

STATEMENT OF
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE THOMAS
R. NIDES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the
Committee, I also thank you for this opportunity.

I want to reiterate what Bill said: All of us have a responsibility to provide the men and women who serve this country with the best possible security and support. From senior Department leadership setting priorities... to supervisors evaluating security needs... to Congress appropriating sufficient funds – we share this responsibility. Secretary Clinton has said that, as Secretary of State, this is her greatest responsibility and highest priority.

Today I will focus on the steps we have been taking at Secretary Clinton's direction, and that we will continue to take.

As Bill said, the Board's report takes a clear-eyed look at serious, systemic problems for which we take responsibility and that we have already begun to fix.

We are grateful for the recommendations from Ambassador Pickering and his team. We accept every one of them – all 29 recommendations.

Secretary Clinton has charged my office with leading a task force that will ensure that all 29 are implemented quickly and completely – and to pursue steps above and beyond the Board's report. The Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Under

Secretary for Management, Director General of the Foreign Service, and Deputy Legal Advisor, will work with me to drive this forward.

The Task Force has already met to translate the recommendations into about 60 specific action items. We have assigned every single one to a responsible bureau for immediate implementation – and several will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Implementation of each and every recommendation will be well underway by the time the next Secretary

of State takes office. There will be no higher priority for the Department in the coming weeks and months. And, should we require more resources to execute these recommendations, we will work closely with Congress to ensure these needs are met.

As I said, Secretary Clinton wants us to implement the ARB's findings – and to do more. Let me offer some specifics.

For more than two hundred years, the United States – like every other country around the world – has relied on host nations to provide security for our

embassies and consulates. But in today's evolving threat environment, we have to take a new and harder look at the capabilities and commitment of our hosts. We have to re-examine how we operate in places facing emerging threats, where national security forces are fragmented and political will may be weak.

So, at Secretary Clinton's direction, we moved quickly to conduct a worldwide review of our overall security posture, with particular scrutiny on a number of high-threat posts.

With the Department of Defense, we deployed five Interagency Security Assessment Teams – made up of Diplomatic and military security experts – to 19 posts in 13 countries... unprecedented cooperation between our Departments at a critical time. These teams have provided a roadmap for addressing emerging security challenges.

We're also partnering with the Pentagon to send 35 additional detachments of Marine Security Guards – that's about 225 Marines – to medium and high threat posts, where they will serve as visible

deterrents to hostile acts. This is on top of the approximately 150 detachments already deployed.

We are realigning resources in our 2013 budget request to address physical vulnerabilities and reinforce structures wherever needed, and to reduce the risks from fire. And let me add: We may need your help in ensuring we have the authority to streamline the usual processes and produce faster results.

We're seeking to hire more than 150 additional Diplomatic Security personnel – an increase of 5

percent – and to provide them with the equipment and training they need. As the ARB recommended, we will target them squarely at securing our high threat posts.

I want to second Bill's praise for these brave security professionals. I have served in this Department for only two years, having come from the private sector. However, as I have traveled to places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, I have seen first-hand how these dedicated men and women risk their lives. We all owe them a debt of gratitude,

as they go to work every day to protect our more than 275 posts around the world.

As we make these improvements in the field, we're also making changes here in Washington.

We named the first-ever Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for High Threat Posts within the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. And we're updating our deployment procedures to increase the number of experienced and well-trained staff serving at those posts.

We are working to ensure that the State Department makes decisions about where our people operate in a way that reflects our shared responsibility for security. Our regional Assistant Secretaries were directly involved in our Interagency Security Assessment process and they will assume greater accountability for securing their people and posts.

We will provide this Committee with a detailed report on every step we're taking to improve security and implement the Board's recommendations.

We will look to you for support and guidance as we do this. Obviously, part of this is about resources.

We must equip our people with what they need to deliver results safely, and we'll work with you if needs arise. But Congress has a bigger role than that. You have visited our posts, you know our diplomats on the ground and the challenges they face. You know our vital national security interests are at stake – and that we are all in this together. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your support and counsel. And for this opportunity to discuss these

important matters. We would be happy to answer
your questions.

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