

STATEMENT OF MARA RUDMAN
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR NOMINEE
BUREAU FOR MIDDLE EAST
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BEFORE THE
FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE
ON
April 5, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

I want to express my appreciation for the trust and confidence that President Obama and Administrator Shah have placed in me through this nomination. And I am grateful to have the strong support of Secretary Clinton.

It is difficult to conceive of a more challenging time to be considered for this portfolio. In country after country the people of the region have, in a word, inspired. As the President said last week, "we must stand alongside those who believe in the same core principles that have guided us through many storms: our opposition to violence directed against one's own citizens, our support for a set of universal rights...[and] our support for governments that are ultimately responsive to the aspirations of the people."

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the dedicated women and men of USAID, and colleagues throughout the US Government, laying the foundation for diplomatic and development strategies that will serve us and the peoples and countries of the Middle East in the months and years ahead. I want especially to recognize the dedicated public service of George Laudato, who has led the Bureau for the past three years, having been called back to USAID from retirement to do so.

This transition and period of regional change are providing a rapid-fire chance to operationalize Secretary Clinton and Administrator Shah's shared goal: to modernize and strengthen USAID, reaffirming its status as the premier development agency in the world. If confirmed, I look forward to picking up the baton as my colleagues are working to make important progress. I can assure you that no one will work harder to see that we are responding most effectively to the great challenges and historic opportunities that we face.

In that regard, my objectives for the Middle East Bureau go to areas that I believe are critical to the sustainability, growth, and success of our policy missions. If confirmed, I would:

- Focus on managing our relationships with key countries so as to move from “assistance” to “cooperation and partnership.”
- Work to ensure that the best and most innovative initiatives are not only developed, but implemented effectively; that we evaluate the results, and learn from and apply those lessons going forward.
- Coordinate closely with colleagues at State, Defense, Treasury, and the White House to see that we are truly practicing smart diplomacy, using development, diplomacy, and defense as mutually reinforcing policy platforms to make the objectives of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) come alive.

I believe in the importance of focusing on the pragmatic – on the details of how to get things done and “bridge the gaps” with a range of actors, across cultures internationally and domestically. I recognize that it is important to have a political horizon, a policy objective, a strategic vision. But once we have it, we must be able to maintain the vision while we implement programs and projects with maximum effectiveness.

Under the leadership of Administrator Shah, USAID is implementing an aggressive agenda to streamline development work, the “USAID Forward” agenda, which builds on Secretary Clinton’s QDDR and the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development. In this context, I am excited that the Middle East Bureau is already brokering new approaches to development.

I appreciate the enormity of tasks ahead in this region and position. I also recognize how fortunate I am to have worked with and for people who have helped prepare me to take on this challenge. I would like to specifically thank Representatives Lee Hamilton, Howard Berman, and Sam Gejdenson, leaders on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for the investment they have made in guiding me. I also owe much to Senators Jack Reed and Jeanne Shaheen, who have been gracious with their counsel, and to Chairman Kerry. Among other things, he showed me by example what it really meant to conference a bill in my early days as HFAC’s chief counsel.

I have spent much time deeply involved in the Middle East, from my first position as a legislative assistant for my hometown Congressman, who served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee; to a research fellowship in the region; to work as Chief Counsel at the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where I focused among other matters on rule of law efforts and programs.

When I served President Clinton as a deputy national security advisor and Chief of Staff at the National Security Council, I helped to coordinate strategic and budget aspects of the Middle East peace negotiations efforts. I explored yet another aspect of these issues in my work in the private sector, where I assisted in creating the non-profit economic development oriented Middle East Investment Initiative. Now, as a deputy to Senator

Mitchell, I have spent the majority of my time focusing on coordinating U.S. efforts to support the Palestinian institution building program, across U.S. agencies, in Washington and in the field, and among Palestinian Authority, Israeli, and international actors.

Through my time in government, I have learned to appreciate the dynamics among and between the agencies and actors that play a role on foreign assistance and foreign policy matters. To implement programs effectively, and meet policy objectives, it is critical to navigate smoothly in this environment.

I also value the time I have spent working on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, in different parts of the Executive, and with the Judiciary. Given the critical role of the Legislative branch in funding and overseeing foreign assistance programs and policy, the Executive branch in setting and developing policy, and the powerful balancing role of our Judiciary, having an insider's familiarity with these institutions has served me well, and will continue to do so in this role, if confirmed.

When working on governance challenges in other parts of the world, it has made a huge difference for me to be able to draw upon experience I have had in our own government: a contentious floor debate, an intricate conference bill negotiation, a complex set of jury instructions to be drafted, advising a President, or working out budget differences with a legislature controlled by the opposition party. I discovered this firsthand when I found myself explaining the House Rules Committee operations to a group of villagers in a remote part of the West Bank when the Palestinian Legislative Council had just run its first election in the mid 1990s and rules that would govern its proceedings were at the time heavily debated among the citizenry.

Indeed, as President Obama described articulated in Cairo nearly two years ago, “[A]ll people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn’t steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose.”

In presenting the foreign assistance budget request recently, Secretary Clinton noted “Generations of Americans... have grown up successful and safe because we chose to lead the world in tackling the greatest challenges. We invested the resources to build up democratic allies and vibrant trading partners. And we did not shy away from defending our values, promoting our interests, and seizing the opportunities of each new era... the world has never been in greater need of the qualities that distinguish us: our openness and innovation, our determination, our devotion to universal values.”

As President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Administrator Shah believe, we have the power to create the world we seek if we have the courage to embrace opportunity and the willingness to do things smartly, sometimes differently, and together.

I am honored to be considered for this position and fully appreciate the responsibilities and challenges it entails. I am deeply committed to the mission of USAID and the role it

plays in advancing our national security, promoting economic opportunity and advancing our embodying our core American values.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions you might have.

###