet and advisors, in consultation with Congress, are best placed to determine whether and when to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than “political purity” tests?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DANIEL TRAVIS BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to making yourself and the Embassy’s health team available to brief the committee on the bilateral Global Health MOU, implementation plan, and any other relevant assistance efforts?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, working with the Department’s Bureau of Legislative Affairs, I do.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DANIEL TRAVIS BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. September 10 will mark my 25th year in the Foreign Service. I have served 17 of those years overseas, including 12 in Africa. In Africa, I served as Deputy Chief of Mission and long-term *Chargé d’affaires* in the Republic of Congo, successfully leading an embassy through COVID lockdowns and contentious local elections. I have extensive experience in crisis management, having participated in five evacuations, including on a team managing the evacuation of Cairo during the Arab Spring.

Question. What are the most pressing issues or challenges in the U.S. relationship with Sierra Leone?

Answer. The top U.S. priorities in Sierra Leone are promoting U.S. trade and investment and ensuring Sierra Leone remains a reliable partner on migration and strengthening governance principles. If confirmed, I look forward to focusing on these areas.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on commercial development to advance U.S. strategic interests and mitigate competing foreign influence in Sierra Leone. I will also work to identify opportunities to cooperate on military and security priorities.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. The America First foreign policy means placing the interests of the United States and its citizens before those of all other nations.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Sierra Leone?

Answer. America First foreign policy champions core American interests and always puts America and U.S. citizens first. If confirmed, I will implement an America First foreign policy by strengthening U.S. security through immigration and migration cooperation, promoting trade and investment, and leveraging U.S. foreign assistance as a tool of statecraft.

Question. In Sierra Leone, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. The United States is countering Russian and Chinese influence in Sierra Leone by expanding U.S. commercial engagement and deepening our economic partnership through significant investments in energy, infrastructure, and telecommunications.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to People’s Republic of China (PRC) influence operations and infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes. Sierra Leone's economy presents substantial opportunities where U.S. companies can compete directly with Chinese alternatives. If confirmed, I will highlight to my Sierra Leonean counterparts the benefits of partnering with the United States.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. I believe that Congress and the executive branch share the fundamental goal of advancing U.S. national security and foreign policy interests. If confirmed, I will faithfully implement the policies of the Administration while ensuring full compliance with all applicable laws.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure that Embassy Freetown fulfills all statutory requirements, including those concerning foreign assistance, in a way that advances American interests in Sierra Leone while delivering results and ensuring responsible stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed, I will direct the U.S. Embassy in Freetown's engagement with partner diplomatic missions and the full range of Sierra Leonean officials and citizens to promote respect for human rights, including religious freedom, and address wide-spread corruption.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid.

Answer. Humanitarian aid is critical to managing crises before they escalate. The burden of humanitarian aid should be shared widely and carefully monitored to ensure it is spent responsibly and as intended.

Question. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. The United States remains the world's most generous donor of humanitarian assistance. Within the America First Foreign Assistance framework, our aid is targeted, efficient, and accountable to the taxpayer, and we continue to press international partners and the U.N. system to do more.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. The United States' use of bilateral mechanisms allows for the rapid deployment of time-bound, life-saving assistance while reducing bureaucratic burdens on staff. This approach reinforces our work to make humanitarian assistance faster, more efficient, and more accountable to U.S. taxpayers.

Question. What should be the determining factors in whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. The Department considers the following factors when deciding whether to provide humanitarian assistance: (1) there is evidence of significant unmet need, (2) U.S. disaster assistance will save the lives of disaster-affected people, (3) the affected country requests or will accept international assistance, and (4) responding supports explicit U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. Declarations of Humanitarian Need are issued by the Chief of Mission. Additional assistance may be provided at the discretion of Department leadership in response to humanitarian need and/or foreign policy priorities, in coordination with the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than "political purity" tests?

Answer. I commit to abide by the State Department's rules and regulations as defined in the Foreign Affairs Manual.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO DANIEL TRAVIS BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. What specific electoral reforms will you prioritize and encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to adopt in advance of the 2028 elections to promote a credible and transparent process?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to implement the electoral, legislative, and judicial recommendations of the Tripartite Committee process, including the restructuring of the Electoral Commission.

Question. Why did the Trump administration not provide International Military Education and Training in fiscal year 2026?

Answer. Secretary Rubio has emphasized that IMET remains a key tool of American diplomacy and smart investments to strengthen allies and partners' ability to defend themselves.

