

**Statement of John J. Sullivan**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**October 30, 2019**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee.

It is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Russian Federation. I want to thank the President for his confidence in me and for the opportunity—with the Senate's consent—to represent our nation in Moscow. I also want to thank Secretary Mike Pompeo for his leadership of the Department of State and his support of my nomination. Finally, I am indebted to our most recent Ambassador to Russia, my friend Jon Huntsman, for his leadership of our mission there and his advice as I seek to succeed him.

I come before the Committee after serving for two and a half years as the Deputy Secretary of State, and for six weeks of that tenure as the Acting Secretary. My service at the Department—working with the men and women of the Foreign Service and Civil Service in Washington and around the world—has been the most rewarding professional experience of my life. But my service would not have been possible without the love and support of my family, who join me today: my wife Grace Rodriguez and our children Jack, Katie, and Teddy; my mother-in-law Graciela Rodriguez; and my sister-in-law Susan Rodriguez, her husband Tony, and their children Evan and Cameron. I am eternally grateful to them.

If confirmed as the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, I will bring to the position not only my experience as the Deputy Secretary of State, but also my prior experience in a variety of government positions over the last thirty-five years: from my early service as a law clerk for Judge John Minor Wisdom and Justice David Souter, to my service at the senior levels of the Justice and Defense Departments, and, finally, to my most recent prior position as the Deputy Secretary of Commerce. I believe my background and experience—earned in four cabinet departments across three presidential administrations—has prepared me to assume the profound responsibilities of serving as our Chief of Mission in Moscow.

And experience teaches that this sensitive diplomatic mission will not be easy or simple. Our relationship with Russia has reached a post-Cold War ebb. The litany of Russia's malign actions that have severely strained our relationship is painfully familiar to this Committee: attempting to interfere in our and our allies' elections, violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and Georgia, employing a weapon of mass destruction in an attempt to assassinate its citizens abroad, violating the INF Treaty, and infringing on the basic human rights of its people, among other things.

Yet the need for principled engagement with Russia is as important to our national interest as ever. Russia's status as a nuclear superpower and permanent member of the U.N. Security Council compels us to engage on a range of issues involving global stability and security. This requires sustained diplomacy with the Russian government in areas of shared interests, for example in arms control, nonproliferation, and counterterrorism, and resolute opposition to Russia where it undermines the interests

and values of the United States and our allies and partners, for example by threatening stability in Europe and election security in the United States.

As the Deputy Secretary of State, I have been directly involved in developing U.S. policy on Russia. I lead the U.S. participation in an ongoing counterterrorism dialogue with Russia, and I led a senior U.S. delegation to Geneva in mid-July to restart a U.S.-Russia Strategic Security Dialogue. Last month, I participated in the decision to impose sanctions on Yevgeniy Prigozhin and others associated with the Internet Research Agency for their attempts to interfere with the U.S. 2018 midterm elections.

In considering these complex issues, I want to acknowledge this Committee's leadership and insights on Russia. As I mentioned in recent meetings with many of you, if confirmed as the next U.S. Ambassador to Russia, I would welcome the opportunity to consult and collaborate with the members of this Committee, individually and collectively, on our Russia policy.

If confirmed, I will continue to support dialogues with the Russian government on counterterrorism and arms control, as well as on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, on finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, on Syria, and many other issues. But I will be relentless in opposing Russian efforts to interfere in U.S. elections, to violate the sovereignty of Ukraine and Georgia, and to engage in the malign behavior that has reduced our relationship to such a low level of trust.

I assure the Committee that I also will be indefatigable in protecting the American citizens who live in and travel to Russia, including the U.S. business community, scholars, athletes, tourists, and all American visitors. If confirmed, I intend to continue to press the Russian government for the release of Paul Whelan, who has been imprisoned without charges for nearly a year, and to demand that Michael Calvey's case be disposed of in a civil proceeding, not in a criminal court.

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the Russian people to celebrate Russian culture, commemorate Russian history, and listen to their perspectives on the issues that unite and divide us and convey directly to them my American perspective as well. I also will continue to promote—in accordance with U.S. law—people-to-people exchanges to foster a better understanding among the Russian people of the United States. And, as I have during my travels as Deputy Secretary of State, I will meet with civil society, including religious leaders and human rights activists.

Finally, there would be no greater honor for me, if confirmed as the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, than to serve with the dedicated women and men—and their families—who constitute our mission in Russia. I know from firsthand experience that it is not easy to be a U.S. diplomat in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, or Vladivostok. Yet dedicated career officers from across the U.S. government are serving with distinction in the wake of massive staff cuts, uncertainty, and intense pressure from the host government. Their tenacity in the face of these challenges is inspiring. Indeed, it was the example of my colleagues in Mission Russia that inspired me to seek to leave Washington and join them on the frontlines of American diplomacy. I humbly ask this Committee for that opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome your comments and questions.