

**Testimony of James R. Kunder  
Deputy Administrator – designate  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
before the  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate  
September 12, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to appear before the Committee today as President Bush's nominee to serve as Deputy Administrator of the U. S. Agency of International Development (USAID).

As I now serve as Assistant Administrator for the Asia and Near East Bureau, I am aware of the development challenges facing USAID and the intense interest of the Committee in helping us meet them. The Asia and Near East region, stretching from Morocco to Mongolia, is home to millions of impoverished people, and is on the front lines in the global battle against terror, and against those conditions that allow terrorism to flourish. The U.S. government's foreign assistance programs are an important weapon in the fight against terror, against poverty, against illiteracy, against inequality and against instability. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge that I will do everything in my power, and in full consultation with the Congress, to ensure that U.S. government development and reconstruction programs are carried out effectively, equitably and with the oversight that the taxpayers have every right to demand.

I am proud to say that I have spent a considerable part of my career at USAID. From 1991 to 1993, I served as Director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. In January 2002, I returned to USAID to reopen the USAID Mission in Kabul immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Subsequent to serving as the Director of Relief and Reconstruction in Afghanistan for five months, I served as Deputy Assistant Administrator and then Assistant Administrator of the Asia and Near East Bureau, where

I had the privilege to work on issues like Iraq, West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon and the tsunami-affected countries of Southeast Asia.

From these experiences, I have learned that designing and implementing sustainable development and reconstruction programs in transitioning nations is a daunting, but critically important, challenge. I look forward, if confirmed, to continuing to benefit from the Committee's guidance and consultations in USAID's work.

It is a time of historic change in our nation's foreign assistance program; change at a level not seen since the beginning of the Cold War. With Secretary Rice appointing Ambassador Randall Tobias to be the first-ever U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance, we are making dramatic changes to meet unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Ambassador Tobias is leveraging USAID strengths and coordinating foreign assistance programming to meet today's foreign policy needs. I am excited to be part of this change at a time of critical importance for foreign assistance as an element of U.S. foreign policy.

If confirmed, Mr. Chairman, I will take seriously my role in representing the Agency in the many inter-agency deliberations in which U.S. support for international economic, governance and social programs are discussed. Under the direction of Ambassador Tobias, we understand now better than ever the key importance of our relationship with the Department of State, and our respective staffs are making great efforts to ensure optimal coordination. If confirmed, I expect to devote significant time to addressing questions of budget, strategic priorities and funding levels with colleagues at the Department of State and other U.S. government agencies.

I also recognize that we within the U.S. government do not have a monopoly on knowledge of what transforms societies. Having worked in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, I look forward to a fruitful dialogue with all elements in the development community, including but not limited to the NGO's, universities, and the business community, since activities in all these sectors impact human progress.

After twenty years of working in the development and reconstruction field, I remain an optimist about America's role in the world, and I firmly believe in the importance of the role assigned to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Working to build democracy and economic prosperity in the poorest countries in the world, countries that are in the strategic interest of the United States, as well as those countries that are simply deprived, suffering or experiencing a humanitarian crisis, is one of the most inspiring missions of the U.S. government. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, other Members of the Committee, and your staff, in order to help steer this work in the right direction and ensure that each tax dollar is used to make a real impact in the world.

On a personal note, Mr. Chairman, I had hoped that my parents, Jim and Virginia Kunder, from Rochester, Pennsylvania, would be able to join me here today, but they were not able to make the trip. As they have been an inspiration to me, I wanted to note their contributions. Over 62 years ago, my father was pushing across the beaches at Normandy. Subsequently as a steelworker, volunteer firefighter, and community leader, he has continued to serve his country well. My mother was one of those millions of Americans who came here as a child from a far country, speaking not a word of English. She pulled herself up by her bootstraps, worked in the Pentagon during World War II, forged a career in the non-profit world, and led numerous civic organizations. I would be proud if I am able to execute my duties half as well as they executed theirs.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any of your or the Committee's questions.