

Statement of Jessica Lewis
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 28, 2021

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Committee: I am honored and humbled to be here as the Biden-Harris Administration's nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.

I would like to thank President Biden for nominating me, and Secretary Blinken for his support.

I would like to thank my father Robert Lewis for raising my sister and me. His strength and love after my mother, Molly Lewis, passed away when I was a child, made me who I am. I am also lucky to have the love and support of my step-mother -- who is truly my second mother-- Patricia Lewis. I am joined by my sister Kaitlynn Griffith, who has been with me every step of my life. My greatest joy in life has been as a mother and I would like to thank my 9-year-old son Matthew, who is wisely enjoying a day of summer camp today instead of sitting through a hearing. And to my incredible community of friends – thank you for being my second family.

I would like to personally thank Chairman Menendez, who hired me nearly 20 years ago as a staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and who trained me to be a staffer. The Chairman has the sharpest mind I have encountered and has taught me to stand up for what you believe in. I would not be here before the Committee today if it were not for Senator Menendez.

I would like to thank former Senator Harry Reid, who taught me the ways of the Senate during my 9 years working for him, and Senator Cardin, who brought me on as Staff Director of this Committee.

Finally, I would like to thank the outstanding bipartisan staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. To my team, you are simply the best. To my Republican colleagues, working with you has taught me when we can come together – as we recently did on the China bill which passed this Committee with overwhelming support – we are at our best.

I have spent my entire career in public service; if confirmed, I would be honored to continue that path at the State Department. I began my career teaching third grade in public schools and believe my work as a teacher serves a foundation for all I do.

I then worked at the Organization of American States running education, training, and technology programs in Latin America.

Since then, I have spent nearly 20 years on the Hill and have worked on some of the most critical national security legislation of our time. I staffed the conference committee for the legislation that implemented the 9-11 Commission recommendations in the early 2000s and negotiated passage of the Countering Americas Adversaries Through Sanctions Act only a few years ago.

And, as Senator Reid's national security advisor, I worked directly with the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, the Defense Department, and our Intelligence Agencies.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs manages our arms sales and security assistance, negotiates international security agreements, and manages our security relationships with other countries. The Bureau is also in charge of U.S. programs to help countries cope with the aftereffects of war through conventional weapons destruction programs.

The Bureau is also unique because of its dedicated workforce. They have a well-deserved reputation for professionalism, and they have performed the challenging work of the Bureau across Administrations.

If confirmed, I would focus on four areas.

First, as President Biden promised, I plan to enhance the consideration of human rights in our decision-making to ensure our arms sales are in our foreign policy interest and in line with American values.

Second, I am committed to reinvigorating the Bureau's relationship with this Committee and Congress.

Third, I want to focus on strengthening the workforce at the Bureau, and specifically its efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Fourth, I believe the judicious provision of U.S. defense equipment can deepen our relationships with our allies and partners and support our foreign policy and national security. I believe if government can help to keep the global playing field

level, our defense companies can continue to outcompete any rival while upholding our values.

In conclusion, if confirmed, I am committed to leveraging the tools of the Political-Military Affairs Bureau in the service of U.S. foreign policy and American values.