

**Testimony of Mr. Anthony Godfrey
Ambassadorial Nominee to the Republic of Serbia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 30, 2019**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is a great honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia. I deeply appreciate the trust and confidence President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me to represent the American people, and I hope to earn your trust as well. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you to advance our nation's interests in Serbia.

This hearing is an important event for my family, and I'm very proud that my wife Anne and two of my three children, our sons Peter and Jamie, are present with me today; they've served overseas with me through postings in Croatia, Armenia, Turkey, and Russia; although they weren't with me in Iraq or in Chechnya, their support was essential for my success. My sister, Dr. Katy Godfrey, and my niece Rosemary are present in the room today. Not present, but surely watching by livestream, is my Dad, Bill Godfrey, who at 90 years young just finally retired from 52 years of teaching at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

In nearly forty years of service, both as a member of the Foreign Service and in the U.S. Navy, I have dedicated my professional life to improving America's security, prosperity, and position in the world. We have sought out challenging assignments, where America's active diplomacy can make a difference in advancing our goals. In domestic assignments I am proud of the work I did to develop the international coalition to defeat ISIS; my work at the National Security Council helped advance our missile defense capability. Mr. Chairman, as you know, I've just left Moscow, and after serving first as the head of the policy team, and then for two years as Ambassador Huntsman's Deputy Chief of Mission, I am fully aware of Russia's aggressive behavior, malign influence, and disinformation campaigns throughout much of Europe; our team has been an important part of U.S. efforts to confront those challenges. I believe the sum of these experiences has prepared me well to serve as Chief of Mission in Serbia.

European Integration

Serbia is a political and economic leader and plays a key role in influencing regional stability and cooperation. It is in the strategic interest of the United States that Serbia develops as a modern, democratic, prosperous European nation at peace

with its neighbors, demonstrating full respect for the rule of law and rights of all its citizens. We fully support Serbia's stated goal of European integration and EU membership. Serbia now stands at a critical inflection point, and political leaders in Belgrade must undertake serious reforms to advance Serbia on its EU path.

Regional Relations

Most importantly, Serbia must normalize its relationship with Kosovo, in order to advance both countries' European integration. The United States continues to support the EU-facilitated Dialogue, aimed at comprehensive normalization of relations. We remain ready to help the parties in any way, as they pursue a locally-owned agreement that is durable, implementable, and increases regional stability. If confirmed, I am committed to promoting normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina as a top U.S. priority in the region. Together with my colleagues in Pristina and Washington, our European partners, and this committee, I will work to encourage the parties to return to the table in good faith.

Serbia's relations with its other neighbors require attention too. If confirmed, I will work with Serbia to resolve legacy issues with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia – to provide all citizens of the Western Balkans a more stable, secure, and prosperous future.

Democracy and Rule of Law

An important element of the United States' work in Serbia is promoting and defending our shared democratic values. Violence and threats of violence against journalists in Serbia are increasing self-censorship and hindering journalists' ability to faithfully inform the public. If confirmed, I will lead my team in helping our Serbian partners to strengthen their democratic institutions, protect the rights of members of minority communities, combat corruption, and improve media freedom. Serbians must take the lead in these efforts, but the United States can be an important partner, and if confirmed, I will ensure that we are.

Economic Development

Serbia has enormous potential, with an educated and talented workforce, a location at an important trading crossroads for Europe, and a long culture of hospitality. Strengthening the rule of law will enable Serbia to further attract investment and curb the debilitating emigration of its youngest and brightest. While Serbia has made great strides in reforming its economy, it needs to streamline the process of

doing business, reduce bureaucratic impediments, and combat the corrosive consequences of corruption to make it a more attractive environment for businesses. If confirmed, I will be committed to supporting American companies as they explore opportunities in Serbia and look to build on the significant U.S. investment in Serbia, which has created over 20,000 jobs since 2000.

Peacekeeping and Military Relations

Serbia is an important partner in international stability and contributes hundreds of military personnel to UN and EU peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, Somalia, Cyprus, and Lebanon. Serbia's contribution of peacekeeping troops and medical professionals is among the highest per capita in all of Europe. The Ohio National Guard's engagement with Serbia, through the State Partnership Program, is among the most successful in Europe.

Bilateral Concerns

If confirmed, I will continue to seek resolution to a persistent irritant in our bilateral relationship. To date there have been no prosecutions for the murder of three Americans – Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi, executed while in Serbian police custody in 1999. I am committed to pressing the Serbian government to complete a thorough investigation and ensure that all who were involved in these crimes are brought to justice, regardless of rank or position.

Closing

The United States and Serbia have a long and in some ways a complicated history. We were allied during two world wars. In 1918, President Wilson raised the Serbian flag over the White House. During World War II, Serbian families saved the lives of 500 American and Allied pilots and crew members. Our assistance – in the form of food, military equipment, and technical programs – helped Yugoslavia maintain its independence from the Soviet bloc. The 1990s were a difficult time, and we must work together to find a way to come to terms with that legacy. Nevertheless, the broader arc of our ties has been positive and mutually beneficial.

This is an ambitious agenda, but if confirmed, I would be supported by an incredibly talented team of Americans and locally employed staff at Embassy Belgrade, and interagency partners in Washington. With the support of the Legislative Branch, I am committed to doing my utmost to promote our shared

goal – a democratic Serbia providing growth and security for its citizens, at peace with all of its neighbors, and firmly set on a path of European integration.

Thank you once again for granting me the opportunity to appear before this committee today. I look forward to your questions.