

**Testimony of James R. Kunder
Deputy Administrator – designate
U.S. Agency for International Development
before the
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
March 13, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to appear before the Committee today as the President Bush's nominee to serve as Deputy Administrator of the U. S. Agency of International Development (USAID).

I have had the honor to serve as the acting deputy administrator for the past six months. This experience has made me acutely aware of the development challenges facing the U.S. government and the intense interest of the Committee in meeting them. I have devoted much of my time as acting deputy administrator to assisting Administrator Tobias administer the foreign assistance reforms – reforms necessary to meet the 21st century's unprecedented challenges and opportunities. I am excited to be part of this change to leverage USAID strengths to support foreign assistance as an element of U.S. foreign policy.

Prior to serving as acting deputy administrator, I was the Assistant Administrator of the Asia and Near East region, which stretches from Morocco to Mongolia, is home to millions of impoverished human beings, and is on the front lines in the global battle against terror, and against those conditions that allow terrorism to flourish. The U.S. government's foreign assistance programs are an important weapon in the fight against terror, poverty, illiteracy, inequality and instability. If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge that I will do everything in my power – in full consultation with the Congress – to assist Ambassador Tobias and Dr. Rice in furthering the goals of transformational diplomacy, and to ensure that U.S. government development and reconstruction programs are carried

out effectively, equitably and with the oversight that the taxpayers have every right to demand.

From 1991 to 1993, I served at USAID as Director of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. In January 2002, I returned to USAID to reopen the USAID Mission in Kabul immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Subsequent to serving as the Director of Relief and Reconstruction in Afghanistan for five months, I served as Deputy Assistant Administrator and then Assistant Administrator of the Asia and Near East Bureau, where I had the privilege to work on a wide range of issues in support of Iraq, West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon and the countries affected by the 2004 tsunami and 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.

From these experiences, I have learned that designing and implementing sustainable development and reconstruction processes in transitioning nations is a daunting, but critically important, challenge. I look forward, if confirmed, to continuing to benefit from the Committee's guidance and consultations in USAID's work.

If confirmed, Mr. Chairman, I will take very seriously my role in representing the Agency in the many inter-agency deliberations in which U.S. support for international economic, governance and social programs are discussed. Under the direction of Ambassador Tobias, we understand now better than ever the key importance of our relationship with the Department of State, and our respective staffs are making great efforts to ensure optimal coordination. If confirmed, I expect to devote significant time to addressing questions of budget, strategic priorities and funding levels with colleagues at the Department of State and other U.S. government agencies.

I also recognize that we within the U.S. government do not have a monopoly on knowledge of what transforms societies. Having worked in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, I look forward to a fruitful dialogue with all elements in the development community, including but not limited to the NGO's, universities, and the business community, since activities in all these sectors impact human progress.

After twenty years of working in the development and reconstruction field, I remain an optimist about America's role in the world, and I firmly believe in the importance of the role assigned to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Working to build democracy and economic prosperity in the poorest countries in the world, countries that are in the strategic interest of the United States, as well as those countries that are simply deprived, suffering or experiencing a humanitarian crisis, is one of the most inspiring missions of the U.S. government. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, other Members of the Committee, and your staff, in order to help steer this work in the right direction and ensure that each tax dollar is used to make a real impact in the world.

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 able to make the trip. As they have been an inspiration to me, I wanted to note their contributions. Over 63 years ago, my father was pushing across the beaches at Normandy. 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.