

## **The State Department's ISN Bureau: Enduring Priorities and New Missions**

Testimony by

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Good afternoon, Chairman Sherman, Ranking Minority Member Yoho, and Representatives. Thank you for giving me the chance to appear before you today to outline our vision and priorities at the State Department's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN).

As reflected on our [website](#), ISN's primary mission is to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, delivery systems, and destabilizing advanced conventional weapons capabilities, as well as to help roll back such proliferation where it has already taken root. This is a critical U.S. national security objective – one emphasized in both the [2017 National Security Strategy](#) and the [2018 National Defense Strategy](#) – and we in the ISN Bureau are proud of our contributions to this mission.

Precisely how we live out our roles and responsibilities in support of U.S. national security and foreign policy priorities, however, is (and must always be) a work in progress, tailored on an ongoing basis to the nature and severity of the threats facing our nation in light of the policy priorities of the administration. I am pleased to take this opportunity to set forth how we are presently working to leverage the Bureau's talented personnel, diverse skills, resources, and experience to protect and advance U.S. interests in today's very challenging security environment.

I hope that insight into our vision for this work will be of use to you as you evaluate our bureau and its resourcing. To be as helpful as I can about answering your questions, I will truncate my initial remarks in the interest of brevity – but I respectfully request that the full version of my prepared comments be entered into the record.

For longtime observers of U.S. nonproliferation policy, much of what we are doing is unsurprising. Fortunately, nonproliferation has tended to enjoy strong bipartisan support in Washington, and many of our key priorities and objectives have remained fundamentally

unchanged for many years. There is also much in the approach being taken by *today's* ISN, however, that is quite new and innovative. I am pleased to have the chance to highlight to you both what remains important and what is new.

## I. *Our Enduring Agenda*

In the past, ISN generally conceived its mission as being principally about “nonproliferation” in a narrow sense – that is, about preventing the flow of sensitive technology and materials to rogue regimes or terrorists and supporting nonproliferation-related multilateral regimes. All this we still do, Mr. Chairman, and I daresay we do it well. I have my capable predecessors, as well as a longstanding tradition of strong support in the U.S. Congress, to thank for having such a capable team at ISN, and such a strong record of accomplishment for us to build upon in these regards.

- We work, for instance, to help build, maintain, preserve, and strengthen the various treaties, multilateral regimes, and international institutions upon which the global nonproliferation regime depends.
- We negotiate civil-nuclear cooperation agreements, working to ensure that they include the strongest possible nonproliferation provisions.
- We also negotiate consequence management plans with foreign governments and U.S. embassies around the world to improve preparedness for chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents.
- We are the U.S. government’s diplomatic lead on issues related to nuclear safeguards, safety, security, and peaceful uses of nuclear technology vis-à-vis the International Atomic Energy Agency, and in bilateral and other multilateral relationships – including on the most sensitive of safeguards issues (such as in Iran).
- We manage approximately \$170 million in capacity-building programming to help other countries come up to nonproliferation, safety, security, and export control best practices. We use this to work with partner countries to make them better nonproliferation partners in various ways: securing their borders; building effective national security export control regimes and regulatory structures; combating nuclear smuggling and the proliferation of chemical and biological goods and materials; effectively implementing their international nonproliferation obligations and United Nations sanctions against problem proliferators; minimizing, securing, and eliminating sensitive items or materials; and training and equipping law enforcement, customs, or other personnel who prevent or interdict proliferation-facilitating transactions.
- We screen both export licenses and visa applications for proliferation dangers, conduct proliferation impact assessments of proposed agreements or transactions,

and work with interagency and international partners to ensure that U.S. and multilateral control lists keep up with the evolution of WMD and other proliferation threat technologies.

- And we use State Department nonproliferation sanctions authorities – and work with interagency partners to most effectively use *their* authorities – to penalize those who engage in proliferation and to help deter future mischief.

