

**Testimony of James R. Kunder
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U.S. Agency for International Development
before the
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate**

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Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to appear before the Committee today as the President's nominee to serve as Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Since much of my work has focused on unstable nations – nations still struggling with how to allocate authority and power peacefully – it is both reassuring and inspiring to participate personally in this modern-day manifestation of America's constitutional wisdom and foresight. Sitting before you today reinvigorates my hope and expectation that those nations still tortured by internal conflict, and battling over governmental legitimacy, might similarly devise systems for selecting government officials based on the consent of the people and their representatives.

As I am now serving as Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Asia and Near East region, I am acutely aware of the development challenges facing this large portion of the globe and of the intense interest of the Committee in these development challenges. To highlight some of the key points in USAID's budget presentation to the Congress, the Asia and Near East region is home to hundreds of millions of impoverished and undereducated human beings, more than Africa and Latin America combined. Across this region, women especially face profound difficulties and inequalities that prevent this 50% of the population from making the contribution to human progress women could and should make. The lack of economic opportunity, the lack of education, and the inequality, when combined with too many instances of authoritarian and corrupt regimes, makes the region -- stretching from Morocco to Mongolia -- the front lines in the global battle against terror, and against those conditions that allow terrorism to flourish.

On the positive side of the ledger, the nations of the Asia and Near East region bring substantial assets to the struggle for human freedom and progress. These include proud traditions and vibrant cultures, vast natural resources, a hard-working and entrepreneurial populace and, in many cases, a global perspective. USAID programs, supported by the U.S. taxpayers and guided by this Committee, are additional assets. The U.S. government foreign assistance program is an important weapon in the fight against terror, against poverty, against illiteracy, against inequality, against instability. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge that I will do everything in my power – in full consultation with this Committee – to ensure that U.S. government reconstruction and development programs are carried out effectively, equitably and with the oversight that the taxpayers have every right to demand.

Reconstruction programs in Iraq and Afghanistan are, I recognize, an especially important part of the responsibilities I would undertake, should I be confirmed by the Senate. Designing and implementing reconstruction processes that will stand the test of time in these two nations provide a daunting challenge, especially during this time of transition in Iraq. I look forward, if confirmed, to continuing to benefit from the Committee's guidance and consultations on our reconstruction activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the other unstable nations in the Asia and Near East region.

Closing 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 well enough to make the trip. As they have been an inspiration to me, I wanted to note their contributions. Just about sixty years and a week ago, my father was pushing across Omaha Beach. 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.