

**Statement of Christine Abizaid**  
**Nominee for Director of the National Counterterrorism Center**  
**Senate Select Committee on Intelligence**  
**June 9, 2021**

Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today to be considered for the role of Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. I am both honored and humbled by this opportunity to return to Government service, the Intelligence Community, and the field of counterterrorism. I want to thank President Biden and Director Haines for their confidence in my ability to lead the Center and to help steer the United States' counterterrorism enterprise at this critical stage.

I want to especially thank my wife for her love and support. Without her encouragement, I would not be here today. If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, the burden of keeping our lives running smoothly will fall squarely on her shoulders, even as she continues her own demanding career. To our son: what your future holds is, in its own way, motivation to serve again. We will raise you to value sacrifice for your countrymen, just as we both were raised.

Along those lines, I would like to recognize my family for being such a compelling example of public service. My father served for more than 30 years as an officer in the United States Army and later as a diplomat. Growing up, I was always proud of him and the uniform he wore. But it was not until I began my career at the Defense Intelligence Agency that I got to know my father by his professional reputation, as the highly-decorated, deeply respected, brilliant, and battle-tested soldier he is. My mother also served, as an Army and State Department spouse. Her ability to navigate the everyday chaos of Army life with calm, optimism, and grit was an inspiration to me; she is the foundation of our close-knit family. The example she and my father set for me and my siblings encouraged our own forms of service. My brother enlisted in the Army after high school; 9/11 was supposed to be his first day of boot camp. And I stand in awe of my sister's resilience as an Army wife in the post-9/11 era. She and her husband, an Army Officer and Ranger, have been separated by near-constant deployment cycles since 2001. While he commands on the front lines, she leads on the Homefront, guiding and inspiring Ranger families, in addition to her own.

For my own part, my years of government service were squarely rooted in the attacks on 9/11. While it has been several years since I was last part of the CT community, even from the outside, it is clear that the terrorist threat to Americans and U.S. interests persists. This is not to say it is unchanged – it has evolved significantly in the last two decades. The threat from groups like al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State is in some ways diminished; but it is also more diffuse, active across an ever-broadening geographic terrain. These groups appear less organized against the Homeland; but also more technologically sophisticated, leveraging social media platforms to widen their appeal. Meanwhile, the threat from other terrorist elements remains urgent. Whether posed by domestic violent extremists, Iranian-sponsored proxies, racially-motivated terrorists, or others, we must not lose sight of the diversity of the threats that confront the United States.

While terrorism remains a challenge, I believe our country's ability to address it is unmatched. Reforms after 9/11 – including those led by Members of this Committee – created a

counterterrorism and Homeland Security enterprise that is agile, collaborative, and proactive in mitigating threats to the United States. In particular, the creation of the National Counterterrorism Center in 2004 institutionalized the integration of CT-related intelligence and has since been a key enabler of the United States' ability to holistically address the evolving threats to our interests. American citizens have done their part, too; I believe today, we are a country more resilient in the face of terrorism than at any time in our history.

This mature CT capability is even more important at a time of heightened strategic competition, especially related to China, rising cybersecurity threats, and a technological revolution that will present both challenges and opportunities. In this environment, the counterterrorism capability invested in so steadfastly over the years must be both effective and efficient in protecting our country. This is doubly true for an organization like NCTC, purpose-built to prevent, detect and deter terrorist threats to the United States.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the great contribution of all national security professionals, but especially those at the National Counterterrorism Center. It would be a distinct honor to lead the men and women who make up the Center, who have so selflessly devoted their lives to protecting the nation, and who have asked for their families' support in doing so. If confirmed as their Director, I commit to doing everything in my power to ensure these public servants have the tools and capabilities necessary to succeed. I further commit to ensuring that NCTC fulfills its duty to protect the United States with the utmost integrity and with a deep appreciation for the trust that has been placed in it by the American people. Finally, I commit to working with this Committee, among others, to keep Congress fully and currently informed of the Center's activities so that you can discharge your critical intelligence oversight responsibilities on behalf of the nation.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.