Question. If confirmed, what tools and programs do you plan to prioritize to advance U.S. security objectives and strengthen professional, accountable security institutions and civilian oversight of the military in Sierra Leone in the absence of IMET funding?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the interagency to leverage available security cooperation tools to strengthen professional, accountable security institutions and support civilian oversight of the military in Sierra Leone.

Question. If confirmed, what metrics will you use to assess the effectiveness of the 2025 U.S.-Sierra Leone health cooperation agreement?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the results of the U.S.-Sierra Leone health partnership against the memorandum of understanding's (MOU) core benchmarks, including reducing malaria deaths by 75 percent, improving HIV diagnosis and treatment rates, integrating health workers into the national payroll, and establishing a national outbreak surveillance system.

Question. Will data related to these metrics be made available to either Congress or the public, and if so how frequently will the data be updated?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to ensure relevant data is made available to Congress upon request, consistent with standard reporting practices.

Question. If confirmed, how will you assess progress toward achieving the agreement's key public health objectives?

Answer. If confirmed, I will track progress toward the key public health objectives using the benchmarks and timelines built into the MOU, and I will engage regularly with Sierra Leonean counterparts and U.S. health agencies to ensure the partnership stays on track.

Question. Will your assessment of progress be made available to either Congress or the public, and if so how frequently?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Bureau of Legislative Affairs to ensure that assessments of progress are made available to Congress upon request, consistent with standard reporting practices.

Question. How do you plan to use the lessons learned from Sierra Leone's 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak to inform your priorities for strengthening U.S.-Sierra Leone health security cooperation, particularly epidemic preparedness, disease surveillance, and health system resilience?

Answer. If confirmed, I will draw on the lessons of the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak to ensure Sierra Leone builds on the disease surveillance and outbreak response capacity that the country and international partners have developed over the past decade. The current health MOU further strengthens that foundation through the national outbreak surveillance system.

Question. Following the termination of most USAID programming to Sierra Leone, including health assistance, how will you work to mitigate the potential gaps in critical health services previously supported by U.S. assistance and ensure continuity of shared health security priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the health MOU's benchmarks and co-investment commitments help sustain core health security priorities, while encouraging Sierra Leone to assume greater responsibility for financing and delivering these services over time.

Question. If confirmed, how will you leverage MCC and DFC investments to advance U.S. strategic interests, promote transparent governance, and provide a credible alternative to PRC-backed financing and investment practices in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the interagency to ensure that the MCC compact and DFC investments are used to advance transparent, U.S.-backed development that offers Sierra Leone a credible alternative to Beijing-backed financing, while holding the government accountable for the reforms necessary to attract American investment.

Question. Why is the MCC compact still at the pre-implementation stage, 21 months after the signing of the underlying compact in September 2024?

Answer. MCC implementation was paused during the 2025 foreign assistance review and government shutdown.

Question. In your view, what PRC activity in Sierra Leone, if any, poses competitive or security threats to U.S. interests?

Answer. I understand China has expanded its economic footprint in Sierra Leone, including in fishing, mining, and infrastructure. If confirmed, I will pay particular attention to projects with national and economic security implications for the United States' interests, including those potential dual-use applications.

Question. How—aside from MCC and DFC investments as mentioned above—would you seek to counter competitive or security threats from the PRC in Sierra Leone?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advocate for transparent, rules-based frameworks in sectors like fishing and mining, so that American companies can compete on a level playing field with Beijing-backed actors.

Question. How many third-party nationals has the Administration transferred to Sierra Leone under the bilateral agreement allowing such transfers?

Answer. I would refer you to the Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for the removal of aliens from the United States, for information about its operations.

Question. Is the arrangement to transfer third-party nationals to Sierra Leone necessary?

Answer. Third-country removal arrangements like the one with Sierra Leone are an important tool for enforcing U.S. immigration law when individuals cannot be returned to their countries of origin. If confirmed, I will work to ensure this arrangement continues to support the Administration's immigration enforcement priorities.

Question. If yes, why?

Answer. Such arrangements are a necessary tool to remove individuals who cannot be returned to their countries of origin, supporting the Administration's broader efforts to enforce immigration law and secure U.S. borders.

Question. If no, why?

Answer. I am aware that Sierra Leone has engaged in repatriation efforts consistent with its commitments under the arrangement. Such arrangements are a necessary tool to remove individuals who cannot be returned to their countries of origin, supporting the Administration's broader efforts to enforce immigration law and secure U.S. borders.

