

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS
NOMINEE FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE
MAY 24, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lugar, Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to become Deputy Secretary of State. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Clinton for their confidence in me, and in our diplomatic service, in which I have proudly served for 29 years. If confirmed, I will do my best to live up to their trust, and to work closely with all of you on this Committee, as I have throughout my career.

I'd like to begin by expressing deep appreciation to my family – my wife, Lisa, and our daughters, Lizzy and Sarah. As in so many Foreign Service families around the world, their love and sacrifice are a very large part of why I am here today. I can never repay them adequately.

This is the fifth time, Mr. Chairman, that I have appeared before this Committee for confirmation. I approach this new challenge with considerable humility; with great respect for Jim Steinberg and all those who have come before me; with an abiding commitment to public service; with faith in the power of clear-eyed diplomacy in the pursuit of American interests and human freedoms; and with few illusions about the complicated world around us.

It is a world with no shortage of troubles, but also plenty of opportunities for creative and determined American leadership. It is a world which faces the spreading dangers of weapons of mass destruction; unresolved regional and sectarian conflicts; extremist violence and terrorism; global economic dislocation; and transnational health, energy, and environmental concerns. It is a world in which American vision and drive are essential in crafting relations with emergent and resurgent Powers, and deepening their stake in global institutions and a stable international system.

It is a world in which other people and other societies will inevitably have their own realities, not always identical to ours. That doesn't mean that we have to accept those perspectives or agree with them or indulge them, but it does mean that understanding them is the starting point for sensible policy. It is a world in which there's still no substitute for setting careful priorities in the application of American power and purpose, having clear goals, and connecting means to ends.

But is also a world in which the power of our example and our generosity of spirit can open the door to profound advances, from supporting the universal aspirations fueling the Arab Spring, to promoting global health and food security. We have our share of problems, but it is a mistake to underestimate our enduring strengths, and our capacity to do big and difficult things.

That capacity will be tested in the months and years ahead. It will be tested across the Middle East, where revolutions which are only just beginning will be as consequential in their own way for global order as 1989 was for Europe and Eurasia. It will be tested across Asia and the Pacific, in many respects the most dynamic and significant part of the world for American interests in the next half-century, with the rise of China, the growth of our partnership with India, the strengthening of our ties in Southeast Asia, and the deepening of our relationships with traditional allies like Japan and South Korea all enormously important.

It will be tested in different ways in Europe, where NATO remains the strongest link in our chain of overseas security partnerships; where the EU still constitutes 30 percent of the global economy; where Turkey is an increasingly influential partner at the intersection of several crucial regions; and where the reset of relations with Russia has produced tangible results, despite lingering differences. It will be tested in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where success against Bin Laden brings us to an important and extraordinarily challenging crossroads. It will be tested in Africa, soon to be a continent of a billion people, nearly half born since 1995. And it will be tested in our own Hemisphere, where the 50th anniversary of the Alliance for Progress this year is a fitting moment to focus more of our diplomatic energy and attention closer to home -- and where growing partnerships with countries like Brazil and Colombia, which I visited last week, hold great promise.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward, if confirmed, to doing all I can to help President Obama and Secretary Clinton meet all these tests. I will work hard with my friends and colleagues in other agencies to promote an effective policy process. I will work hard with all of you to ensure the closest possible cooperation with Congress. And I will also work hard to support Secretary Clinton's efforts to transform and strengthen America's diplomatic capabilities for the new century unfolding before us. Taking care of our people -- of the members of the Foreign and Civil Services and the Foreign Service Nationals who serve our country with such dedication and courage in so many difficult places around the world -- is not only the right thing to do, but also a powerful contribution to America's best interests.

Thank you very much again, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lugar, and Members of the Committee for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.