

UNCLASSIFIED

Statement of Marshall Billingslea
Nominee for Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights
U.S. Department of State

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights.

Senators, at the outset I thank my family – my wife Karen and my two daughters Morgan and Elsa, for having supported my decision to accept the President's nomination to the Department of State. These positions require enormous family sacrifice, and I could not do this without their love and backing.

I have had the opportunity over the past weeks to meet with several members of the Committee, and it has been very helpful for me to hear about a wide range of issues that are viewed as important with respect to the "J Family" of bureaus and offices at the State Department. If confirmed, I look forward to working with all members of the Committee, and your staff, on the full range of topics.

At the outset, I must say that it is wonderful to be back in this hearing room. I began my government career, nearly twenty-five years ago, on the staff of this august committee. In fact, I vividly remember one of the very first hearings I attended, sitting on the bench in the corner over there. It was on a matter highly relevant to the Office of the Under Secretary, both then and now; the topic was Chinese repression of Tibetans.

So my familiarity and involvement with issues falling within the purview of J goes back more than two decades, to the very beginning of my time in government service. From the days on this Committee's staff, working with the Department's counterterrorism experts, to my work with the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau on Colombia and Afghanistan while I was at the Pentagon, and my present role in driving use of Treasury authorities to combat human rights abuses and corruption across the globe, from Nicaragua and Venezuela, to Uganda and Burma, I have been fortunate to work with the many fine career professionals within the J Family.

There are three points I would like to emphasize today:

First, support for civilian security, democracy, and human rights is crucial to advancing vital American interests. For example, fighting terrorists, disrupting transnational organized crime, and stopping the trafficking of opioids and other illicit drugs protects the American people and our communities. Strengthening the rule of law overseas improves the investment climate for

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

American businesses, while advancing international labor standards the playing field for American workers. Building the capacity of foreign partners to strengthen their law enforcement capabilities and counter trafficking helps them to take on greater responsibility for addressing common threats. Championing our values such as justice, humanitarian ideals, religious freedom, and other human rights inspires and promotes strong, stable global partners that help keep the American people more safe and secure.

Second, threats to civilian security, democracy, and human rights are prevalent and multi-faceted. Venezuela is an example of what can happen when a regime engages in massive corruption, undermines the rule of law, fails to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, dismantles democracy, and drives instability in the region. These efforts to strangle the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people have created the largest refugee crisis in Latin American history as four million Venezuelans have fled. I have been outspoken in my current role regarding the appalling acts perpetrated by the former Maduro regime, from its use of food and hunger as a political tool, to the ecocide conducted in the Orinoco belt, to the kleptocratic, wholesale looting of Venezuela's natural resources. Like you, I am appalled at the former regime's unconscionable human rights abuses, including torture and extrajudicial killings. I am therefore so gratified that my courageous friends in the Venezuelan opposition have written to the Committee in support of my nomination. Mr. Chairman, I submit for the record letters from opposition leaders Maria Corina Machado, Antonio Ledezma, and Julio Borges. These are incredible men and women, valiantly speaking out against the brutality of the former Maduro regime in the hope of a better future for the Venezuelan people.

I commit, if confirmed, to using the Office of the Under Secretary to do everything I can to help alleviate the suffering in Venezuela, as well as to help those around the world preyed upon by despots, oligarchs, and criminals. I mentioned Tibet at the outset. China continues to seek to silence criticism of its severe human rights violations and abuses there, as well as its detention of more than one million Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other Muslims in Xinjiang since April 2017. As Secretary Pompeo has said, "China is home to one of the worst human rights crises of our time." More broadly, places such as Syria, Central America, and Burma all show the interconnectedness of religious intolerance, impunity, violence, porous borders, trafficking of illicit goods, human rights abuses, human trafficking, and large-scale forced displacement.

These are all situations where the multiple capabilities housed within "J" must be brought to bear in a synchronized fashion.

This brings me to my final point: to address these complex challenges effectively we must develop holistic solutions that leverage all of the tools and resources at our disposal. This begins by sustaining a close, bipartisan working relationship with Congress. In partnership with Congress, the State Department has developed a broad range of tools to promote civilian

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

protection. In addition to diplomatic engagement, these include foreign assistance programs; human rights and corruption-related visa restriction regimes; terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and other rewards, sanctions, and designation efforts; and public reports that draw global attention to issues such as human rights, religious freedom, human trafficking, atrocity prevention, narcotics control, and terrorism. The Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights is uniquely positioned to ensure the Department leverages these tools to achieve our strategic objectives.

As a former Senior Professional Staff Member on the Foreign Relations Committee, I worked for many years on a range of issues that enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support. The same is true for my work at Treasury. I look forward to continuing to work in a strong bipartisan fashion, if confirmed, in this new role.

In conclusion, Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez, I greatly appreciate the opportunity afforded by the Committee to appear before you today as you consider my nomination. Over more than two decades, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Department of the State on counterterrorism, conflict stabilization, illicit finance, and other issues, and I believe I would bring a unique combination of executive branch, legislative, and private sector experience to the role of Under Secretary. If confirmed, I will collaborate with this Committee to design and implement the policies and strategies necessary to advance civilian security, democracy, and human rights.

UNCLASSIFIED