

**Statement of John Jefferson “Jeff” Daigle
Ambassador-Nominee to the Republic of Cabo Verde
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 16, 2019 at 2:00 PM**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee. It is my honor to appear here today as the President’s nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Cabo Verde. I am grateful for the confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have placed in me with this nomination. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to do my utmost to uphold this trust and to advance U.S. national interests.

Over the past two decades, I have been privileged to represent the United States at U.S. missions on four continents. Any measure of success that I achieved during these postings would not have been possible without the support of my family, so I would like to start by expressing my sincerest gratitude to them. I come from a very large Louisiana family – I have 10 sisters, one brother, and more than 70 nieces and nephews – so I won’t name them all, but I do want to single out my mother, Carole Daigle; my father, World War II naval hero Warren Daigle; and of course my partner and spouse of 18 years, Matthew Cuenca-Daigle, who has been with me through every posting but one.

Over the course of my career, I have worked with governments that are allies of the United States and with those that have had strained ties with our country. I have worked in developing nations and in rich ones. Irrespective of the host country environment, the one constant I have witnessed throughout my service is the positive impact the United States has on people around the world by staying true to our values as we further our national interests. As a Public Diplomacy officer, I am keenly aware of the direct relationship that exists between advancing U.S. national interests and strengthening our ties with foreign peoples and supporting them in their aspirations for a better life for themselves and their children.

Cabo Verde is a true success story in lifting up the lives of its citizens, having transitioned to a lower middle-income economy in recent years. The country enjoys a vibrant, multi-party democracy and has had an unbroken history of civilian rule since its independence in 1975. This year we are celebrating 200 years of relations between our two countries, which stretch back to December 1818 when the United States established in Cabo Verde the first U.S. consulate in sub-Saharan Africa. Since then, many people of Cabo Verdean descent have settled in

the United States, with New England now home to a large and vibrant Cabo Verdean diaspora.

Increasing economic growth and development is the top U.S. priority in Cabo Verde, which has the distinction of being the first country to complete two Millennium Challenge Corporation compacts. Both compacts focused on improving Cabo Verde's openness to investment and the private sector, which are playing vital roles in the country's development. Cabo Verde now aspires to have a bilateral free trade agreement with the United States, and, if confirmed, I will vigorously support efforts to increase trade and investment between our two countries. A key focus will be continuing to support Cabo Verde in strengthening its business environment in support of the Administration's Africa Strategy and Prosper Africa objectives.

Cabo Verde has set an ambitious target to produce 100 percent of its energy using renewable resources by 2040. And in December 2018, Cabo Verde also announced new plans to capitalize on its geo-strategic location to attract private-sector investment in such areas as tourism, air transport, and maritime activity to advance the country's Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development. Both of these initiatives present exciting opportunities for U.S. companies and entrepreneurs to partner with Cabo Verde and help the country reach its goals.

In February, Boston's mayor led a delegation to Cabo Verde, and I look forward to welcoming other U.S. delegations and businesspeople to the country wishing to explore trade and investment opportunities. Investors will soon be able to take advantage of the new support and advantages presented by the BUILD Act and the new Development Finance Corporation. I will promote these new tools as a means of attracting U.S. investment to Cabo Verde, and I will champion the country's continued efforts to improve its business climate and achieve self-reliance.

Our other top objective in Cabo Verde is strengthening security cooperation between our countries, which is reflected in our strong maritime security and law enforcement partnerships. Cabo Verde has hosted U.S. military exercises such as Epic Guardian 2016 and Africa Endeavor 2018, and the Boston Police are providing training on community policing practices. AFRICOM and the U.S. Coast Guard also conduct training and exercises and share best practices with their Cabo Verdean counterparts to enhance the country's capacity to interdict illicit maritime vessels and carry out search and rescue operations. The success of this

training was dramatically illustrated by Cabo Verde's interception in late January of nine tons of cocaine bound for Europe.

Our Status of Forces Agreement with Cabo Verde entered into force in November 2018. The agreement enables the U.S. military to respond more rapidly to humanitarian or disaster-related emergencies and enhances our ability to conduct military training exercises in coordination with our partners in West Africa, and AFRICOM continues to explore new ways to deepen our cooperation under the agreement. Cabo Verde is a model in the region for forging successful security partnerships, and if confirmed, it is my goal to not just maintain but to expand our collaboration with Cabo Verde in this area by working with AFRICOM and others in the inter-agency to explore all options available to us.

Cabo Verde has made excellent advances in recent years in combating sexual and gender-based violence and violence against children, as well as improving prison conditions. If confirmed, I pledge to sustain U.S. support and encouragement for Cabo Verde's admirable efforts to continue making progress on these and other civil and human rights issues.

Finally, if confirmed, no responsibility will be more important to me than that of protecting the lives, interests, and welfare of the thousands of American citizens who live in Cabo Verde and the thousands more who visit the country each year.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the honorable Members of this Committee to advance U.S. interests in Cabo Verde and to sustain and expand the progress we have achieved in our long and positive relationship.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.