

**Statement of Rebecca Gonzales**  
**Nominee to be Director of the Office of Foreign Missions**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

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

Over four years ago I was honored to sit before you as the nominee for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho. I thank you for putting your trust and confidence in me back then. I'm tremendously proud of the countless women and men across the globe with whom I have had the honor to work with as we made important strides in combating HIV/AIDS, championing democracy and human rights, and promoting trade. I am truly honored to come again before this committee as a nominee – this time as the Director of the Office of Foreign Missions. I am grateful for the confidence President Biden and Secretary Blinken have shown in me through this nomination

If confirmed as Director of Foreign Missions, I look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress in advancing U.S. national security interests, protecting the American public, and advocating for United States missions, our dedicated staff members and their families overseas.

I would like to take just a moment to recognize and thank my late father, Jose Rene, and my mother Estella B Gonzales. My father, Colonel Jose Rene Gonzales, served in the United States Air Force for 26 years and was buried in 2013 with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. My mother, Estella, has been a D.C. public school teacher for more than 30 years, and, indeed, I am fortunate to have her with me today. I would also like to recognize my son, Imagine Alexander, who completed his studies at the University of California who is also here with me today.

Raised in a military family, I lived abroad and this gave me a great appreciation for other cultures and a desire to serve my country by joining the Foreign Service. It has been a profound honor and great privilege serving my country for nearly 30 years as a Foreign Service Officer.

My experiences in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America and a recognition that there is always much to learn have prepared me, if confirmed, for the important task of leading the Office of Foreign Missions, an organization whose primary goals are:

- Using **reciprocity** to ensure equitable treatment for U.S. diplomatic and consular missions abroad;
- **Regulating** the activities of foreign missions in the United States to protect U.S. foreign policy and national security interests;
- **Protecting** the U.S. public from abuses of privileges and immunities by members of foreign missions; and
- Providing **assistance** to ensure the U.S.-based foreign mission community has appropriate privileges, benefits, and services on a reciprocal basis.

As you are aware, OFM was established in 1982 pursuant to the Foreign Missions Act. For more than 30 years, this Act has guided the Department's management and regulation of foreign missions in the United States and the extension of privileges and benefits ranging from property acquisition to domestic travel courtesies and restrictions. Each of these functions is crucial to ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of U.S. foreign policy. It is through vigilant management and attention to these activities that OFM also protects the public from the abuse of privileges and immunities by members of foreign missions.

A key element of the Foreign Missions Act is reciprocity. This fundamental tenant allows OFM to positively influence and condition the environment in which U.S. diplomatic and consular missions abroad operate. Reciprocity plays an integral role in advancing our national interests, the efficient conduct of diplomacy, and the safety and wellbeing of our staff and their family members abroad. Accordingly, OFM plays a critical role in assisting with the resolution of matters with foreign governments thus contributing to the overall success of the Department's commitment to the safe and efficient operations of our diplomatic and consular missions abroad as well as the safety and prosperity of the American people.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am honored to have the opportunity to address you and the esteemed Members of the Committee. If confirmed, my priority will be to further the important objectives Congress set out in the Foreign Missions Act, to include the protection our national security interests and the American public. I look forward to continuing OFM's work in helping to resolve a myriad of existing challenges and those that inevitably arise in the conduct of U.S. diplomacy.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.