

Statement of Nathan Alexander Sales
Nominee to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 18, 2017

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing. It's an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism.

Let me introduce some family members who are here this morning: My wife, Margaret, along with our daughters, Anna and Cate. My parents, Alex and Marsha, came out from Ohio. And I'd like to acknowledge my father- and mother-in-law, who are home in Boston and couldn't join us today: Charlie and Anna Tretter.

I'd like to thank Senator Portman, a fellow Buckeye, for his kind words of introduction.

I also want to express my gratitude to President Trump and Secretary Tillerson for putting me forward for this important position. If I'm confirmed, I'll do everything in my power to justify the trust and confidence that they—and the Senate—have placed in me.

I came to the field of counterterrorism and national security almost by happenstance. In 2001, I was a young lawyer, fresh off a judicial clerkship, when the Justice Department hired me to work on administrative law issues. I started in mid-August.

Three weeks later was 9/11. I still vividly recall the chilling rumors that flew as we evacuated Main Justice that sunny morning. Car bomb at the State Department. Fires on the national mall. Another hijacked plane heading for the capital. Some of the reports turned out to be false alarms, but that was little consolation. The reality was bad enough.

Suddenly, the *Chevron* doctrine no longer seemed so important. My job—indeed, the focus of the Justice Department and the Administration as a whole—now shifted to one fundamental and overriding priority: Preventing another assault on our homeland.

9/11 wasn't just an attack on our landmarks and our citizens. It was an attack on our very way of life—our democracy, our devotion to the rule of law, our commitment to individual liberty. And so our top priority as policymakers was to equip our nation's cops, spies, and soldiers with the tools they needed to confront this new menace, and to do so in a way that affirmed our basic national values. We couldn't allow our fundamental rights as Americans to become a casualty of war.

I carried that commitment with me when I joined the fledgling Department of Homeland Security a few years later. At DHS, I learned the importance of working with our allies around the world to confront terrorism. And I saw firsthand that our alliances are strong, not just because of our shared economic and military might, but because of our shared liberal values.

I also learned the ins and outs of the interagency process, working with key counterterrorism players throughout the government. Terrorism is a complex threat that requires all tools of national power—the armed forces and the intelligence community, to be sure, and also the diplomatic corps, economic officials, and law enforcement.

Let me say a few words about the dedicated career professionals I hope to join at the State Department. Before she became a lawyer, my wife earned a master's degree at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, and many of her friends and classmates have gone on to work at State. Getting to know them, I've developed a deep appreciation for their extensive knowledge, their commitment to the mission, and the sacrifices they've made to advance our country's interests and values. It will be a privilege to serve alongside them, if I'm confirmed.

I started with my family and I'd like to end there too.

I come from a long line of patriots. My father, Alex, was an ROTC cadet and a Navy officer in the tumultuous Vietnam era. During World War II, my grandfather, Clarence, served in the Army Corps of Engineers. He was stationed in England, where he met my grandmother, Agnes, an Army nurse. She actually outranked him, a fact that she never let him—or anyone else—forget. My other grandfather, Chic, was an infantry captain. He saw action in Normandy, helped liberate France, and earned a Bronze Star for valor and a Purple Heart.

It was a great honor for me to carry on their tradition of service at Justice and Homeland Security. And it will be a great honor, if I'm confirmed, to continue their legacy at State.

Thank you again and I look forward to your questions.