

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Opening Statement for Nominations Hearing

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Republican Leader Richard G. Lugar made the following statement at today's nominations hearing:

Today, the Committee reviews the nominations of Daniel Benjamin to be the State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Bonnie Jenkins to be the State Department Coordinator for Threat Reduction Programs. The nominees have critical responsibilities in addressing the threats to U.S. national security posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Despite operational and tactical successes against terrorist groups and cells, the root causes of terrorism and the intense ideological motivations behind this phenomenon persist. A comprehensive approach to counterterrorism, with strong coordination between our military and civilian departments of government is essential. We need to ensure that our strategy sufficiently accounts for the roles of diplomacy, foreign assistance, and other non-military tools.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their intersection with terrorist groups remains the number one national security threat facing the United States and the international community. To prevent a terrorist attack utilizing a weapon of mass destruction, the U.S. must confront the threat on multiple levels, including: nonproliferation efforts at the source; counter-proliferation at the borders; counterterrorism efforts against organizations seeking to obtain and utilize weapons of mass destruction; and strong international cooperation with allies and partners.

In 1991, former Senator Sam Nunn and I offered legislation to help secure and dismantle the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union. Seventeen years later the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program continues its important work. It has accumulated a lengthy list of achievements including the deactivation of more than 7,500 nuclear warheads; the elimination of 2,000 intercontinental missiles; and the destruction of 1,000 missile launchers. The program has helped secure innumerable biological pathogens, and it is proceeding with a project to destroy almost two million chemical weapons. The Program has been applied beyond the former Soviet Union and exists as an important resource for responding to proliferation emergencies and building ties to countries that want help contending with WMD stockpiles and infrastructure.

These successes were never a foregone conclusion. Today, even after almost two decades, creativity and constant vigilance are required to ensure that the Nunn-Lugar program and associated non-proliferation programs in the State and Energy Departments are not encumbered by bureaucratic obstacles or undercut by political disagreements.

I have been gratified by the partnership of President Obama, who as a Senator on this Committee joined with me in passing the Lugar-Obama Act, which expanded our government's efforts against proliferation in several creative ways. I appreciate the President's enthusiasm for Nunn-Lugar and all the components of threat reduction. To fulfill the potential of our non-proliferation programs, however, Presidential enthusiasm must be translated into creative action by officials up and down the chain of command and in multiple departments of our government.

Both of our nominees will be on the front lines protecting the American people. I appreciate this chance to learn more about their vision for accomplishing the difficult tasks before them.

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