

Statement of Eric Wendt
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Albania
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
May 20, 2026

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Members of the Committee:

I am honored and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the trust placed in me with this nomination for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Albania.

For over thirty-four years I served the United States of America as an active-duty Soldier. That tenure included being assigned to the U.S. State Department for two years while leading an eight-country coalition as the U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In that position I operated as an integral part of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem while reporting directly to the Secretary of State.

Since retiring from uniformed service, I have been blessed to teach Command and Leadership at my graduate school Alma Mater: the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Today my wife is overseas in Okinawa, Japan with our U.S. Air Force Captain son in law and with our daughter and granddaughter, to help care for another newly arrived granddaughter. Our son, a U.S. Army First Lieutenant serving as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, is sitting behind me. He and his wife are serving the country while stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We are a family that loves the United States of America and are thankful for the opportunity to serve such a remarkable country.

As the commander for NATO's Special Operations Forces, Albanian Special Operations troopers were a part of my command. I was fortunate to experience Albania itself while working with their special operations troopers and military leadership. In Afghanistan, I was honored to serve as the deputy commander of a regional command that included Albanian troopers. Albanian Special Forces troopers exemplify the warrior spirit of the Albanian hero Skanderbeg, and the Albanian people themselves are a proud, hard-working, and hospitable people.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Albania, my top priorities will be to protect U.S. citizens and advance American interests. If confirmed, upon arrival in Albania, I will initiate an assessment to further develop a country plan to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, while being mutually beneficial for Albania.

Our partnership with Albania is rooted in shared interests and a commitment to freedom and security. Albania has a strong track record of delivering on our shared bilateral and global priorities.

If confirmed, at Post we will utilize four lines of operation as we assess and then move forward. The first line will explore ways to make America safer. Albania continues its fight against legal and economic corruption as well as transnational organized crime and drug trafficking linked with Latin American drug cartels. Challenges that reach our shores. Supporting Albania's continued fight in these areas will help make America safer.

Second, we'll work to make America more secure. These actions will also benefit Albanian security. In just a few decades, Albania has transformed from isolation under communist rule to status as a key U.S. partner and NATO Ally, and as a reliable force for regional and global stability. I will work diligently to support Albania's progress toward the Hague 2025 NATO summit agreement to thoughtfully increase defense spending to 5% of GDP by 2035 while supporting increased US and Albanian cybersecurity capabilities and investigating mutually beneficial initiatives across multiple military domains.

Third will be our focus on making America more prosperous. These efforts will simultaneously benefit Albanian prosperity. If confirmed, I will promote economic and commercial diplomacy to benefit our citizens. As Albania's AI, energy, infrastructure, mining and other economic sectors grow, U.S. businesses and investors should be welcomed and treated fairly, with transparency and level legal and contractual playing fields.

Fourth will be our focus on the people of the Post, including a key line of effort I call "Human Factors," which will seek to utilize both standard and creative ways that can be institutionalized to care for the most valuable part of the Post, its people, both professionally and personally.

In conclusion, I am honored to be considered for the role of United States Ambassador to Albania. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating with the members of this Committee and our partners in Albania to achieve these important goals.

I welcome any questions you may have.