Question. How many, if any, of these transferees have Sierra Leone's government repatriated to their home countries, and under what legal and humanitarian conditions?

Answer. I am not in a position to speak to how many third-country nationals the Government of Sierra Leone has repatriated or the conditions under which it repatriated them. However, I understand that, as part of the third-country national arrangement, the Government of Sierra Leone committed to treat any third-country nationals transferred from the United States in accordance with its international human rights obligations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NATHANIEL MORRIS BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Colombian President-elect Abelardo de la Espriella has expressed plans to dismantle crucial components of the 2016 Peace Accords, shifting toward a more aggressive security-first approach against remaining guerillas. If confirmed, how would you engage with the new government to ensure that a renewed security focus does not come at the expense of the peace process, civilian protections and human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage the government early to make clear that security gains and civilian protections are not competing goals; rather they reinforce one another. I am aware that the Petro administration's own shortcomings in policy, coordination, and resourcing limited the 2016 Peace Accord implementation.

A security-first approach that consolidates state authority in ungoverned areas can support long-term stability, but Colombia must pursue it in a manner consistent with respect for human rights and the rule of law. I will continue to urge Colombian authorities to prioritize the Accord's provisions on security, infrastructure, and reform.

Question. If the new administration moves to undermine the 2016 Peace Accords, what tools should the U.S. leverage to safeguard commitments made under the Accords?

Answer. The United States is committed to peace and justice in Colombia, and our relationship with the Colombian people and their institutions is strong and enduring. If confirmed, I will continue to urge the Government of Colombia to prioritize comprehensive and expeditious implementation of its commitments under the Peace Accord, especially those related to security and infrastructure investment, as part of a permanent solution to Colombian narcoterrorism and insecurity.

Question. Do you commit to not being a partisan actor in an increasingly partisan bilateral relationship?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to serving as the President's representative to the Republic of Colombia, and I will work to fulfill President Trump and Secretary Rubio's foreign policy objectives. To do that, I commit to working with all parts of the Colombian government to ensure America's objectives are fulfilled. The U.S.-Colombia partnership has been sustained by coalitions in both countries, and if confirmed I will engage Colombia's government and private sector to advance American interests on security, counternarcotics, and trade.

Question. Do you commit to meeting with a diverse range of the Colombian opposition and conveying to the incoming Colombian government the importance of engaging with the United States on a bipartisan basis?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage with a range of Colombian political and civil society voices as part of representing the full scope of U.S. interests in Colombia. The bilateral relationship has benefited from sustained bilateral support, and I will encourage the Colombian government to value that continuity in its own engagement with the United States.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to fill the gap left by the administration's foreign assistance cuts?

Answer. The Department has realigned foreign assistance to America First priorities by concentrating resources on life-saving programming and strategic investments that directly advance U.S. national interests. For Colombia, that means prioritizing the tools most aligned with this Administration's approach: security, infrastructure investment, and reforms that reduce opportunities for illicit actors to exploit for illegal gain. To that end, the United States announced \$1 billion in assistance to support President de la Espriella's Administration in achieving our shared economic and security goals. There is also a role for the private sector to play, investing in licit supply chains and markets that can offer Colombians durable alternatives to coca cultivation. If confirmed, my priority will be to ensure that resources the United States commits to Colombia are targeted and efficient to deliver measurable impact for both the Colombian people and the American taxpayer.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO NATHANIEL MORRIS BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Do you support U.S. military strikes on boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific?

Answer. I have not been briefed on these programs or the legal basis for them, and do not have a framework to evaluate their utility or effectiveness. Illicit narcotics claim tens of thousands of American lives every year, and President Trump has made clear that drug cartels will no longer operate with impunity in our hemisphere. If confirmed, I will fully support that commitment. Dismantling these networks requires every tool available: diplomatic, economic, and security.

Question. Should those operations be extended to targets inside Colombia?

Answer. I welcome Colombia's cooperation with the United States on a range of security matters, which makes both of our countries safer. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for continued partnership between the Department of War and the Government of Colombia in accordance with policy direction from Washington. For information on specific operations, I would refer you to the Department of War.

Question. Would you support U.S. military action inside Colombia if the Colombian government did not consent to it?