All of this work, Mr. Chairman, is devoted to making sure that it is as difficult, costly, expensive, and painful as possible for rogue regimes and terrorists to acquire WMD, delivery systems, or advanced conventional weapons. This is our “traditional nonproliferation” mission, and it is exceedingly important work. Nevertheless, this is not *all* we do.

## II. *Reforming and Improving*

We are also hard at work to ensure that we do all of this as efficiently and effectively as possible. As an example, we are undertaking a broad reform of our programming efforts to ensure that ISN is as responsible and effective as possible as a steward of the funds that Congress and the U.S. taxpayer have entrusted us to manage in support of international security and nonproliferation equities.

We are, for instance, building new evaluative mechanisms into our programming to ensure that we target spending as directly as possible against concrete security threats and the highest priority challenges facing U.S. foreign and national security policy, that we re-evaluate programming decisions on an ongoing basis in order to maximize their responsiveness to evolving circumstances, and that we “graduate” recipients of our assistance as their national or institutional capacities improve so as always to be devoting our capacity-building resources to the most pressing security needs. To this end, Mr. Chairman, we have also been migrating our programming funds from rigid, country-specific efforts into more flexible regional or global accounts that will permit us to maintain appropriately threat-prioritized allocations in a rapidly changing environment. We are grateful for the support we have received both from the Department and from Congress in these reform efforts, and for continued funding for our nonproliferation programming, which faces an ever growing list of threats to address as part of our mission to prevent the spread of WMD, delivery systems, and advanced conventional weapons capabilities – and rolling back such proliferation where it has already taken root.

In line with these reform efforts, in the past two of the President’s budgets, the Department requested that the Congress grant full notwithstanding authority for three ISN programs to counter WMD proliferation threats that emerge from state sponsors of terrorism and gross violators of human rights. This would provide these ISN nonproliferation programs a similar notwithstanding authority as other State programs, such as those of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and ensure that all necessary tools are available to hold regimes such as North Korea and Iran accountable. This would enable us to implement programs to address proliferation threats in countries where we lack this authority. This request is not intended to use foreign assistance dollars to build the capabilities of states that

violate United Nations Security Council Resolutions and break international commitments, but to identify and help prevent proliferation activities anywhere they may occur.

Internally, moreover, ISN has greatly improved mutual situational awareness and coordination between our “policy” and “programming” offices, to maximize their effectiveness as collaborative team members. Indeed, we have been working to replicate this approach on a multilateral basis, by encouraging analogous moves by our diplomatic partners and in *fora* such as our Global Partnership and Nonproliferation Directors Group engagements.

Nor have we restricted our innovations to the U.S. interagency and our work with diplomatic counterparts. We have also placed a very high priority upon public outreach and engagement, to explain what we have been doing on all fronts, to outline the thinking behind it, and – frankly – to evangelize for sound nonproliferation and international security policies across the entire range of Bureau mission areas. We are proud, Mr. Chairman, not just of the work we are doing, but of the robust public record we are building about that work – hopefully, not merely as another bureaucratic participant but also as an example and an inspiration to others both at home and abroad.

### III. *Evolving New Missions*

But these days we do even more than this, Mr. Chairman. ISN now also uses our nonproliferation-derived tools and expertise to support U.S. national security and geopolitical strategy more broadly. Most of all, in this respect, we are building new lines of effort in support of our nation’s competitive strategy. This undertaking is appropriate for an era in which high-level U.S. national security documents such as the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy place special priority upon meeting the challenges presented by the revisionist powers of China and Russia – as well as the threats that Iran and North Korea present.

