

Statement of Brett Holmgren
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
May 18, 2021

Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the nominee to be Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. I am deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me, and to Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, for supporting my nomination. I also want to thank Senator Klobuchar for her kind words.

I would not be here if it were not for the love and support of my family: my wife, Dana, our son Teddy, my parents, Michael and Mary, and my siblings Stacie, Krista and Ryan. Each of them has inspired me to live my life with a sense of purpose, love, and humility.

Like many Americans of my generation, the tragic events of 9/11 were a turning point in my life. I left my home state of Minnesota nearly 18 years ago to pursue a career in public service to defend the freedoms, values, and liberties we all cherish. I came to Washington with a sense of optimism and a deep and abiding belief in the ideals of this country – that America is a force for good in the world, and that all men and women are created equal with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Those ideals derive from my upbringing in Minnesota, where I was surrounded by family who believed deeply in the role of public service. Both of my grandfathers were World War II veterans. My parents, both of whom were public school teachers for 40 years, instilled in my siblings and me the importance of service. I still share the optimism and commitment to public service that I brought with me to Washington nearly two decades ago.

While I may be a new face to the Committee, I have a long track record of working in and with the Intelligence Community. As an analyst, first at the Defense Intelligence Agency and later at Central Intelligence Agency, I authored all-source intelligence products to inform policy decisions. Through deployments overseas, including in warzones, I have seen firsthand the key role that intelligence plays in shaping national security and the tremendous sacrifices of our diplomats, intelligence officers, and warfighters.

Throughout my career, I have also served in policy roles at the Pentagon and on the National Security Council staff at the White House. These experiences gave me a richer understanding of the vital role and the limitations of intelligence in shaping policy. Most importantly, I gained a greater appreciation for the importance of analytic objectivity and the need for the Intelligence Community to tell the policymaker what they need to know, not what they want to hear.

I have been nominated for this position at a time when the United States and its allies are facing a diverse, interconnected array of threats against the backdrop of a global pandemic that is straining governments and societies, fueling unrest, and accelerating global competition. From China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, to terrorism, cyber, climate change, and evolving

technologies, these threats pose new challenges and opportunities for the Intelligence Community.

INR plays a unique role in addressing these challenges. As the oldest civilian intelligence agency in the United States, the Bureau has a long and proud history of providing policymakers valuable insights into America's most pressing national security issues, while empowering our diplomats with the information and analysis to advance US foreign policy.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading this remarkable institution, serving as the principal intelligence advisor to the Secretary of State and the head of one of the Nation's 18 intelligence agencies. INR's responsibility to provide timely, objective, all-source analysis and to assure that intelligence and sensitive law enforcement activities are consistent with, and supportive of, our foreign policy objectives is more critical than ever.

If confirmed, four interrelated imperatives will shape my approach to leading INR. First, I will ensure that our capabilities and resources are aligned and strategically prioritized to address the most pressing challenges and opportunities, to include China, Russia, Iran and North Korea, as well as global health, cyber, climate change and how to capitalize on the revolution in open-source intelligence.

Second, I will prioritize investments in INR's greatest asset – its people. We must continue to attract, train, and retain top talent while placing greater emphasis on diversity recruitment.

Third, I will focus on upgrading INR's technology infrastructure to empower our analysts with the tools they need to improve the delivery of our products and support our customers, especially our diplomats overseas.

Finally, I will insist on strong cybersecurity practices throughout INR to safeguard the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of our data, networks, and systems.

In closing, I want to recognize the important role that Congressional oversight plays in ensuring that US intelligence activities are lawful, ethical, and consistent with our values. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with this Committee as we confront the many challenges ahead.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.