Answer. Decisions regarding U.S. military action are made by appropriate decisionmakers in the executive branch, and ultimately by the President as Commander in Chief, and I would not get ahead of that process. If confirmed, my role would be to support the bilateral relationship and ensure our security cooperation and assistance with Colombia continues to advance the shared interests of both countries.

Question. Do you consider Colombia an ally of the United States?

Answer. Colombia is a major non-NATO ally and vital strategic partner with more than 200 years of shared history and, if confirmed, I will prioritize advancing that partnership. The United States has a deep, long-standing interest in Colombia's stability, security, and prosperity. To my understanding, the relationship faced serious strain in recent years, so restoring it to its full potential will require sustained, principled engagement. I understand that President Abelardo de la Espriella seeks a close relationship with the United States and is aligned on a variety of important issues, including security, counternarcotics, and trade.

Our countries maintain vibrant political, economic, and cultural ties that serve the enduring interests of both our peoples. If confirmed, my commitment will be to the long-term security and prosperity of both our nations, and I intend to engage Colombia's government and security forces to deliver on that commitment.

Question. Describe your previous work in international diplomacy and how that experience will help you fulfill your duties as Ambassador.

Answer. Early in my career, I had the opportunity to work for the Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development in Asia, where I worked to expand investment for Kentucky industry and economic cooperation. I was also selected as a U.S. Department of State Fulbright Scholar, earned a certificate from the U.S. Army War College, served as a Senior Advisor at the Atlantic Council, and earned my MBA from the University of Oxford. I am a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former member of the Trilateral Commission. I also completed the Department of State's Ambassadorial Seminar. I pair that foreign policy grounding with a business career in which I built a company from a startup into a publicly traded enterprise, operating across 50 States and 20 countries, negotiating complex agreements, and delivering results. If confirmed, I will bring that same results-driven approach to Embassy Bogota, working alongside its career professionals to advance American interests.

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in the U.S. relationship with Colombia?

Answer. While the U.S. partnership with Colombia is strong, it does face challenges. For instance, we have observed in recent years record levels of coca cultivation, and security conditions are difficult. If confirmed, counternarcotics will be a top priority: pressing Colombia to take concrete action to reduce record coca cultivation and cocaine production, restore a fully functioning extradition relationship, and ensure U.S. security assistance delivers real results. I will also work to strengthen the security partnership against the armed groups (the ELN, FARC dissidents, Clan del Golfo, and others) that threaten Colombia's stability and drive drug trafficking across the region.

Question. If confirmed, how will you address the primary security and economic threats to U.S. interests in Colombia?

Answer. The Colombian Presidential transition on August 7 presented a genuine opportunity to reset this relationship, and, if confirmed, I intend to engage the new government early and directly to establish a foundation of trust, shared priorities, and mutual accountability. The fundamentals of this partnership are strong: deep commercial ties, a common interest in regional security, and over 200 years of diplomatic relations.

I understand President Abelardo de la Espriella's administration will be serious about counternarcotics, rule of law, and confronting armed groups, and will find a willing and committed partner in the United States.

Question. In your own words, what is an America First foreign policy?

Answer. An America First foreign policy measures every action abroad by whether it makes Americans safer, stronger, and more prosperous. In Colombia, that means stopping the flow of illicit drugs, dismantling criminal organizations, and expanding trade and investment that benefits both countries. America First does not mean America alone. Colombia is a vital partner, and if confirmed I will strengthen that partnership in service of American interests.

Question. What will implementing an America First foreign policy entail in Colombia?

Answer. Under President Trump's America First agenda, our foreign policy toward Colombia should continue to focus on our Nation's core priorities: strengthening our security and economic partnerships to deliver for the people of the United States.

Question. In Colombia, how is the United States working to push back against Russian and Chinese influence?

Answer. The Trump Administration works to ensure the United States remains preeminent in our hemisphere by offering a transparent and beneficial alternative to exploitative practices and any malign external actors. This means helping partners understand the risks of predatory lending and opaque deals that undermine sovereignty and leave countries with unsustainable debt. If confirmed,

I will work with colleagues in the Department of State and interagency to offer viable alternatives as the partner of choice in critical sectors like energy, mining, technology, and infrastructure—areas where American investment can deliver sustainable growth while securing supply chains vital to our national security.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to People's Republic of China (PRC) influence operations and infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. Yes, I understand that the U.S. Government and embassies throughout the region work to identify commercial opportunities and advocate for U.S. companies, especially in strategic sectors including infrastructure, critical minerals, energy, and technology. The Trump Administration also provides technical assistance through the U.S. Trade and Development Agency and the Transaction Advisory Fund, as well as financing tools from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and Export-Import Bank of the United States to derisk projects for U.S. companies and offer viable alternatives to malign Chinese investment and financing.

