

**Testimony of Michael Edward Hess
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U.S. Agency for International Development
before the
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear here today as President Bush's nominee for Assistant Administrator of the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau (DCHA) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

If confirmed, I would join the USAID team at a critical time in the history of international development and foreign assistance. The President's National Security Strategy states that development now stands with defense and diplomacy as one of the three cardinal principles supporting US national security. In the 21st Century, the world is undergoing an unprecedented transition matched in recent history only by the wave of decolonization that marked the early and mid 20th century. The globalizing world is marked by massive flows of information and people, emerging and consolidating democracies, fragile states, human rights crises, global public health issues and both natural and man made disasters. Failed states and complex emergencies now occupy center stage among the nation's foreign policy and national security issues. As part of the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, USAID plays a leading role in diminishing the underlying conditions that lead to extremism. September 11, 2001, served to accelerate the nation's awareness of these issues, and development is now as essential to U.S. national security as diplomacy and defense.

With its roots in the Marshall Plan and programs today in over 100 countries, the U.S. Agency for International Development is uniquely placed to influence our relationships around the world. I am convinced the programs of USAID including democracy building, conflict management and mitigation, food security and disaster assistance can make a difference to the world's most vulnerable who are disproportionately affected by the negative aspects of globalization. The programs administered by USAID in Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan, along with other programs around the world, help bring democracy and free markets to millions. They show the compassion and generosity of the American people. The programs of USAID present a win-win for the United States. That is why I am excited at the prospect of contributing my military and private sector experience to USAID and the achievement of U.S. national security.

The position of Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance is charged with achieving the mission of saving lives, alleviating suffering, supporting democracy and promoting opportunities for people adversely affected by poverty, conflict, natural disasters and a breakdown of good governance. The Assistant Administrator ensures that DCHA rapidly responds in support of USAID's mission worldwide with a special focus on fragile, failed and failing states.

The Assistant Administrator also leads DCHA's collaboration both within USAID, and with other executive branch agencies, Congress and external stakeholders that share its vision and complement its resources.

As head of the Bureau, the DCHA Assistant Administrator bolsters longer term development efforts through complementary high-impact interventions. If confirmed, I

will lead the development of technical strategies and help formulate Agency policy and resource allocation to address newly emerging global issues. I will ensure the professional management of Bureau staff including assisting in recruitment, training, assignment and career development.

The Assistant Administrator's mix of duties - implementing field programs, formulating strategy, monitoring program performance and allocating budgets is an especially attractive combination to me. My own experience at the tactical, operational and strategic levels in many management positions, has taught me that linking the three is key to the successful delivery of programs. If confirmed, my background in leadership, management and strategy development in both the private and military arenas gives me a strong grasp of the strategic context in which USAID must work. I will also bring the knowledge and practical experience gained from operating in complex and difficult crises settings in Iraq, Bosnia, and Kosovo. This position will require that I work closely with the Department of State, the National Security Council, Department of Defense and the Congress. Building a cooperative working relationship with each of these entities is vital to the success of USAID's mission. I believe my previous experience will serve me well in this effort.

Mr. Chairman, I believe public service is both a noble and high calling, and there is a name I want to share with you: Fred Cuny. I had the privilege of working with Fred, a renowned disaster expert who worked as the Chief of Staff to USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team in Northern Iraq in 1991, during Operation Provide Comfort, the Kurdish relief effort. His visionary and practical work in support of Kurdish refugees

and his determination to offer them a better and safer life, led me to commit to helping others through humanitarian relief.

Fred disappeared in Chechnya ten years ago, but his example has continued to inspire me.

My career has been both broad and deep in a variety of sectors – military operations and executive leadership positions in business and teaching. All of which have prepared me for the position of Assistant Administrator, DCHA.

In the United States Army, I served in both the Active Duty and in the Reserve Component. I was commissioned from the United States Military Academy in 1971. In 14 years of active duty as an armor officer I served in both command and staff assignments in the U.S. and Germany and taught European History at the United States Military Academy.

After leaving active service I joined the Army Reserves and began the second phase of my military career as a Civil Affairs soldier. I have served in humanitarian operations in Turkey, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo. I helped write the humanitarian relief plan to aid the Kurds in Northern Iraq in 1991, and then deployed to Turkey and later to Iraq. During Operation Provide Comfort, I was the liaison between the military and the Disaster Assistance Response Team deployed by USAID. I served in Bosnia in Operation Joint Endeavor, after the Dayton Peace Accords, as the Civil Military Cooperation Operations Officer assisting the rebuilding of the Bosnian infrastructure. Later, as Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Office of the High Representative, I assisted in the transition of the Sarajevo suburbs, the establishment of freedom of movement, and holding the first post-war elections in Bosnia.

In June 1999, I deployed to Kosovo where I was the Chief of the Military Liaison Branch at Headquarters Kosovo Force. In this capacity I integrated civilian-military cooperation, plans, operations, guidance and directions with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and harmonized goals and objectives to ensure unity of effort. It was during this deployment I recognized how working with civilian partners to achieve unity of effort and the achievement of longer term goals of peace and stability are inextricably linked.

I retired in 2001 from my position as the Deputy Commander of the 353rd Civil Affairs Command, U.S. Army Reserve. In 2003, I was re-called to active duty to serve as the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance during Operation Iraqi Freedom. I later served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Coalition Provisional Authority, assisting in the establishment of the 2,000 person multinational organization responsible for establishing a representative government for the people of Iraq and re-building Iraqi infrastructure. This background makes me keenly aware of the challenges USAID faces in administering high quality and essential programs in areas of danger and instability.

In addition, to my Army Reserve duties, I have worked for over 21 years in corporate finance. I am currently a Senior Risk Reviewer and Vice President at Citibank responsible for monitoring and evaluating 15 areas of risk for corporate finance units at Citigroup Inc. My banking experience gives me a unique perspective on globalization and the interaction between the public and private sectors.

Finally, my experience as an instructor at West Point has prepared me well for mentoring and training the next generation of leaders.

I believe I have the skills necessary to lead as diverse a bureau as DCHA and oversee a broad portfolio of programs in over 100 countries with often competing needs.

I have lived and worked in many different areas both in and outside the United States. I have seen the end of the Cold War and détente, the ravages of war in Northern Iraq as a soldier aiding Kurdish refugees, the brutality of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the devastation left behind by genocidal regimes. Should I be confirmed, I believe that my diverse operational, foreign policy, academic and executive leadership positions would serve me well in this important USAID position.

In conclusion, I am proud to be nominated for this position with the U.S. Agency for International Development, and am eager to serve the President and work with the Congress in carrying out our National Development Strategy.

Mr. Chairman, thank you and the Committee for considering my nomination at this hearing. This concludes my testimony, and I would be pleased to answer any of your or the Committee's questions.