

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Nominations Hearing
September 29, 2004

Today, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets to consider nominees to four key leadership positions in the Administration. President Bush has nominated Catherine Todd Bailey to be Ambassador to Latvia; Ryan Crocker to be Ambassador to Pakistan; Marcie Ries to be Ambassador to Albania; and Douglas Menarchik to be Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination at USAID. We welcome these four distinguished nominees and look forward to our discussions with them.

Our first nominee, Ms. Catherine Bailey has been a civic leader in Louisville, Kentucky. She has championed various charitable and artistic causes, including her current service as President of Operation Open Arms, a charity that cares for children whose mothers are in prison. Although she has lived for many years in Kentucky, she has Hoosier roots, having been born in Indiana and having graduated from Franklin College in my home state. We admire the nominee's achievements and her willingness to undertake this important service for our country.

The United States and Latvia have enjoyed a strong relationship over the past decade. Most recently, the United States played a key role in advocating Latvia's successful application to become a member of NATO. Latvia achieved another key foreign policy objective when it joined the European Union last May. Latvia's commitment to NATO is evident in its participation in the Balkans mission, and Latvia has supported U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Latvia also has made remarkable economic progress. Since reestablishing its independence in 1991, it has proceeded with market-oriented reforms and has developed a dynamic and prosperous private sector. Our next ambassador should build on growing economic contacts with Latvia and continue to expand our cultural and security ties with that country.

Our second nominee, Ambassador Ryan Crocker has been a career member of the Foreign Service since 1971. He has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; as Director of Governance in the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq; as Charge d'Affaires in Afghanistan; and as our Ambassador to Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon. If confirmed, his experience would be invaluable as he leads one of our most important embassies.

We support the Pakistan Government's efforts to root out terrorism, and we are committed to Pakistan's long-term development and prosperity. President Musharraf, the target of two assassination attempts last year, faces extraordinary difficulties. Many of the religious parties in Pakistan have links to extremists who fought in Afghanistan and Kashmir. A crackdown on extremism in Pakistan is necessary to help prevent future terrorist attacks, as well as to facilitate the India-Pakistan peace process. Last Friday's groundbreaking meeting between President Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Singh provides hope that both sides will take risks for peace and find common ground on the issues that divide them, including the conflict over Kashmir. We look forward to hearing from Ambassador Crocker on these foreign policy challenges.

Our third nominee, Ms. Marcie Ries, is an accomplished Foreign Service Officer who is currently serving as Chief of Mission in Kosovo. Ms. Ries has held numerous important posts, including time spent in London, the U.S. Mission to the European Union, Belgium, and Turkey. If confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Albania, she would bring extensive skills and knowledge to the post.

The United States and Albania enjoy a strong bilateral relationship. As Albania works to strengthen its democratic foundation, the United States is committed to helping Albania achieve its goals of Trans-Atlantic integration, such as joining NATO and the European Union. Albania has demonstrated an impressive commitment to NATO membership by overhauling almost every aspect of its defense establishment.

I visited Albania last month and enjoyed productive meetings with the Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Foreign Minister. I was extremely pleased with the bilateral cooperation underway to eliminate threats posed by conventional and non-conventional weapons. I visited a military storage site containing 79 MANPADS -- shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles designed to attack military aircraft and helicopters. These MANPADS were part of a massive arsenal that Albania has left over from the Cold War. I am happy to report that the MANPADS were destroyed on September 2 with U.S. assistance.

Albania has provided military and diplomatic support for the U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has been active in freezing terrorist assets, shutting down suspect Islamic NGOs, and expelling Islamic extremists. Our next ambassador must work hard to maintain this momentum.

Our final nominee, Dr. Douglas Menarchik, has been nominated to be Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination at USAID. Dr. Menarchik has had a long and distinguished career as an Air Force officer and policy advisor, primarily focusing on issues related to low intensity conflict and terrorism. He holds a doctorate degree from George Washington University and is currently serving as the Director of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

The Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination has primary responsibility at USAID for policy formulation, budget analysis, and program coordination. This office knits USAID into the State Department and the interagency process. It is also relevant to one of this Committee's particular interests -- establishing a more robust civilian stabilization and reconstruction capacity at the State Department and USAID. We currently have pending on the Senate calendar S.2127, a bill that builds that capacity. If confirmed, Dr. Menarchik, we hope that you will strongly support improvements in our preparations for future stabilization and reconstruction missions.

I congratulate each of you on your nominations. I ask that you deliver your statements in the order that you were introduced. If you are summarizing a statement, the text of your entire presentation will be included in the hearing record. Also, please introduce family and friends that may have accompanied you on this important occasion.

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