

**Statement of Ambassador Elizabeth Richard
Nominee to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 10, 2022**

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the Department of State. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their support and confidence in me.

Over the course of my 36 years as a Foreign Service Officer, I have had the privilege of serving in some of our most challenging posts, including Lebanon, Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. During that time, I have taken part in robust efforts by the U.S. and our partners and allies to confront the challenges to our stability and security from terrorist groups in these regions and beyond. We have prevented another terrorist attack on the homeland and greatly weakened ISIS and al-Qa'ida, though both groups continue to work to expand their geographic footprint, creating new challenges.

Terrorist groups threatening the United States and our partners today are more geographically dispersed, more ideologically diverse, and more technologically adept than ever before. We must remain vigilant in addressing this dynamic and complex terrorist landscape.

Iran – the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism - and its proxies continue their destabilizing behavior in the Middle East and beyond. I have seen, first-hand, the results of Iran's malign influence and use of proxies and fully understand the need to keep the pressure on and, if confirmed, I will continue to work with our partners, to do the same.

Terrorist groups in Africa exploiting poor governance and economic despair are growing more destructive by the day. Groups like Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and Jama'at Nusratul Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and increasingly ISIS, thrive in this environment and threaten our interests in the region. If confirmed, I will work to increase international attention to this region. There is also a rising danger from racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, which FBI Director Wray elevated in 2020 to a threat on par with ISIS and al-Qa'ida.

In addition to the increasing organizational decentralization of these groups, challenges to detecting and disrupting terrorist attacks include the exploitation of social media to radicalize and recruit, use of commercially available encrypted communications, deployment of commercially available drones, and employment of sophisticated financial schemes.

The State Department plays an integral role in the U.S. government's counterterrorism efforts by fostering international agreement on the need to confront these terrorist groups as well as by helping build the counterterrorism capacity of our partners.

U.S. counterterrorism efforts are shifting from a U.S.-led, partner-enabled approach that relies heavily on military power to one in which our partners have the will and capability to lead in

addressing terrorist threats on their soil. As U.S. efforts become more focused on building partner capacity, the Counterterrorism Bureau's work will be vital.

If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to reduce the continuing threat that ISIS poses around the world. Under U.S. leadership, the 84-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS has made major strides against the terrorist group in Iraq and Syria and is now also focused on addressing ISIS threats in Africa and emanating from Afghanistan.

As part of that effort, I will prioritize repatriating foreign terrorist fighters and their family members from Syria to their countries of origin, strengthening the detention facilities in which they are now housed and improving conditions in displaced persons camps in Syria to prevent them from becoming incubators for the next generation of ISIS fighters.

While countering terrorism is vital to U.S. national security interests, there are many other priorities and finite resources. While it is critical that the United States maintains its leadership role in international counterterrorism efforts, our partners should shoulder a greater share of the burden.

If confirmed, I will work both bilaterally and multilaterally to spur all those threatened by terrorism to do more to address these threats. I will also work to ensure that our foreign assistance resources are spent wisely on programs that help partners develop the capability to secure their borders, investigate and disrupt terrorist plots, track terrorist financing, bring terrorists to justice, prevent and counter violent extremism, and rehabilitate and reintegrate former terrorists.

I will also promote a counterterrorism approach that upholds the rule of law and respect for human rights. Finally, I commit to working with you to ensure that Congress is regularly informed and consulted on counterterrorism efforts.

With that, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, I appreciate your consideration and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.