

Statement of Colonel Jenny McGee, United States Air Force (retired)
Nominee to be Associate Administrator for Relief, Response, and Resilience,
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate
June 4, 2020

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be Associate Administrator for Relief, Response, and Resilience at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I am grateful to President Trump, Secretary Pompeo, former Administrator Green, Acting Administrator Barsa, and Deputy Administrator Glick for their trust and confidence in me and my leadership to serve in this important new role.

I am truly humbled to be considered for the Agency's Associate Administrator for Relief, Response and Resilience, whose mandate is at the forefront of U.S. national security interests. As part of USAID's Transformation, this new position is a new principal in the Office of the Administrator, specifically responsible for some of the most fast-paced and high-profile work at the Agency. The three Bureaus I would oversee—Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS), and Resilience and Food Security (RFS)—will improve the Agency's effectiveness in providing life-saving aid, preventing and addressing crises, strengthening self-reliance, and avoiding hunger. This is certainly a Herculean task, to which I would devote all of my energy, capabilities, and heart. It would be an honor to help USAID continue this important work to protect America's security and prosperity, and assist countries along their Journey to Self-Reliance.

I want to recognize the service of the extremely dedicated and talented USAID workforce who have led the Agency's response to natural and man-made disasters, designed programs to reduce global hunger and malnutrition, and worked to prevent conflict and violent extremism. Under the leadership of Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer, Trey Hicks, Rob Jenkins and Dr. Beth Dunford, this incredible team has responded to hurricanes in the Caribbean; earthquakes in Indonesia and Albania; drought and locust infestations in the Horn of Africa; the threat of famine in Yemen, South Sudan, and Nigeria; and the ongoing conflicts and crises in Syria, Iraq, and Venezuela. I sincerely thank Admiral Ziemer, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Jenkins, and Dr. Dunford for their counsel in our interactions, and I look forward to a continued strong working relationship as we create an effective and streamlined approach to preventing and responding to crises. Both Admiral Ziemer and Dr. Dunford have been forces of stability within the Agency and extremely influential in driving forward USAID's mission. I admire their dedication to service, and I wish them well in their retirement.

During my consultations in preparation for this hearing, I had the pleasure and honor to meet with many USAID employees who provided me with briefings and papers that detailed their work. To those dedicated Foreign Service, Civil Service, and contract employees, thank you for your counsel and guidance, and for making USAID the world's flagship development agency that makes such a difference in the lives of so many.

I must also thank my family, friends, and colleagues who have given me tremendous support and encouragement over the years. My wonderful husband, Patrick, a retired U.S. Navy officer, is here with me today, while my proud parents, Joe and Tokiko, remain safely inside their home in Ohio. My father was born on a small farm in Maine and ultimately retired after 23 years of active duty in the Air Force and then as an Air Force civilian. My family is dedicated to service and country, and has sacrificed over the years in support of my own long Air Force career. The life and opportunities I have had, including my military career, all stem from my parents' decision to adopt me from an orphanage in Seoul, South Korea. I am grateful for their unconditional love, and for the values they instilled in me. My commitment to service is rooted in the gratitude and patriotism that I have as a result.

When I decided to retire after 31 years in the Air Force, I knew I wanted to continue to serve our country, and in a role that emphasizes our exceptional American values and commitment to democracy and humanitarian assistance. During my time in the White House Situation Room, on the staff of the National Security Council, and in military units around the world, I have had the opportunity to see USAID hard at work to support communities in their Journey to Self-Reliance. I have been part of coordination with USAID on security in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, and have worked on security assistance projects directly with allies in all of these regions. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, my unit communicated directly with USAID and its government partners on the ground to assist the logistics effort to deliver relief. I actively participated in planning at U.S. Southern Command headquarters, as well as the Air Force's theater operations center, to best support the delivery of aid. My units have supported planning in typhoon-relief activities in Asia; improvements to agriculture and the use of land in Niger and Ghana; and capacity-building projects in North and East Africa, the Sahel, and Europe. In every engagement or observation, I have always admired the consistent courage and commitment of USAID's personnel and partners, who operate in challenging environments with a true focus on mission.

