

**Statement of Donald Lu**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**June 28, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear here today as President Trump's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the Congress to advance our nation's interests in the Kyrgyz Republic.

As the son of an immigrant to the United States, I am particularly blessed to have served my country in the U.S. Foreign Service and the Peace Corps. I have seen the importance of American leadership in the world. For most of my 27 years in the State Department, I have worked in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, including three years as Deputy Chief of Mission in the Kyrgyz Republic. It would be my honor to return to the Kyrgyz Republic as our ambassador, to a country renowned for its incredibly beautiful mountains, hospitable people, and rich cultural heritage.

Mr. Chairman, for centuries Central Asia has been at the crossroads of civilizations. Its strategic position has brought both tremendous opportunities and daunting challenges. Let me mention three.

First, all of Central Asia, including the Kyrgyz Republic, faces the difficult challenge of the risk of radicalism at home and the spread of extremism from terrorist organizations operating from Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz Government reports 800 of its citizens leaving to become foreign terrorist fighters. Consistent with the President's Afghanistan and South Asia Strategy, we should be looking for new ways to support the Kyrgyz people in preventing violent extremism at home but also in enlisting their support in countering terrorist organizations operating from Afghanistan. We are already working to identify at-risk populations and working with the Kyrgyz people to create opportunity and jobs that deter the growth of extremism. We can and we should do more to defend both of our societies from terrorism.

Second, in supporting entrepreneurship and economic prosperity, we as Americans have a lot to offer. Both bilaterally, and as part of the C5+1 process, the United

States is working with all of the Central Asian countries to support greater interconnectedness of their economies in a global marketplace. For example, we are working with the Kyrgyz Republic to facilitate the sale of its surplus hydroelectric power during the summer months to support the growing energy needs of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We support the development of a positive business climate that will enable American investors and traders to compete fairly with businesspeople from all over the world to develop a robust Kyrgyz economy.

And third, I believe we can have an open and honest dialogue with the new Kyrgyz Government about how we can support stability and security, while promoting our common values of democracy and support for human rights. This dialogue should be built on trust, respect, and confidence and not one country lecturing another. We should work together to find ways to promote civil society, media freedom, an independent judiciary and the rule of law.

Finally, allow me to share a story of the courage of the Kyrgyz and American people when faced with a common peril. In 2004, a Soviet-built MI-8 Kyrgyz helicopter crashed in a snowstorm in the remote Tien-Shan mountain range. The military believed there were survivors but weather conditions prevented an air rescue. By chance, some of our embassy staff, including a former U.S. Army Ranger, were conducting a snowmobile training exercise for the Kyrgyz border patrol. The American trainers with the support of the Kyrgyz border guards set off in the night to find the survivors. They drove in dangerous conditions with sub-zero temperatures and in near zero-visibility conditions. They found the passengers and crew, some seriously injured. They loaded them onto makeshift sleds and pulled them behind the snowmobiles through the night to safety. That night they rescued every one of the survivors. This is what Americans and Kyrgyz can do together.

If confirmed, I will take seriously my role as Chief of Mission to manage and safeguard our precious resources – our people, including our local staff who often take great risks in fulfilling their duties on behalf of the mission, our embassy and the strong reputation of the United States abroad. If confirmed, I look forward to building the relations between our two great nations and defending and promoting the interests of the United States in the Kyrgyz Republic.