

Statement of Dr. Christopher A. Ford
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State
for International Security & Nonproliferation
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
November 28, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation. I want to thank the President for his confidence in me, and for the opportunity – with your approval – to help meet the formidable challenges of protecting the American people and preserving and advancing the national interests of our great Republic in the face of ongoing challenges from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), delivery systems, advanced conventional weapons, and associated materials and technologies. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson for supporting my nomination.

But I also want to take a moment to thank my family – my wife, Schuyler, and my daughter, Stella-Grace – for their love and support. Almost all of my professional career has been spent in government, or near it in the public policy community, and I think my record demonstrates an unstinting commitment to public service. Nevertheless, it is they, my wife and my daughter, who are really the sun around which my planet revolves. I owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for all their patience, their kindness, and their support – especially in the months since I joined the National Security Council staff last January – and I am pleased beyond words that they have been able to join me here today. Schuyler and Stella-Grace, I love and I thank you with all my heart.

I have been privileged to serve in many positions of responsibility and trust in national security affairs over more than two decades – as indeed it was my dream to do when studying many years ago as an undergraduate at Harvard, getting my doctorate as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, and getting my law degree at Yale. I have served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, as a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, and as the U.S. Government’s Special Representative for Nuclear Nonproliferation, and I have worked for five different Senators on six different committee staffs here in the U.S. Senate – including at the Foreign Relations Committee.

It has been my particular honor to serve the American people over the last 11 months on the National Security Council (NSC) staff, where I presently run the Weapons of Mass Destruction and Counterproliferation Directorate and serve as a Special Assistant to the President. My experience with nonproliferation and related national security issues goes back many years now, but it is probably my time at the NSC that has done the most to prepare me for the honor of serving – if confirmed – as Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation.

I am proud of the role I have played in helping the new administration find its footing in this arena and begin to build out a far-sighted and resolute approach to meeting the many challenges we face.

Though I have never been able to imagine *not* being deeply involved in working on U.S. public policy and national security issues, the WMD business is not a line of work in which I originally expected to be. My doctoral dissertation, after all, was on international relations theory and African regional relations. When I practiced law, I worked on toxic tort class action litigation, and I spent years doing Congressional investigations on multiple Senate staffs. My Senate career has also included doing intelligence oversight during the first two years of the “Global War on

Terrorism,” working on appropriations legislation during the tumultuous period surrounding the 2013 government shutdown, and a broad range of subsequent legislative work for this very Committee just last year.

I have also, at various points, helped an international war crimes tribunal set itself up in West Africa, produced intelligence analyses as a Navy officer, clerked briefly for a federal appellate judge, and helped with research on elephant physiology while living for months in a Kenyan game park. I have trained at a Zen Center in the foothills of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains, taught Japanese jujutsu at a dojo here in Washington, and written books on naval history and on Sino-American relations.

But I have been drawn to the field of WMD because of its combination of intellectual challenge and technical complexity, and because of its obvious criticality to the preservation of U.S. national security, of international peace and security, and potentially even of civilization itself. This admixture of challenge and urgency has made these issues, for me, an abiding passion.

Preventing the use and spread of weapons of mass destruction is clearly a vital national security interest of the United States. It is critical to slow, stop, or roll back the acquisition of WMD, delivery systems, advanced conventional weapons, and associated materials and technologies by state and non-state adversaries alike. It is critical both to prevent the use of such weapons and to hold those who do use them strictly to account. And it is critical to manage wisely the challenges of stability and deterrence that are inherent in relationships between nuclear weapons states.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with State Department colleagues, with stakeholders from across the interagency, with diplomatic counterparts, with the private sector and civil society, and – yes, of course –

with Congressional Members and staffs to protect and advance the interests of the American people and of international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your comments and questions.

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