

**Opening Statement of Keith Hanigan  
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Solomon Islands  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
September 19, 2024**

Chair Duckworth, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I want to thank you for your service to our nation and for your bipartisan interest in ensuring that the United States maintains strong and effective relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific.

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the first resident U.S. Ambassador to Solomon Islands and I am grateful for the confidence that President Biden and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. I appreciate the hard work that this Committee and the Department did in re-opening our Embassy in Honiara and would like to recognize the expeditionary diplomats who prepared for and have overseen this reopening, led by Ambassador Ann Marie Yastishock.

With the Chair's permission, I would like to thank my family members who are with me today, including my four children, my sister and brother-in-law, and to recognize those in the family who were not able to attend in person. They have been my anchors and full partners in this incredible Foreign Service journey, and I thank them for their love and sacrifices along the way. I would also like to acknowledge my parents, Levin and Patricia Hanigan, who are no longer with us but whose lifelong example of honesty, integrity, service and compassion continues to guide our family. Finally, I would like to recognize my Foreign and Civil Service colleagues and mentors for their support throughout my career.

Before joining the Foreign Service in 1995, I lived in Solomon Islands for seven years as a Peace Corps volunteer, a private sector engineer, and a local employee with Embassy Honiara who assisted with its closure in 1993. I developed a deep respect for the culture and people of Solomon Islands. My experiences there built upon those of my father, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, including transporting Marines for the Battle of Guadalcanal. The events of the Second World War have created an enduring bond between the people of the United States and the people of Solomon Islands. My familiarity with Solomon Island's culture, language, and socio-economic

dynamics means that, if confirmed, I will be ready on day one. I bring 30 years of experience in the Foreign Service, serving in eight countries and five regions, including challenging environments in both Iraq and Afghanistan. I will leverage my decades of management experience to strengthen the institutional capacity of Embassy Honiara. I will endeavor to transform one of our newest and smallest missions into a strong and effective platform to meet the challenges of the moment and prepare for those of the future.

As highlighted in the U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy, the region will play a pivotal role in the international arena for years to come. It is critical that we continue enhancing our presence across the Pacific and prioritize working within the Pacific Islands regional architecture. As a leader in the region, and the next PIF chair, Solomon Islands exercises considerable influence. Our relationship with Solomon Islands is more important now than ever.

If confirmed, my overarching goal will be to rebuild the presence of the United States in Solomon Islands, and to further strengthen our bilateral relationship. I will also work in close coordination with our allies and partners in the region, to bolster our alliances and explore areas of mutual interest and cooperation with the host country, such as unexploded ordnance removal, tackling climate change, and promoting educational opportunities for Solomon Islanders.

Solomon Islands' future hinges on its commitment to security and freedom of navigation, strengthening institutional democracy and the rule of law, and tapping into the talents of its citizens in sustainable economic development. I will continue to build on the important work that USAID, Millenium Challenge Corporation, and others have accomplished in these areas while also prioritizing respect for media freedom, protection of human rights, combatting trafficking in persons, and empowering women.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today and for considering my nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you in representing the interests of the American people and to welcoming you to the Happy Isles on a visit sometime soon. I look forward to any questions.