- We now work with new focus and vigor, for example, to impede technology and resource flows to China and to Russia as part of the United States’ broader competitive strategy, to constrain their high rates of military-technological advancement. This also helps our own great Republic’s creativity and industriousness (and that of our allies) to meet the challenges before us.
- We implement sanctions against those who engage in significant transactions with the Russian defense or intelligence sectors, as well as leveraging the threat of sanctions to prevent such transactions, cutting off revenue flows to the Kremlin, undermining the malign strategic relationships Moscow seeks to build with foreign clients, and perhaps helping create opportunities for Western suppliers in the process.
- We work to counter the momentum of China’s predatory, state-funded nuclear industry – and to create opportunities for U.S. or other suppliers – through diplomatic engagement with foreign partners and through both private and public consciousness-raising about Chinese manipulation of industrial and commercial

ties, theft of intellectual property, and diversion of foreign technology to military purposes. We also negotiate Nuclear Cooperation Memoranda of Understanding, a new diplomatic mechanism we have developed to help U.S. industry, laboratory, academic, governmental, and regulatory entities develop and strengthen relationships with actual or potential nuclear technology partners overseas.

- And we help implement full-spectrum pressure campaigns against Iran and the DPRK to change their strategic calculus on weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation – even while we plan and prepare to implement the cooperative, negotiated elimination of threat programs in those countries as an outcome of the talks our pressure efforts aim to incentivize. Such pressure campaigns complement and reinforce traditional nonproliferation work that is aimed at impeding the flow of sensitive technology and materials, but it targets bigger game: in addition to making proliferation more difficult, we aim to make it *less attractive*.

As the U.S. government as a whole is in the process of reorienting itself increasingly toward broader strategic challenges, Mr. Chairman – including to the exigencies of *counterstrategy*, especially vis-à-vis revisionist China – we are making such work an increasingly important part of the ISN Bureau’s activity. All ISN offices are exploring how they can contribute better to these strategic goals, and we are reorienting parts of the Bureau to facilitate this.

- We aim to build upon our current work in preparation for North Korea denuclearization activities – as well as excellent (if somewhat *ad hoc*) work done by ISN in the past on such projects as missile elimination in the Former Soviet Union, WMD program removal in Libya, and Syrian chemical weapons destruction – to institutionalize negotiated threat program elimination as a locus of professional specialization in ISN for the first time.
- We are also working to expand the bureau’s work in the competitive strategy space by developing and improving ways in which we can support U.S. posture vis-à-vis state-level adversaries such as China, Russia: ways in which to use our nonproliferation-related skills to help undermine elements of *their* strategies and create opportunities for our own.
- Additionally, we are taking a more thoughtful look at strategic planning by dedicating personnel to surveying the strategic environment and looking at trends and emerging challenges to help maximize our chances of being postured effectively against future threats. In effect, Mr. Chairman, I want to minimize the danger that my successors will find themselves in *my* position of having to make up for time lost while the United States failed to focus upon Great Power threats while our adversaries were hard at work on their own competitive strategies.

We certainly haven't abandoned the traditional priorities, which often provide a vital foundation for our new and emerging missions, and we still work at them faithfully, diligently, and effectively. But we are also mindful that state-on-state challenges never went away over the last quarter century, and that certain other powers have been hard at work on their own strategies against us while we were preoccupied with other matters. It is now a key part of our mission to contribute to U.S. competitive strategy in response to these challenges – on top of all of the other vital things our bureau does.

#### IV. *Conclusion*

We are proud of all we are doing in support of these U.S. national security and foreign policy priorities, Mr. Chairman. It remains an immense honor and a great pleasure to lead this superbly talented team of Civil Service, Foreign Service, and contract experts devoted to protecting and advancing the interests of our great Republic in a challenging and dangerous world and helping make that challenging world a less dangerous place.

As I hope I've made clear, we are working enormously hard on a great many fronts in our efforts to make the American people safer and more prosperous in the face of a broadly deteriorating global security environment. Doing all of this is hardly easy, and our staff has basically been engaged in a sort of "marathon sprint" for the last couple of years. We are enormously grateful for the support we've received from Congress, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues on these great collective challenges in the months and years ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to your questions.

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