

Statement of Ambassador Carlos Trujillo
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of
the United States of America Department of State
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 21, 2020

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and Distinguished Members, it is an honor to be with you today as President Trump's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

I am humbled and deeply appreciative for this important opportunity. I would like to first take a moment to express my gratitude to God for all His blessings in my life. I would also like to thank my amazing wife Carmen, our four wonderful children, and our friends and family watching from home today for their love and support. I would also like to underscore my deep appreciation to this committee and its Staff Members whose diligent work and dedication made this hearing possible in view of these very trying times and extraordinary circumstances.

I am also deeply grateful for the trust placed in me by President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo in putting forth my nomination, and proud of the opportunity to have served over the course of the last two years as Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States (OAS).

It has been the greatest honor of my life to serve our great nation and the American people and work to build and strengthen the strong bonds of friendship which today unite us with our democratic partners throughout our hemisphere.

I am particularly pleased that the OAS today represents an organization whose leadership role has been restored and revitalized, an institution that is working to live up to and preserve the core values and principles whose mission it is meant to uphold – the promotion and defense of democracy, respect for human rights, and development and security cooperation on behalf of our citizens. Important institutional reforms have also been implemented to place the organization on firmer footing with effective measures to enhance oversight and accountability.

We have made significant progress in strengthening democratic institutions and support for the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the leadership exercised by the OAS in giving voice to the oppressed people of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, marks a critical and historic milestone for the organization in its fundamental responsibility to stand up against dictatorships and make real the promise of the Inter-American Democratic Charter for all the peoples of the Americas. This is multilateralism that works.

But for all of these achievements and hard fought gains, great challenges lay before us, and we are reminded each day that the promotion and defense of democracy and human rights, economic opportunity and the security of our region requires constant work and dedication to strengthen our regional friendships and alliances in securing a future of greater progress, prosperity, and good will.

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs is at the forefront of the Trump administration's agenda to work with our hemispheric partners to promote shared security and prosperity, promote democratic governance, and, more recently, combat the COVID-19 pandemic – which brings with it new challenges for our region and new tests for the resiliency of our institutions and economic prosperity. This in turn calls for concerted regional action.

The President and the Secretary are actively engaged in and taking action to pursue those ends, and we are seeing results in our policy on what the Secretary calls the “Hemisphere of Freedom.” I pledge, that if confirmed, I will be firmly and tirelessly committed to uphold the United States' historic role and leadership to advance these shared values and common interests.

Expanding Respect for Democracy in the Hemisphere of Freedom

The Trump administration has overseen a remarkable shift toward democratic governance in the hemisphere, but Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba remain outliers. In Venezuela we are supporting the will of the Venezuelan people by seeking a peaceful transition to free and fair elections. In a display of regional solidarity, we the Lima Group and the OAS came out among Guaidó's first supporters in January 2019 and saw the first invocation of the Rio Treaty since September 11, 2001.

The states that are party to the Rio Treaty have approved resolutions that address the former Maduro regime's threat to regional peace, stability and security in Venezuela and the region.

Our goal is to leverage the Rio Treaty mechanism to coordinate peaceful regional action such as multilateral economic sanctions, visa restrictions, and diplomatic pressure to support the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. At the same time as this regional mechanism moves forward, we will continue to provide bilateral support to address Venezuela's humanitarian crisis. To that end, we have committed \$856 million in U.S. assistance.

In Nicaragua, we are also calling for free and fair elections. We stepped up diplomatic pressure and increased sanctions on the Ortega regime, its repressors, and corrupt enablers to push for conditions for free and fair elections and respect for human rights, and we will continue to press for continued engagement by the OAS. Our pressure and diplomatic campaigns are ongoing.

Cuba actively undermines democracy in the region by exporting dictatorship, committing human rights abuses, trafficking in medical workers, and abusing opposition figures. We are increasing pressure on the Castro regime to constrict internal repressive capabilities and stop its interference in other countries by restricting key sources of revenue, including foreign investment, travel to the island, and the Cuban medical missions program.

Increasing Prosperity

In keeping with our commitment to democracy and prosperity in the region, we look forward to free, fair, and transparent elections in Bolivia – with international observation, including the OAS – that reflect the will of the Bolivian people.

If confirmed, I would also look forward to working with the Haitian government to meet the needs of the Haitian people by urgently addressing public security, restarting economic growth, and organizing free, fair, and credible legislative elections as soon as technically feasible.

More broadly, in the Caribbean, I believe it is important that we build on Secretary Pompeo's message during his visit to Kingston, Jamaica earlier this year in which he underscored the United States' commitment to work together to build closer ties and strengthen our bonds of friendship and cooperation. It is important also to recognize the important role of key Caribbean countries in the successful reelection of OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro to secure strong leadership for the organization.

