

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Opening Statement for Nominations Hearing for Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Deputy Secretary of State

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I join Chairman Kerry in welcoming our distinguished nominee. I appreciate the experience that Mr. Nides would bring to the position of Deputy Secretary, and his willingness to re-join public service.

It has been nearly two years since this Committee heard the testimony of the first nominee to fill the role of Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources. At that time, I stressed the need for our foreign policy to become less reactive and for the State Department to be managed in such a way that does not lose sight of the strategic horizon or unjustifiably concentrate our resources on the crises of the moment.

This Committee has, over the past two years, worked to promote a more strategic approach to American diplomacy. We have drafted and passed legislation to reform the way our foreign assistance is administered and to ensure that resources are efficiently utilized in support of our national objectives.

Secretary Clinton has taken meaningful steps to try to advance the objective of a more balanced foreign policy. Both she and Secretary of Defense Gates have been prominent voices for the elevation of diplomacy and development alongside defense in support of our national interests. Secretary Clinton launched the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review last year to align policy, process, and resources among the key stakeholders in the foreign policy community. I hope we are able to see the results of this review in the near future.

The challenges for the Department and for our nation remain formidable. In Iraq, the Department of State is about to inherit responsibility for massive operations, which currently are being run by our military. I am interested in the nominee's views about whether the Department is ready for this role and has the resources required to succeed.

In Afghanistan, the Department of State has overseen an enormous surge in the numbers of civilian staff on the ground. How are these new positions being utilized and managed? Do they have the resources and ability to conduct their assigned tasks?

At the same time, I remain concerned that, as the Department devotes increasing resources to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, and other critical states, we risk stretching ourselves thin in other endeavors. In Deputy Secretary Lew's hearing two years ago, I laid out a series of challenges related to non-proliferation, energy security, and our traditional alliances that I said called for strategic initiatives from the Obama Administration. That list has only grown in the past two years.

I look forward to our discussion with Mr. Nides about the strategic priorities for the Department.

Today we also consider the nomination of Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook to serve as Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. If confirmed, the nominee would serve as principle advisor to the

President and Secretary of State on religious liberty issues. Her responsibilities would include submitting the annual report on the state of religious freedom to Congress, engaging other nations on religious freedom issues, and recommending appropriate responses to violations of religious liberty.

I [submitted 37 questions for the record](#) to Dr. Cook regarding the organization and mission of the Office of International Religious Freedom, as well as countries of particular concern, such as Burma, China, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan. I appreciate Dr. Cook's answers to these questions. I have posted them on my website for members and the public to review.

During the last decade, the Office of International Religious Freedom has engaged numerous countries on ways to improve their religious freedom practices. For example, an agreement negotiated with Vietnam involved new laws on religion, the release of dozens of religious prisoners, and the reopening of hundreds of places of worship. The Office worked extensively in Saudi Arabia to remove intolerant teachings from school books and to advocate for the right of religious minorities to hold meetings. Advances of this type require painstaking diplomacy, but I believe it is important for the United States government to be seen unmistakably as an advocate for religious freedom.

Dr. Cook, if confirmed, will have a difficult challenge ahead of her. The Administration waited a year and a half before making this appointment, leaving the IRF Office without the leadership and institutional strength that comes with an Ambassador. Inevitably, this has led to perceptions that the Administration has downgraded the role of the IRF Office. Given these circumstances, it is especially important that Dr. Cook has access to the Secretary of State and other top decision makers; that she has hiring and supervisory authority over her staff; that the staff remains dedicated to the core mission of international religious freedom; and that the Office retains independence and has sufficient operating funds.

I welcome Dr. Cook to the Foreign Relations Committee and look forward to her insights on religious freedom priorities.

The Committee also is considering the nomination of William Brownfield to be Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. The counternarcotics and anticrime programs run by INL are especially vital at a time when we are attempting to work with our Mexican neighbors to reduce extreme violence linked to the drug trade. INL plays an important role in coordinating the implementation of key elements of the Merida Initiative. Also in the Western Hemisphere, its reports have provided important information regarding the holes in Venezuela's anti-money laundering regime and the rampant corruption throughout that country's law enforcement, judicial, and banking sectors.

In Afghanistan, INL has provided critical expertise on police training, the rule of law, and counter-narcotics. Its Corrections Systems Support Program has built prisons in all 34 Afghanistan provinces and trained more than 3,800 Afghan corrections staff.

Finally, the Committee welcomes Paige Alexander, the Administration's nominee to be USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia. While the overall USAID budget for this region has been in decline in past years, many countries still face critical challenges in the areas of institutional-reform, economic growth, and humanitarian aid. The United States should continue to foster the integration of reform-minded nations from the Caucasus, Balkans, and Eastern Europe into Euro-Atlantic institutions, even as we transition from traditional assistance programs.

I congratulate the nominees on their appointments.

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