

Statement of Lucy Tamlyn
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 26, 2018

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Booker, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor for me to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Central African Republic (CAR).

My husband, Jorge Serpa, is here today along with other family members. Jorge has represented our nation by my side for over 27 years and been a tireless advocate for Foreign Service families.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I have served as a Foreign Service Officer since 1982, culminating with the privilege of serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. Assignments across three continents and in war zones have given me experience in balancing the imperatives of the diplomatic mission with the sacred mission of protecting lives.

United States interests in the Central African Republic are primarily security and humanitarian. The Central African Republic is a mineral-rich but largely ungoverned territory the size of Texas. In the absence of state authority, local armed groups hold sway. More than a quarter of the population has been displaced

over the past decade and more than half of the country needs humanitarian assistance.

The primary U.S. objective in the Central African Republic is to help the elected government of President Touadéra expand state authority to bring security to the country. We support the African-Union-led peace process, efforts to bring justice to victims of atrocities, and re-establishment of credible civilian security and justice capabilities. U.S. humanitarian assistance brings succor to a population in desperate need.

The United States is also the largest contributor to one of the most challenging UN peacekeeping missions in the world. I would like to pay tribute to the 75 UN peacekeepers who lost their lives carrying out their mandate in CAR.

If confirmed, I will seek to continue the leadership role my predecessors so ably performed to keep the AU-led peace process on track. Progress requires coordination and thoughtful division of labor with other international actors, but must be consistent with UN Security Council Resolutions. The safety of those under my authority, Americans and local staff, will be my paramount concern, along with ensuring the best use of the resources entrusted to us by the U.S. taxpayer.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I recognize that, if confirmed, I will be assuming leadership of a post in a country of extreme fragility,

one where our diplomatic presence has been suspended three times in the past twenty years. The Central African Republic has looked into the abyss, and seen, in the words of Henry Kissinger, that, “if order cannot be achieved by consensus or imposed by force, it will be wrought at disastrous and dehumanizing cost, from the experience of chaos.” I hope that you agree with me that it is important to maintain a focus on the longer term, recognizing that there will be advances and set-backs, and that the United States has a role to play here. I look forward to your advice and counsel in this challenging task, if confirmed, and I am very happy to take your questions.