

**Testimony of Brian D. McFeeters  
Nominee to be Ambassador to Malaysia  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Wednesday, December 2, 2020**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Malaysia.

With your permission Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize my wife Melanie, who has not only worked at the posts where we have served but also ensured that our three children thrived, including when we were evacuated and during periods when I was serving overseas unaccompanied. I would also like to recognize my parents: my father James, who served as a U.S. Air Force officer for 30 years including leading a fighter squadron in Vietnam, and my mother Nancy, who taught elementary school for even longer, both examples of public service whom I have sought to emulate.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Malaysia, I will draw on my 29 years of experience as a Foreign Service Officer, including leadership positions as Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad and Jakarta, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, and Senior Advisor to the Counselor of the Department.

In recent years, the United States and Malaysia have greatly expanded defense and law enforcement cooperation in order to promote the safety and security of the citizens of both our countries. We cooperate on combatting terrorism and transnational crime and countering violent extremist narratives to keep our borders and skies safe. If confirmed, I intend to work with Malaysia to deepen our close security and law enforcement cooperation, particularly in shared priority areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity.

The United States has recovered or assisted in the unprecedented recovery of more than \$1.2 billion in assets associated with the 1MDB international money laundering and bribery scheme. The Department of Justice continues to trace and recover these stolen assets so that they may be returned to benefit the Malaysian people. If confirmed, I intend to continue supporting our mutual commitment to combat corruption.

The United States is among Malaysia's largest foreign investors. Last year, bilateral trade reached nearly \$60 billion, and Malaysia produces important PPE supplies and components used in our health sector. We are grateful for Malaysia's efforts to keep vital supply chains open during the global pandemic and facilitating export of critical PPE to U.S. frontline workers earlier this year.

The United States promotes the rule of law, transparency and good governance, and freedom of expression in Malaysia. Human trafficking, including forced labor, remains a significant issue in Malaysia, and the government has much work to do. If confirmed, I will urge Malaysian government officials to significantly improve anti-trafficking efforts and investigate and prosecute allegations of forced labor. I will also coordinate with Malaysia and UNHCR regarding the safety and security of the nearly 180,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in the country, including more than 100,000 Rohingya.

Our public diplomacy programs demonstrate the strong connection between the United States and Malaysia. The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, or YSEALI, is a vibrant part of our engagement with nearly 500 emerging Malaysian leaders participating in programs last year. The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant program places recent American college graduates in underserved public schools throughout Malaysia to teach English. If confirmed, I intend to continue support for these people-to-people programs.

While Malaysia maintains close relations with China, Beijing is increasingly encroaching on Malaysian-claimed maritime areas in the South China Sea. The PRC's assertive and provocative activities are hampering Malaysia's longstanding efforts to pursue its interests in exploiting natural resources off its coast. The United States is concerned about China's actions and destabilizing presence in the South China Sea and rejects Beijing's unlawful South China Sea maritime claims. If confirmed, I will support both Malaysian and regional efforts regarding freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea. I will also encourage Malaysia to pursue open and transparent investment and infrastructure deals to avoid negative Chinese economic influence.

Malaysia is a regional leader in combating COVID-19 and has taken proactive measures to respond to the pandemic. As a result, the country is working to contain the spread of the virus. If confirmed, I will engage with the Government of Malaysia to partner on bilateral and regional initiatives to mitigate the spread of the disease.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other Members of the Committee. I look forward to your questions.