



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

Crackdown on Religious Freedom in Nicaragua

Panel I



Patrick H. Ventrell is the Director of the Office of Central American Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor. Since joining the State Department in 2003 he has served at the U.S. Embassies in Bogota, San Salvador, Baghdad, Santiago and twice at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York.

From 2008-2011 Patrick was Deputy Spokesperson for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York. He joined the Bureau of Public Affairs at State Department Headquarters in 2011 as Director of the Office of Press Relations. From 2012-2013 Patrick also served as Acting Deputy Spokesperson for the Department and was a regular briefer at the State Department Daily Press Briefing.

From 2013-2015 Patrick served on detail to the National Security Council Staff at the White House as a Director of Communications and National Security Council Deputy Spokesperson. He served as the Economic and Political Counselor at U.S. Embassy Santiago from 2015-2018. From 2019-2020 Patrick was Director of the Office of Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) at the State Department where he oversaw a \$500 million foreign assistance budget and INL programs in 24 countries. Patrick joined the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs as Director of Central American Affairs in December 2020.

Patrick has a Bachelor of Science degree from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is also distinguished graduate of National War College at the National Defense University, where he earned a Master of Science degree in National Security Strategy. At the

National War College, Patrick was also recognized for his scholarship and leadership with the Commandant's Theodore Roosevelt Award as top graduate in his class and with the George Kennan Strategic Writing Award.

Panel II



Manuel Orozco [MAN-WELL OR-OHZ-CO] is the Director of the Migration, Remittances, and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue. He also serves as a senior fellow at Harvard University's Center for International Development and as a senior adviser with the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Mr. Orozco has conducted extensive research, policy analysis and advocacy on issues relating to global flows of remittances as well as migration and development worldwide. He is chair of Central America and the Caribbean at the US Foreign Service Institute and senior researcher at the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University. Mr. Orozco frequently testifies before Congress and has spoken before the United Nations. He holds a PhD in political science from the University of Texas at Austin, a MA in public administration and Latin American studies, and a BA in international relations from the National University of Costa Rica.



Irela Guevara [EE-REL-AH GUH-VAH-RUH] is the Program Director at Outreach Aid to the Americas, where she oversees implementation of U.S. government programs in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Previously, she was the Senior Program Officer with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Nicaragua where she developed the Women's Leadership Program to promote collaboration across sectors in efforts to increase women's involvement in the nation's political and economic development. She earned a Master's of Business Administration from Universidad Thomas More in Managua, Nicaragua.



Christopher S. Ljungquist [LUNG-QUIST] is the Adviser for Latin America at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In this capacity he serves as a "bridge" between bishops' conferences throughout the region and the U.S. Government. After graduating from The American University (2006) and the London School of Economics (2009), where he focused on civil-military relations in Latin America and democratization dynamics, Christopher worked for political risk consulting firms in the US and Spain. Ongoing professional specializations include international trade dynamics, transnational organized crime in Latin America, and religious freedom. As a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher, Christopher is also focused on advancing interreligious dialogue in Israel and Palestine.



Ryan Berg is the Director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is also an adjunct professor at the Catholic University of America. Previously, he was visiting research fellow at the University of Oxford's Changing Character of War Centre and has also worked as research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he helped lead its Latin America Studies Program. He has served as a research consultant to the World Bank, a Fulbright scholar in Brazil, and a visiting doctoral fellow at the Graduate Institute of

International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. Berg's research focuses on U.S.-Latin America relations, authoritarian regimes, democracy, armed conflict, great power competition, and trade and development issues. Berg obtained a PhD and an MPhil in political science and an MSc in global governance and diplomacy from the University of Oxford, where he was a senior Hulme fellow. Earlier, he obtained a BA in government and theology from Georgetown University.