In addition, if confirmed, I would ensure all necessary capacity of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs is available to support the White House in hosting a successful Summit of the Americas in 2021, as announced by Vice President Pence at the Summit in Lima in 2018. Serving as Summit host provides opportunity for the United States to work closely with our democratic partners to set a constructive and productive hemispheric agenda moving forward.

The United States continues to work with the democratic governments and institutions of the Americas to realize the promise of the Lima Commitment – adopted at the 2018 Summit – and to enhance the ability of civil society to monitor governments' implementation of their anti-corruption commitments.

Our work to reduce corruption is vital to our vision of a hemisphere of freedom, and the United States remains committed to combatting corruption in the Western Hemisphere and to the promotion of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Corruption erodes the foundations of a stable, prosperous, and well-governed societies. Combatting corruption and impunity is key to upholding democracy, improving civilian security, and establishing the enabling economic environment to create jobs and erode the influence of transnational criminal organizations.

Our economic engagement with the hemisphere is robust and reflects our interest in remaining the partner of choice with our neighbors.

U.S. companies have invested \$350 billion in Latin America and \$400 billion in Canada. U.S. goods and services trade with the Western Hemisphere totals nearly \$2 trillion annually.

In 2019, the United States came together with Mexico and Canada to replace NAFTA with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which will increase middle-class jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, and digital trade, while bolstering North America's competitiveness as a global economic powerhouse.

In December, the White House expanded the Growth in the Americas or America Crece initiative, which seeks to foster economic growth by catalyzing private sector investment in energy and other infrastructure across Latin America and the Caribbean. To date, we have signed

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MOUs with eight partner countries: Panama, Chile, Jamaica, Argentina, Colombia, and most recently El Salvador, Ecuador, and Brazil.

The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is a critical tool for our prosperity efforts. We expect the DFC to leverage at least \$12 billion worth of investment in the region. We are working to create the economic environment in the region to leverage DFC investment.

All these initiatives also provide the framework for the Administration's ability to respond strategically to the second and third order effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to be the partner of choice in helping the region overcome this challenge, as well.

Combatting Illegal Immigration and Promoting Security

The Administration is working closely with our Mexican and Central American partners to secure the U.S. southern border and combat illegal immigration into the United States.

The U.S.-Mexico Joint Declaration was signed June 7, 2019, to address the shared challenges of irregular migration, especially the large numbers of immigrants seeking to enter the United States illegally. As part of its commitments, Mexico deployed its National Guard to enforce its borders. Mexico also agreed to support the expansion of the Migrant Protection Protocols across our shared border.

In 2019, the United States secured significantly greater cooperation from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in addressing the humanitarian and security crisis at the U.S. southern border. That collaboration included the signing of multiple agreements and arrangements to enhance cooperation on border security, expand information sharing, promote access to legal temporary employment in the United States, and improve asylum capacities to help protect vulnerable populations.

As a result of these joint, regional efforts, we achieved a 77 percent decrease in the number of irregular migrants arriving at the U.S. southern border from May 2019 to June 2020.

In response to these increased efforts by Central American governments, the Administration resumed targeted assistance this spring for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Assuming such cooperation continues, the Administration intends to continue distributing additional assistance.

The Administration and Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs will continue working to address border security as well as other security threats in the region, including transnational criminal organizations in Mexico and Central America.

Assistance programs in the region such as the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, Merida in Mexico and our security partnership with Colombia combine security and development to enhance partner capacity and deny Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) permissive environments.

The Administration's approach is grounded in encouraging adoption of a shared responsibility for addressing security challenges and requires demonstrable political will from our partners.

Countering Malign Influences

We are also working to counter the malign, undemocratic influences of China and Russia in the Western Hemisphere. Our approach emphasizes U.S. comparative advantages in economics and security, as well as our shared democratic values with our partners in the region. We must also continue to ensure international space for our democratic partner Taiwan in our hemisphere. Indeed, the Western Hemisphere is home to nine of Taiwan's remaining diplomatic partners.

Closing

I have had the privilege to work closely with my colleagues in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. I have been proud to be part of this team and, if confirmed, I look forward to leading the team in further advancing the Trump Administration's agenda for the Americas.

I also wish to underscore my firm commitment to the importance of working together closely with this committee, in a spirit of cooperation and common purpose, as we work to advance a foreign policy rooted in a shared vision – a vision of a region of shared heritage, dedication and sacrifice in the universal struggle for and faith in the values of liberty, united in peace and prosperity, whose governments honor, guarantee and respect the fundamental freedoms and human dignity of each individual, and an abiding conviction, courage and determination to secure the human fulfillment of the hopes and aspirations for a greater democratic future for all of our peoples. Thank you for your time today.

I am happy to answer your questions.