

Statement of Todd Robinson
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics
and Law Enforcement Affairs
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 15, 2021

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as the nominee to be the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. I am honored by the President's nomination and the support of Secretary Blinken for the opportunity to continue to serve the American people.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the support of my friends, colleagues and, most importantly, my family – my mother, Willetta BaCote, and my brothers Mark Robinson and Jeffrey BaCote. Their encouragement has been invaluable to me.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs – INL – which I called home for three and a half years as a Deputy Assistant Secretary, is a key component in protecting the American people by countering crime and supporting the rule of law to maintain stability abroad. I look forward to the possibility of leading my foreign service, civil service, contractor, and local staff INL colleagues working in Washington and more than 90 countries.

If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to tackle the great challenges laid out in the President's national security agenda including combating narcotics trafficking; addressing transnational organized criminal threats, corruption and cybercrime; countering PRC malign influence; and tackling issues of bias and discrimination, in criminal justice systems.

Stopping illegal drugs, like synthetic opioids, from reaching America will be among my highest priorities. We know some terrorist organizations traffic drugs and other commodities to fund their illicit activities. Transnational criminal organizations have seemingly limitless appetites for illicit profits from synthetic drugs. If confirmed, I will prioritize INL's critical engagement with partners and allies to combat this threat.

Transnational criminal organizations are not static, so INL cannot be either. Working with our interagency partners such as the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, INL can lead the effort to ensure that our programs are better

coordinated and show results. Example: after the People's Republic of China (PRC) scheduled fentanyl as a regulated chemical class in 2019, direct flows of fentanyl from the PRC to the United States dropped precipitously. However, non-fentanyl opioids and precursor chemicals continue to flow from the PRC to Mexican criminals that manufacture the fentanyl and traffic it to the U.S. If confirmed, I will prioritize continued diplomatic engagement at all levels to decrease the shipment of these precursors from the PRC, and to reinvigorate shared security cooperation between the United States and Mexico.

In fact, U.S.-Mexico cooperation must continue to address another high priority issue – the management of migration across the region and to the U.S. southern border. Strategic thinking and data will help us address irregular migration and build a smarter border. INL is working closely within the Administration to shape a Central America Root Causes Strategy to look at the drivers of this migration. I know this topic is a high priority to many Committee Members and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can make our foreign assistance dollars more effective on this issue. If confirmed, I vow to respond to these complex challenges using the experience gained and relationships built over my 35-year Foreign Service career.

Another global challenge we confront today is corruption. Simply put, corruption kills. I saw its effects in Guatemala where political, economic, and social elites – at times working with criminal organizations – buy judges and threaten independent and courageous judicial actors. I saw it in Venezuela where the Maduro regime reaps ill-gotten profits by selectively distributing food rations and pillages that nation's natural resources. As President Biden and Secretary Blinken have noted, corruption undermines U.S. foreign policy and national security interests around the world and damages the credibility of countries where U.S. businesses may want to invest.

INL, with our interagency partners, acts as a bulwark against global corruption. If confirmed, I would seek to enhance this work by identifying like-minded crime fighters around the world; building their capacity to prevent, investigate, and prosecute corruption; and reinvigorating multilateral global anticorruption networks. INL can also use rewards and visa restrictions to promote accountability for corrupt actors globally.

Criminals and state-actors use technology to target the American people, our institutions, and critical infrastructure. The detrimental impact of cybercrime on America is clear, with one in four U.S. households affected, and annual losses

reported to the FBI last year of \$4.2 billion. If confirmed, I will want INL to build the necessary know-how and cross-border cooperation to address 21st century transnational security challenges.

Finally, given its decades of criminal justice sector reform experience, INL has a unique responsibility to work with foreign partners to recognize, prevent, and counter bias and discrimination within their criminal justice systems. If confirmed, INL programs and partnerships will continue to reflect a respect for human rights and best practices in balancing individual rights with public safety.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Congress on advancing America's interests at home and abroad. Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to your questions.