

Opening Statement of Mr. Daniel Travis
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
August 5, 2026

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.