

Introduction

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the Committee, I thank you for inviting me to testify before you today, as you consider my nomination to be the next Deputy Director of the Peace Corps.

I would like to thank President Obama for nominating me; I am humbled by the opportunity to serve my country in this role. I also want to thank my family. I am accompanied today by my wife of 33 years – Anita Capizzi; and my mother – Anne Roper. I would also like to recognize my sons; Cristian, who is studying at the University of Maryland; Miguel, who is working in Costa Mesa, California; and Andres, who just finished his MBA at Kellogg University in Chicago and is now working in Austin, Texas. I would also like to thank Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet, for her leadership, trust, and counsel over the past several years.

I am also very proud to have with me today three recently returned Volunteers: Clara Reyes, Daniel Hinkle and Soletia Christie. Clara comes from New Mexico and served in El Salvador from 2009 to 2012, Daniel hails from Montana and also served in El Salvador from 2010 to 2012, and Soletia comes from California and served in Mali from 2010 to 2012. I have asked them to join us today to witness my testimony because they are examples of how Volunteers are at the center of Peace Corps', and my, decision-making process every day.

Background

I would like to take a brief moment to talk about my background and experience, and how it has prepared me for this opportunity. From the beginning of my professional career as a consultant in the financial industries group at the Arthur D. Little Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, through today, I believe I have developed a strong reputation as a manager and as a problem solver. It would be my great honor to be able to continue to apply my skills as the Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, if confirmed.

It was during my time at the Arthur D. Little Company that I first began to work in the field of economic development, focusing my efforts since then on reducing global poverty and income inequality.

In 1983, I was a personal services contractor in Costa Rica with the United States Agency for International Development, which was my first job with the United States Government. A year later, I started CARANA Corporation, a consulting company providing private sector-led solutions to problems in economic development. Over the next 16 years, I built CARANA Corporation into the company that it is today – a Virginia-based company that has a strong presence throughout the developing world with dedicated staff working on a variety of innovative development projects.

It was a natural progression that in early 2009 – several years after having stepped down as president of CARANA Corporation, and with a strong interest in working overseas again – I applied to be a Country Director with the Peace Corps. However, as fate would have it, in December 2009, the agency's leadership asked me, instead, to lead a Comprehensive Agency Assessment team that was tasked to take a critical look at a wide range of issues concerning Peace Corps' operations and procedures.

I am extremely proud of the Assessment, which focused on how Peace Corps could improve its operations, better utilize its resources, and increase its impact. The Comprehensive Agency Assessment has served as a blueprint for the agency over the past four years, and has guided many of our reforms, leading to marked improvements in the way we train and support our Volunteers, how we allocate resources, and overall management and operations within the agency. These reforms, among others, have positioned the Peace Corps to make an even greater impact in the future.

The Comprehensive Agency Assessment was delivered to Congress on June 15, 2010. The next day, I was sworn in as the Regional Director of the Inter-America and Pacific region of the Peace Corps, where I served until March 2013. I then served as the Acting Associate Director for Global Operations until November 2013, when I was sworn into

the job. I have been serving as the Associate Director for the Office of Global Operations since then.

As the Regional Director of the Inter-America and Pacific region, I oversaw Peace Corps' operations in 23 countries, which in turn supported approximately 2,800 Volunteers. In this position, I was able to combine my private sector experience with the knowledge gained in carrying out the Comprehensive Agency Assessment. The result was a sharp focus on improving Volunteer operations, and particularly, on how the agency supports Volunteers in the field.

When I say we are committed to "a safe and productive Volunteer experience," I want to assure the members of this Committee that these are not just words. I believe very strongly that as an agency, it is Peace Corps' moral obligation to provide Volunteers with the best possible experience: a safe and productive experience. Every decision I have made during my time with the agency is based on the foundation that, as a manager at the Peace Corps, I have an obligation to do everything I can so that every Volunteer has a safe and productive experience.

It was this focus on the Volunteer that in 2010 led me to take a hard look at Peace Corps' operations in the Northern Triangle of Central American and in other parts of the region where crime rates against Volunteers were high. We asked ourselves some hard questions regarding our Volunteer operations in these countries and focused on how we looked at risk, with a fresh eye on how we could improve our overall risk mitigation strategies. The result was a comprehensive package of reforms that were implemented in early 2011. The reforms we made resulted in a dramatic decrease in serious crimes against our Volunteers. While these difficult decisions were not always popular, I am proud of the results that we have delivered.

As the Associate Director of the Office of Global Operations, I continued to focus my attention on further strengthening Volunteer operations. I work every day to implement

the vision of our Director, born out of the Comprehensive Agency Assessment, and predicated on our goal that every Volunteer have a safe and productive experience.

During my time at Peace Corps, I have worked with Peace Corps staff to better define our core operations and develop a framework that we can use to make better decisions. I have worked to ensure that our overseas staff has a greater say in the decision-making process at the agency, which in turn keeps the agency's focus on the core operations in the field. I have also worked to introduce new budgeting and planning methodologies that have resulted in improved funding and staffing for our overseas posts, so they can better support our Volunteers.

In her testimony before this committee in November, 2013, Director Hessler-Radelet described her vision for the agency as a dynamic, forward-leaning champion for international service. I embrace this vision where the Peace Corps is defined by its energy, innovation and impact, and as *the* place where Americans who are drawn to service abroad can make a real difference in the lives of the world's poor.

To implement our Director's vision, the agency is concentrating its resources in three key areas: a bold communications and outreach strategy, a competitive recruitment strategy, and continued enhancements to Volunteer support to deliver results. At the center of these three elements is the work that we do to recruit and support the best staff possible, and to ensure that we are providing the right level of resources where they are needed. I am happy to say that we continue to make excellent progress in each of these areas.

Conclusion

If confirmed as Deputy Director, I hope to be able to continue to implement the vision that our Director has articulated so well by focusing on our core operations with the Volunteer at the center.

In my professional career, I have been fortunate to come across many Peace Corps Volunteers in the many countries where I have worked. I developed an admiration for

these dedicated Americans who live in tough conditions, working every day to bring new skills, knowledge, and hope to the communities they serve. In many cases, these Volunteers are the first Americans that the residents in these communities have ever interacted with, and as a result, today there are millions of people around the world with a positive opinion of America and its people, and a greater understanding of what we as a country stand for.

At the beginning of my testimony I introduced three recently returned Volunteers: Clara, Soletia, and Daniel. I am blessed to work with them, and all of the other returned Peace Corps Volunteers at the agency, every day. These returned Volunteers, as well as all of our currently serving Volunteers, inspire me every day to work my hardest so that each and every one of them has a safe and productive Volunteer experience. I welcome the opportunity to serve President Obama, Director Hessler-Radelet, my country and our Volunteers in this capacity.

Thank you again for having me here today, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.