Question. Congress and the executive branch at times have opposing views on how to achieve our national security goals abroad. How will you approach situations where the statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress diverge from the executive branch's policy priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, my approach to any situation pertaining to statutory requirements and oversight actions by Congress will always be to consult relevant departmental colleagues, such as the Office of the Legal Adviser, the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, and others who are able to provide insight.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to obligating all appropriated funds for programs and statutory requirements under your management?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to doing my part to obligate appropriated funds in accordance with the law. I also commit to working closely with Congress to ensure appropriated resources are used effectively to advance U.S. national interests.

Question. If confirmed, how will you work to promote human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts in Colombia?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advance internationally recognized human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption efforts as core pillars of U.S. engagement with Colombia. I will work closely with the Government of Colombia to strengthen the rule of law and support independent media and civil society. I will also engage with the government on transparency and good governance, recognizing that corruption fuels transnational criminal activity, illegal migration, undermines public trust, and threatens regional stability.

Question. Describe your philosophy on humanitarian aid.

Answer. My philosophy on humanitarian aid is grounded in making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous while alleviating human suffering. The United States is the world's most generous nation, and must continue to lead on this, but in a way that directly benefits the American people and promotes our national interests.

As outlined in the Department of State's Strategic Plan, the Department has refocused its assistance programs into two categories: life-saving programs and strategic investments. Life-saving assistance includes time-limited health and humanitarian programs, disaster response, food security initiatives, and efforts to combat deadly diseases.

Question. What are the responsibilities and opportunities for the United States in providing humanitarian aid and assistance around the globe?

Answer. The United States remains the largest single humanitarian donor in the world. The United States is committed to an America First Foreign Assistance policy that aligns with administration priorities and advances concrete U.S. national interests. The United States is continuing to support life-saving humanitarian assistance as we press for transformative change and U.N. reforms that reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and increase accountability for American taxpayers and populations impacted by crises.

Question. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working through bilateral and multilateral processes on humanitarian aid?

Answer. The Department of State's Bureau for Disaster and Humanitarian Response is leveraging the comparative advantages of multilateral funding mechanisms and direct funding to trusted implementers. Since December 2025, the U.S. has announced a record \$3.8 billion in humanitarian assistance across 21 key countries through the pooled funding mechanisms managed by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

I understand this announcement has already led to historic reforms to U.N. humanitarian bureaucracy, bringing activities under a single U.N. Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, enhancing efficiency and delivering measurable impact, improving accountability and eliminating waste, fraud and abuse, and slashing bureaucracy to spend more on life-saving frontline work and less on overhead. The Department is also complementing this by providing funding to select implementers such as Samaritan's Purse, IFRC, ICRC, Catholic Relief Services, World Food Program, UNICEF, and a consortium of faith-based organizations.

This direct funding will enable these organizations to deliver assistance where it is needed most, whether responding to sudden-onset disasters or addressing surges in needs within ongoing complex emergencies. By consolidating funding into these awards, these organizations gain the budget predictability needed to pre-position resources, maintain staffing, and respond immediately, bypassing lengthy procurement processes and sustaining a model that can move at the speed that crises demand.

Question. What should be the determining factors in whether to use humanitarian aid as a tool in our national security toolkit?

Answer. Humanitarian assistance has been and will always be a tool in the United States' national security toolkit. The Department of State will direct humanitarian assistance to address the most urgent, lifesaving priorities while also ensuring that such assistance can be used efficiently and effectively and not create dependency.

Question. Who makes that decision?

Answer. The Secretary of State leads U.S. foreign assistance strategy under the President's direction, coordinating resources—including humanitarian assistance—with other departments and agencies to ensure they align with national security priorities.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than "political purity" tests?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to making personnel decisions within my authority based on merit, performance, and the needs of the mission, consistent with applicable law and Department regulations.

Submitted by Senator Tim Kaine

U.S. Revokes Visa of Top Brazilian Diplomat, Dialing Up Tensions

The State Department has canceled the visa of the Brazilian ambassador in Washington, deepening a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti will not be kicked out of the United States, and her visa will be reinstated if Brazil accepts Daniel Perez, a Republican state lawmaker in Florida, as the next American ambassador to Brazil. Credit...Luiz Rampelotto/ZUMA Press, via Reuters

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By [Ana Ionova](#) and [Adam B. Ellick](#)

Ana Ionova reported from Washington, and Adam B. Ellick reported from São Paulo.