If confirmed as Associate Administrator, the challenge that lies ahead is not lost on me. I am prepared to work with Acting Administrator Barsa and Deputy Administrator Glick to guide the strategic direction of the Agency, particularly when it comes to the work of the new Bureaus I will oversee. I also look forward to strengthening the integration of our humanitarian assistance, investments in resilience, and crisis-prevention programming as the Agency responds to the most significant global health crisis of our lifetime. While we battle the pandemic of COVID-19 here at home, we must also respond to the unique set of challenges the outbreak has caused abroad, particularly in countries that already are facing humanitarian crises, conflict, and a lack of access to basic social services.

Physical distancing proves to be one of the most effective tools to contain the spread of COVID-19. However, there is no space for distancing in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp, which hosts some 600,000 Rohingya refugees. Children in South Sudan cannot wash their hands when they have no consistent access to clean water. And as COVID-19 spreads across conflict zones, the impact of the disease could potentially be catastrophic. Despite a declared cease-fire in Yemen, the fighting has escalated, which complicates efforts to respond to a burgeoning outbreak in the country. USAID has experience operating in these fragile contexts and is the designated Agency to lead the USG's humanitarian responses overseas, including COVID-19. If

confirmed, I would be proud to help bring all of the Agency's assets to bear in containing the disease.

Responding to the COVID-19 crisis means not only assisting with the immediate health needs, but preparing for the secondary and tertiary effects of the crisis. The post-COVID-19 world will be fragile. Deteriorating health care could lead to new humanitarian crises. The outbreak likely will reduce the supply of food in many communities, which could cause widespread hunger. Democratic institutions will need rebuilding or reinforcement. I look forward to leading USAID's response to helping the world maximize its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

USAID is already investing heavily in the tools and capacity to confront the outbreak. RFS is funding partners under the Feed the Future initiative to procure, transport and deliver food to affected communities. BHA is assisting people in countries that already are suffering from humanitarian tragedy, where the risk to vulnerable populations is great and access to basic and life-saving health care is limited. The parts of USAID that soon will become CPS are conducting field-driven analysis of vulnerabilities in fragile countries and providing assistance to reduce the risks of violence; combat misinformation; and fund civil-society organizations that are working to promote effective, transparent responses to the outbreak.

If confirmed as Associate Administrator, I look forward to working closely with USAID's leadership, Congress, the U.S. Government interagency, and the international community on the following priority areas:

First and foremost, my priority would be the safety and security of USAID's personnel. The Bureaus I would directly oversee have approximately 1,500 staff members. Many of them are working in dangerous environments and under difficult conditions, and are still maintaining the same dedication to mission while facing all the COVID-19 challenges. If confirmed, I would work to ensure all of our staff have the resources to safeguard and care for themselves.

My second priority would be to integrate and streamline USAID's humanitarian assistance, investments in food security and resilience, and interventions to prevent conflict to address fragility, respond to global crises, and act as a stabilizing force in times of transition. These efforts optimize USAID's effectiveness and directly support the President's *National Security Strategy* to contribute to American security and stability.

Third, I would strengthen and elevate the U.S. Government's humanitarian voice, both within the interagency and on the world stage. The U.S. Government is the largest donor of humanitarian aid, and we must use our leadership role to encourage consistent adherence to international humanitarian principles as well as to leverage additional financial support for the greatest needs.

Last, but certainly not least, I would work to improve the Administration's ability to identify fragile states and deliver corrective, mitigating measures. By further strengthening civil-military collaboration, USAID can play a key role in combining foreign assistance, diplomatic engagements, and defense strategy to effectively stabilize conflict-affected areas.

In a world as complex as ours, with our national security challenged by a myriad of threats with global reach, we must bring to bear the entirety of our statecraft toolbox, including our most sophisticated development tools. If confirmed as USAID Associate Administrator for Relief, Response, and Resilience, I pledge to be a strong advocate for our mission and our people; to take full advantage of the tremendous expertise of our workforce and partners; and to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars – always a precious resource, especially in these trying times. I would be humbled everyday by the incredible work of humanitarian assistance and development professionals around the globe, and I look forward to the service, challenge, and teamwork alongside them.

Thank you for your time. It is an honor to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.