

Mr. Christopher Miller

Nominee for the Position of
Director of the National Counterterrorism Center

Statement for the Record
Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

July 22, 2020

Acting Chairman Rubio, Vice Chairman Warner, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for taking the time today to consider my nomination to be the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

It is both humbling and surreal to sit before you today as the President's nominee for this position. I am grateful to have the support and confidence of President Trump and DNI Ratcliffe. Along with the overwhelming privilege to lead and command America's sons and daughters in combat as an Army Special Forces officer, being considered for this position is the paramount honor of my professional life.

I still see myself as a kid from Iowa who wanted nothing more than to serve his country and make his parents proud. My father believed strongly in the nobility of public service, and I try every day to follow in his footsteps. In addition, my mother's wisdom and example of citizenship are what I aspire to emulate in all facets of my life. I would also like to take a moment to recognize my wife and three children. My wife graciously stood with me through this 32-year odyssey and raised our three children into magnificent adulthood. Their character, optimism for the future, and goodness are my motivation. They give me hope for the continued greatness of this wonderful experiment that is the United States of America.

I've been a member of the counterterrorism and Special Forces communities for over 30 years. In my experience, there is no more successful organization in this field than NCTC. The Center's ability to protect the American people by fusing pools of voluminous, disparate data, in a way that protects the privacy and civil liberties of our citizens, is the envy of the world. The tactics, techniques, and procedures pioneered by NCTC over the past 16 years transformed the way the Intelligence Community coordinates and shares information. NCTC's spirit and culture

of innovation, discipline, rigor, and its respect for the Constitution serve as a shining example of the genius of our democracy.

When we set out on this journey as a country, we envisioned our campaign against violent extremist organizations as a “generational war,” not a “multi-generational war.” It would be, in my view, the height of irresponsibility to leave this conflict for our children to fight. It is my life’s goal, whether confirmed for this position or in another capacity, to defeat Al Qaida and its affiliates, and transition this war to a sustainable effort laser-focused on monitoring terrorist threats to the United States, attacking those that generate the will and capability to do us harm, developing and nurturing the next generation of counterterrorism professionals and technologies, and expanding relationships with like-minded partners around the world who are committed to the elimination of this scourge to peaceful coexistence.

When Al Qaida declared war on the United States in 1997 and attacked us in force on September 11, 2001, I, like many of my generation, answered the call to fight and defeat them. It was not a war we sought, but, in defense of this nation, we selflessly sacrificed our youth and our innocence. Many dear friends and comrades also sacrificed their health, their marriages, and in some cases, their lives. We have no regrets. The war has been long, but our efforts have been remarkably successful. The commitment of tens of thousands of professionals have taken the fight to the enemy, protected the United States, and developed a global network of partnerships that have prevented another cataclysmic attack.

I recognize and appreciate that many Americans are fatigued by this war. Some in the United States Government have rightfully recognized that we need to focus on new threats. This, to me, is a testimonial to the dedication of the steadfast counterterrorism professionals that have so successfully reduced the severity of the terrorist threat. This was our goal – that we

would degrade the capability of terrorist organizations to the extent that terrorism simply became another national security challenge rather than the sole national security priority. While this war is not over, I believe we are in the final phase.

I have at times been criticized for declaring that we can defeat Al Qaida. While we cannot defeat terrorism as a concept, we absolutely can defeat an entity like Al Qaida and its affiliates. If confirmed, and in concert with my counterterrorism colleagues across the federal, state, local, tribal and international partners, that is exactly what I intend to accomplish.

Our record thus far is impressive. Al Qaida is on the run trying to survive with degraded command and control. ISIS has been decisively defeated on the battlefield, their caliphate destroyed and their leadership severely attrited. ISIS's perversion of the Islamic faith has been exposed for what it is – a craven effort to gain power by manipulating the aspirations and dreams of a small group of people searching for greater meaning and fellowship. Although our success bought us the space for a more fulsome debate about prioritization and resourcing, our gains remain fragile and we must remain vigilant. There is only one fundamental Counterterrorism “truth” – to prevent the enemy from plotting, training, and launching attacks, you must maintain pressure on their networks. It is indicators and warnings from the Intelligence Community, and NCTC first and foremost, that prevents strategic surprise and drives operations.

NCTC is and must continue to focus on preventing strategic surprise. The men and women of the NCTC serve as sentinels, standing guard 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year. NCTC is our nation's “center of excellence” for bringing together the greatest minds in government, the private sector, and academia to think through terrorist threats and how to organize the government to respond. The character and resiliency of the American people is beyond question and serves as a source of strength for our Nation – that was the fatal

miscalculation of Al Qaida and ISIS. The genius of NCTC, and those responsible for its creation, is its amplification of that resiliency to guarantee that the American government has the plans, programs, and capabilities in place to respond effectively to the unexpected.

My commitment to you, if confirmed, is that I, along with the legion of our nation's counterterrorism professionals, will wake up every morning committed to excellence, committed to the Constitution, committed to protecting our service members and citizens, and ultimately dedicated to winning this war.

If confirmed, I promise to work with you, building on NCTC's strong relationship with this Committee, to proactively foster a partnership that facilitates your mandate to oversee the Intelligence Community. I will work to keep you fully and currently informed and be a meaningful partner in matters of oversight and legislation. If we are to be victorious in this conflict, and end it before our children take up the fight, NCTC needs your continued support.

If confirmed, I will lead the patriotic men and women of the NCTC with honor and integrity; advocate for the no-fail requirements of our counterterrorism enterprise; and provide my frank, honest, and unvarnished opinions and advice to the President, the DNI, this Committee, and other policy makers and leaders in order to guarantee that we never again experience the indescribable loss of September 11, 2001.

Mr. Acting Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for your unparalleled leadership in protecting the United States. I look forward to responding to your questions.