Aug. 4, 2026

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The Trump administration has revoked the visa of Brazil's top diplomat in the United States, according to a senior U.S. official, deepening a diplomatic rift between the Western Hemisphere's two largest nations.

The visa of the Brazilian ambassador, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, was canceled in response to her country's decision to stall the approval of President Trump's newly appointed ambassador to Brazil and refuse entry recently to several other U.S. diplomats, said a senior State Department official. The official spoke anonymously to discuss a sensitive diplomatic matter.

Ms. Viotti will not be kicked out of the United States, and her visa will be reinstated if Brazil accepts Daniel Perez, a Republican state lawmaker in Florida, as the next American ambassador to Brazil, according to the U.S. official.

Brazil's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Brazilian Embassy in Washington declined to comment.

The State Department, in a statement, said it had "given the Brazilian government every opportunity to do the right thing," yet it had continued to delay Mr. Perez's approval. "This is a reciprocal action," the State Department said.

The Brazilian government sharply criticized the U.S. decision to revoke Ms. Viotti's visa and rejected claims that it was acting in bad faith.

Brazil highlighted that the United States had violated international law by naming Mr. Perez before completing diplomatic due diligence and added that there is no limit on how long host countries can take to evaluate nominated ambassadors. "The U.S. request is still under review," the government said in a statement.

The visa cancellation is the latest split between two governments that have spent the past year oscillating between confrontation and détente.

"This is very, very unique and severe," said Carlos Poggio, a Brazilian professor of political science at Berea College, a private university in Kentucky. Revoking visas, he added, is a diplomatic tool that the United States normally reserves for unfriendly or authoritarian regimes. "Brazil is not a U.S. adversary," he said. "It's actually a major ally."

At the center of the spat is Mr. Perez, whom Mr. Trump nominated in June. But breaking with diplomatic norms, the United States did not consult Brazil before selecting Mr. Perez for the job, according to two senior officials who did not want to be named publicly discussing the matter.

Before a nation sends an ambassador abroad, it typically asks the host government to approve the nominee, a longstanding diplomatic tradition that most countries observe.

In Brazil, this omission was read as a major diplomatic snub that added to the already frayed relations between the two nations, according to a senior Brazilian government official who requested anonymity to discuss a sensitive diplomatic issue. In response, Brazil has not moved to approve Mr. Perez's posting, throwing a wrench in the process.

On Tuesday, the State Department official said the United States believed Brazil was intentionally withholding the approval, stalling until the country holds its presidential elections in October. The U.S. ambassador post in Brasília, the capital, has been vacant since January 2025.

The official also pointed to a recent decision by the Brazilian government to bar the entry of several senior U.S. officials. Brazilian officials maintained that the envoys sought to meddle in the nation's upcoming elections and sow unfounded doubts about electoral fraud.

In March, Brazil revoked the visa of [a senior Trump envoy](#) after learning that he planned to visit Jair Bolsonaro, the former president convicted of plotting a coup after losing the last election, and meet his son, Flávio Bolsonaro, who is running for president this fall.

The younger Bolsonaro is challenging President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a leftist, and has [repeatedly visited the White House to lobby President Trump](#) to help his political movement, including by [designating Brazil's two largest gangs as terrorist organizations](#). Crime and security are concerns for Brazilian voters and a potential vulnerability for Mr. Lula.

Then, on July 24, Brazil also [denied visas to two other senior U.S. State Department officials](#), which the Brazilian foreign ministry said were intending to "cast doubt on the credibility of Brazil's electoral system."

On Tuesday, the senior State Department official countered that they were denied entry to Brazil to perform routine diplomatic work. Adding to the feud between the two countries, the Trump administration late last month applied [a new round of tariffs](#) on Brazilian imports, citing unfair trading practices. Brazil's government has denounced the levies.

The Trump administration's move to revoke the Brazilian ambassador's visa suggests that tensions between the two countries could increase as Brazil's presidential election approaches, said Lucas de Souza Martins, an instructor in U.S. politics and global affairs at Temple University and a former official at Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Brazil is the new target of the U.S.," he said.

Thayz Guimarães contributed reporting from Brasília.

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