

**Testimony of Thomas M. Countryman
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Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation
July 13, 2011
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Good afternoon, Chairman Shaheen, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for making time to meet with me today to consider my nomination.

Madame Chairman, before I begin my testimony, please allow me a moment to recognize members of my family who have joined me today for this important occasion: my wife, Dubravka, and my son Andrew. My elder son Stefan is away studying physics at Columbia University.

Their support strengthens my resolve and furthers my commitment to work each day toward a safer and more secure world not only for all of us, but for generations to come.

I am sincerely humbled by the honor of appearing before the Committee, and by the honor of being President Obama's choice to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation. I am grateful for the confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have shown in nominating me for this position, and I am fully aware of the important responsibilities that I will undertake on behalf of our country should I be confirmed.

While managing the ISN Bureau will be a new responsibility for me, I am not a new face at the State Department, and I have worked with many of you and your staff in my previous positions. I believe that my experience both in Washington and in building international partnerships abroad will serve me well if you chose to confirm me. I am also keenly aware of the importance of consulting with the Congress early and often. My hope, if confirmed, is that we will have a close relationship that will allow us to communicate not only when we are facing a national security crisis, but also in the quieter times in between, so that we can better prepare for the future.

As you know, in his April 5, 2009 Prague speech, the President committed the United States to seeking the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, and to taking concrete steps toward that end. His remarks

that day also laid out an ambitious nonproliferation agenda that includes: working to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime, including by strengthening compliance with nonproliferation obligations; working toward a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation; ensuring that terrorists never acquire a nuclear device; and securing all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world within four years. This agenda is ambitious but I believe it to be both essential and attainable. If confirmed, I will work vigorously to make it a reality.

ISN's agenda is not only nuclear-related. Nonproliferation in today's context also includes addressing biological, chemical, missile, and destabilizing conventional weapons capabilities. Here too there is much important work before us.

As one example, the Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference will take place at the end of this year. At this important multilateral gathering we will have a chance to build global capacity to combat infectious diseases, prevent biological terrorism, and promote confidence in the biological nonproliferation regime.

Similarly, the world looks to our leadership in areas involving export controls; biological, chemical, and nuclear safety and security; and dealing with the proliferation challenges of Iran, Syria, and North Korea. If confirmed, I will vigorously pursue these tasks. Indeed, the government's work in this area is vital to keeping America and our partners secure.

I realize that I have barely scratched the surface of the critical work to which I will be committed, if confirmed. The continued growth and success of programs and initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance Program, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, and the Global Threat Reduction Program are all essential to our efforts. These cooperative initiatives reflect positive, concrete steps we have already taken on the road to increased international security and nonproliferation. They also highlight the singular work that the State Department does, building long term capacity in partner countries to stem proliferation and serving as the connective tissue between other agencies tackling this existential threat overseas.

If confirmed, I look forward to contributing my energy and dedication to the work of the many professionals in the Department, across the government, and in Congress who are already engaged in important nonproliferation endeavors. Together, we will continue to ensure that the United States is up to the task of realizing the bold and ambitious vision laid out by the President in Prague.

Thank you, Madame Chairman, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Committee for your time and attention today and for your consideration of my nomination. At this time, I am happy to answer your questions.