

Testimony of R. Clarke Cooper
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 1, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, and distinguished Members of the committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs. I am humbled by the confidence placed in me by President Trump and Secretary Pompeo, and if confirmed, will be honored to work with the dedicated professionals at the Department of State.

None of this would be possible without the very important people in my life who are here with me today. I am joined today by my incredible spouse and fellow combat veteran, Michael Marin, my intrepid mother, Tracy Cooper-Tuckman, my dear friends, and esteemed colleagues. Thank you for your love and support.

For two decades, it has been a privilege to serve in many positions of responsibility and trust in national security affairs ranging from tactical level bilateral security assistance work in Iraq, to operational level intelligence planning within the US interagency and among key partner nations, as well as strategic level multilateral peace keeping mandate review at the United Nations. Over the breadth of my career, I have been fortunate to serve in civilian, diplomatic, and military roles. All these positions, including my diplomatic and military tours in the Middle East and Africa, comprised components of strategically aligned capacity building, intelligence, and security assistance with host nation governments and partner militaries. Each of these experiences provided opportunity to lead personnel and coordinate with foreign partners.

One highlight of my career has been the work I have done to advance operational and strategic level engagement with the Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. I have seen first-hand the level of professionalism and experience the bureau brings to the Department's political military work. My bilateral and multilateral work with partner nations on security assistance, intelligence, and force development has given me an applied appreciation for the lead role the Department plays in development of security partnerships, and advancement of U.S. national security.

The Political Military Bureau executes some of our nation's most important policy decisions, negotiations, and treaties. The purpose driven professionals in the bureau are a unique mix of civilian, military, and Foreign Service personnel who negotiate our status of forces agreements globally, support humanitarian demining programs, promote professionalization of foreign militaries and interoperability through training and assistance programs, and ensure our foreign military sales are consistent with our foreign policy and values. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with such dedicated colleagues advancing the bureau's significant contribution to our national security.

The mission of the Political Military bureau is to build enduring security partnerships to advance U.S. national security objectives. If confirmed, this will be my chief priority. I look forward to

further connecting the interagency, enhancing U.S. national and economic security interests, and enabling our partners.

Our diplomacy is stronger when it is fully coordinated across the interagency and is synchronized with our military planning. An important function of the Political Military Bureau is managing the political advisors assigned to military commands around the globe to ensure full interagency coordination. Further, the bureau plays a key transregional role in coordinating the Department's strategic country plans, regional plans, and participation in military exercises to ensure U.S. diplomacy is at the forefront of our international relations.

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring our arms sales and defense trade are key implements of foreign policy where our relations with allies and partners, and our commitment to human rights remain central to our decision-making. The bureau must also work closely with industry. Alignment of national and economic security interests to create jobs and increase U.S. competitiveness in key markets helps maintain a technological edge over potential adversaries while enhancing the ability of the defense industrial base. If confirmed, U.S. producers and exporters can be confident they have a partner in the bureau who diligently supports them to advance our strategic objectives and support our economy.

In today's complex environment, enabling partners' capabilities to address transregional threats is incumbent upon the bureau to ensure there is burden sharing on maintaining global security. Security assistance is a powerful tool the United States can apply to strengthen our allies and partners around the world and mitigate threats requiring a collective response. I know firsthand from building surrogate forces and training partner forces, U.S. security assistance supports regional stability in the face of terrorist threats. Our dedicated assistance reassures allies and partners, and provides the means for them to counter destabilizing and malign activities of violent extremist groups' spheres in a transregional context.

Like you, I currently serve under the same solemn oath to the Constitution. Today, I serve at the Joint Special Operations Command, and it would be a tremendous honor to, again, further support and defend the Constitution of the United States at the Department of State.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to be considered for this critical appointment. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your comments and questions.