

**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 reasserted American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere and secured our national security interests, ensuring 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 region, including Nicaragua. Our goal is a Hemisphere of governments committed to making the region safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

In Nicaragua, we will eliminate 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 of the United States and corrupt criminal elements. On September 1, 2026, they illegally rewrote the constitution for a second time in two years to entrench their illegitimate dynasty and indefinitely deprive Nicaraguans of free and fair elections. As Secretary Rubio said on September 2, “Murillo and Ortega’s war on democracy threatens our hemisphere’s stability and prosperity.”

These dictators have silenced, exiled, and jailed under horrific conditions thousands of perceived political opponents, including American citizens and legal permanent residents. Unjust arrests continue. The dictatorship allowed the horrific death of political prisoner Brooklyn Rivera in May 2026 and has disappeared Rivera’s family and community members for requesting Rivera’s remains.

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.

These dictators continue to deepen their relationships with Russia, China, Cuba, and Iran to support a pervasive surveillance network, enrich themselves, and threaten U.S. security by providing de-facto basing to Russia and enabling our adversaries' intelligence collection in Central America.

The United States remains resolute in confronting these challenges through a combination of aggressive sanctions and bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressure. In April 2026, 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. In August 2026, the United States Mission to the OAS led efforts to launch a foreign ministerial process on Nicaragua—the first since 1978 and widely supported by 28 other member states, nearly all OAS members. We will use that process to ensure the hemisphere ends business as usual operations with this brutal dictatorship.

We have achieved progress in limiting Managua's role as a springboard to our southern border. In February 2026, dictatorship authorities yielded to our pressure and ended visa-free travel for citizens of 128 countries, including Cuba and Haiti. 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 appreciate Congress's role here as well—after our combined aggressive, continuous public messaging, we saw the dictatorship release almost 80 political prisoners since November 2025. Our goal remains the release of **all** unjustly detained political prisoners in Nicaragua.

We remain focused on disrupting Russia's malign efforts to forge even deeper military and security relationships with Nicaragua and the dictatorship's deference to Chinese economic expansion.

Without Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela and with the Cuban regime in tatters, Murillo and Ortega are increasingly isolated at home and abroad. The Trump Administration has led the Hemisphere toward freedom, security, and stability. The dictators must adapt to 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.