

**Statement for the Record before the
United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**

**Antony J. Blinken, Nominee for Secretary of State
January 19, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee – thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

And thank you, Senator Durbin, for your kind introduction.

It is the honor of a lifetime to appear before this Committee as President-elect Biden’s nominee for Secretary of State – and an honor which carries special significance for me for two reasons.

First, I had the privilege of serving as staff director of this Committee for six years – working alongside a distinguished group of Senators, including several who remain on the Committee today, to advance American diplomacy and safeguard the interests of the American people.

That experience gave me an abiding respect for this Committee – for its finest bipartisan traditions, for the caliber of its members and staff, and for the essential work it does to strengthen U.S. leadership around the world.

If I have the honor of being confirmed, those lessons I learned in my years with this Committee will guide my approach to our work together.

The second point of significance is more personal. In addition to my own confirmation as Deputy Secretary of State six years ago, this Committee confirmed my wife Evan Ryan as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, my uncle Alan Blinken as Ambassador to Belgium, and my father Donald Blinken as Ambassador to Hungary.

My family – especially my wife and our children, John and Lila – is my greatest blessing. Our tradition of public service is a source of tremendous pride.

I view that tradition as a sacred duty – payment on the debt our family owes to the nation that gave us refuge and extraordinary opportunities across the generations.

My grandfather, Maurice Blinken, found refuge in America after fleeing the Russian pogroms.

My father's wife, Vera Blinken, found refuge in America after fleeing the communist regime in Hungary.

And my late step-father, Samuel Pizar, found refuge in America after enduring the horrors of the Holocaust.

Sam was the only survivor among his immediate family and school of 900 in Bialystok, Poland after four years in the concentration camps.

At the end of the war, he made a break from a death march into the Bavarian woods. From his hiding place, he heard the rumbling sound of a tank. Instead of an Iron Cross, he saw a five-pointed white star.

He ran to the tank. The hatch opened. An African American GI looked down at him. He fell to his knees and said the only three words he knew in English that his mother had taught him: God Bless America. The GI lifted him into the tank, into America, into freedom.

That's who we are. That's what we represent to the world, however imperfectly, and what we can still be at our best.

If I have the honor of serving as Secretary of State, that is the vision I will pursue – a vision articulated often by President-elect Biden, and doubtlessly informed by his long service to this Committee, of a nation that leads “not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.”

If confirmed, three priorities will guide my time as Secretary.

First, I will work with you to reinvigorate the Department by investing in its greatest asset: the foreign service officers, civil servants, and locally employed staff who animate American diplomacy around the world.

I know from firsthand experience their passion, energy, and courage. Often far from home and away from loved ones, sometimes in dangerous conditions exacerbated by the global pandemic – they deserve our full support. If I am confirmed as Secretary, they will have it.

I am committed to advancing our security and prosperity by building a diplomatic corps that fully represents America in all its talent and diversity. Recruiting, retaining, and promoting officers with the skills to contend with 21st Century challenges and who look like the country we represent. Sparing no effort to ensure their safety and well-being. Demanding accountability – starting with the Secretary – for building a more diverse, inclusive and non-partisan workplace.

Second, working across government and with partners around the world, we will revitalize American diplomacy to take on the most pressing challenges of our time.

We'll show up again, day-in, day-out whenever and wherever the safety and well-being of Americans is at stake. We'll engage the world not as it was, but as it is. A world of rising nationalism, receding democracy, growing rivalry with China, Russia, and other authoritarian states, mounting threats to a stable and open international system, and a technological revolution that is reshaping every aspect of our lives, especially in cyberspace.

For all that has changed, some things remain constant.

American leadership still matters.

The reality is that the world doesn't organize itself. When we're not engaged, when we don't lead, then one of two things happen: either some other country tries to take our place, but

probably not in a way that advances our interests or values. Or no one does, and then you get chaos. Either way, that does not serve the American people

Humility and confidence should be the flip sides of America's leadership coin.

Humility because we have a great deal of work to do at home to enhance our standing abroad. And humility because most of the world's problems are not about us, even as they affect us. Not one of the big challenges we face can be met by one country acting alone – even one as powerful as the U.S.

But we'll also act with confidence that America at its best still has a greater ability than any country on earth to mobilize others for the greater good.

Guided by those principles, we can overcome the COVID crisis – the greatest shared challenge since World War II.

We can outcompete China – and remind the world that a government of the people, by the people, can deliver for its people.

We can take on the existential threat posed by climate change.

We can revitalize our core alliances – force multipliers of our influence around the world. Together, we are far better positioned to counter threats posed by Russia, Iran, and North Korea and to stand up for democracy and human rights.

And in everything we do around the world, we can and we must ensure that our foreign policy delivers for American working families here at home.

Let me conclude with a word about this institution, whose resilience and determination was on full display in the aftermath of senseless and searing violence in these halls. Both the President-elect and I believe we must restore Congress's traditional role as a partner in our foreign policy making.

In recent years, across administrations of both parties, Congress's voice in foreign policy has been diluted and diminished.

That doesn't make the executive branch stronger – it makes our country weaker.

President-elect Biden believes – and I share his conviction – that no foreign policy can be sustained without the informed consent of the American people. You are the representatives of the American people. You provide that advice and consent. We can only tackle the most urgent problems our country faces if we work together, and I am dedicated to doing that.

If confirmed, I will work as a partner to each of you on behalf of all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration – I look forward to answering your questions.