

**Testimony of Ana Quintana-Lovett
Deputy Assistant Secretary
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Before the
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
At a Hearing Titled “Confronting the Totalitarian Ortega-Murillo Regime”
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Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

President Trump has restored the Western Hemisphere to the center of American foreign policy and demonstrated through bold action that “American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again.” A key feature of this effort means zero tolerance for anti-American and rogue states in the Western Hemisphere, including Nicaragua. Our goal is a Hemisphere of governments committed to making the region safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

In Nicaragua, we will end the dictatorship’s facilitation of illegal immigration to the United States, protect U.S. citizens and businesses in country, disrupt and deter adversarial alliances, and end the dictatorship’s human rights violations and abuses.

Since 2018, Rosario Murillo and Daniel Ortega have transformed Nicaragua into a one-family police state, propped up by adversaries and corrupt criminal elements to cling to their dynastic rule. In 2025, they illegally rewrote the constitution to elevate Murillo to Co-President, without even the pretense of an election. The dictators have silenced, exiled, and jailed under horrific conditions thousands of perceived political opponents, including American citizens and legal permanent residents. Unjust arrests continue and authorities’ condition releases to constant police surveillance, harassment, and movement limitations.

Ortega and Murillo have weaponized state-controlled media platforms, granting Chinese, Russian, and Cuban state media unfettered access to amplify anti-American propaganda.

Religious freedom violations persist unabated. The dictatorship forcibly exiled, expelled, and denied the reentry into Nicaragua of more than 300 clergy and

Catholic sisters. Half the country's bishops reside outside of Nicaragua and at least 51 priests face statelessness.

The dictators continue to deepen their relationships with malign actors like Russia, China, Cuba, and Iran. These relationships support a pervasive surveillance network with Sandinista party operatives in every neighborhood and ministry, enrich the dictatorship with investment, and threaten U.S. security by enabling our adversaries' intelligence collection in Central America.

The United States remains resolute in confronting these challenges through a combination of aggressive sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Last month, we implemented financial sanctions on 12 individuals and entities operating in Nicaragua's gold sector and two of the dictators' sons, Maurice Facundo and Daniel Edmundo.

We have achieved progress in limiting Managua's role as a springboard to our southern border. In February, dictatorship authorities yielded to our pressure and ended visa-free travel for citizens of 128 countries, including Cuba and Haiti. In November 2025, the United States took steps to impose visa restrictions under the Immigration and Nationality Act section 212(a)(3)(C) on Nicaraguans who were facilitating illegal immigration to the United States. Our clear and unambiguous messaging on migration has helped to reduce the average number of daily southwest border crossings by 94 percent from the previous administration. Nicaragua also accepts our removal flights on the terms and at the cadence we set. We continue to sound the alarm on the dictatorship's abuses through public and private channels. We assess our public messaging contributed to securing the release of almost 80 political prisoners since November 2025. Our goal remains the release of **all** unjustly detained political prisoners in Nicaragua.

The Trump Administration's National Security Strategy makes clear that we will eliminate malign influence from extra-Hemispheric powers. We remain focused on disrupting Russia's malign efforts to forge an even deeper military and security relationships with Nicaragua and the dictatorship's deference to Chinese economic expansion.

Following the January 3 law enforcement operation conducted against Nicolás Maduro and the shifting political landscape across the Hemisphere, Murillo and Ortega are increasingly isolated at home and abroad. The dictators must adapt to

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this new reality and allow Nicaragua back into the fold of prosperous, democratic American nations.

Under Secretary Rubio's direction, the Department of State is committed to using bold solutions to protect U.S. national security and economic prosperity in Central America. Working with this committee, we can secure U.S. interests and advance our goals in Nicaragua and throughout the region in ways that deliver for the American people.

Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, members of the committee, thank you again and I look forward to your questions.

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