

Statement of Andrew Plitt
Nominee for USAID Assistant Administrator for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Senator Van Hollen, Senator Romney, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee for the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for the Middle East at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

I would like to thank the President, Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, and Administrator Power for their trust in my leadership, especially during such a critical moment in the Middle East.

As I appear before you today, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the unwavering love and steadfast support of my family—my accomplished spouse Lene Lind, my sons Noah and Liam who join me here today, along with my mother, Anna Plitt. I am immensely honored by the sacrifices they have made throughout my more than three decades as a foreign service officer serving across multiple continents.

I have spent my career representing the United States abroad in some of the most complex and demanding environments, with the majority of that time covering the Middle East. My experience has given me a deep appreciation for how vital development and humanitarian assistance are to advance our country's national security objectives.

Even before the heinous attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel on October 7 and the continuing conflict in Gaza, the region faced significant challenges. Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine aggravated tenuous food security across the region as the cost of wheat imports skyrocketed. Meanwhile, the increasing frequency of droughts and water shortages led to poor domestic harvests, further straining fragile economies.

Last year alone, the region endured crippling natural disasters, such as the devastating earthquakes in Syria and Morocco and floods in Libya. Governance and economic mismanagement such as in Lebanon and Tunisia place fragile economies at risk of collapse. Across the region, rising authoritarianism, corruption, and terrorism were already threatening the region's prospects for peace.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that the United States remain committed to helping the people of the Middle East and North Africa. As we help families find viable pathways to peaceful and secure livelihoods for themselves and their children, we help them build a future in which terrorist organizations like Hamas find no quarter. The continuing conflict in Gaza, growing Houthi threats in the Red Sea, and violence perpetrated by Hezbollah underscore the importance of leading with American values as these, and other Iranian-aligned militia groups attempt to further inflame regional tensions.

Last week I visited our staff in Israel where I saw first-hand our team's tireless efforts not only to increase the amount of assistance reaching Palestinian civilians in Gaza, but also the meticulous planning they undertake in cooperation with Israeli government counterparts. The exhaustive effort of our team to safeguard our assistance and facilitate its delivery to civilians caught in this conflict not only demonstrates American goodwill, but also secures American interests. I recognize the need is immense. We are working everyday to do more.

As the current Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East, I have been privileged to work across the Middle East and North Africa region for nearly three years. I have witnessed first-hand the significant impact of USAID assistance efforts—including in Syria where we've helped partners reach five million people in need of emergency health services through mobile medical clinics, equipping of health facilities and training of medical workers; or in Libya where USAID technical assistance to the General Electricity Company of Libya succeeded to unify and strengthen the eastern and western power grids—leading to a more than 60 percent increase in power supply in just two years.

We are at an inflection point where our engagements will shape not only the region, but our world for generations to come. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee and Congress to advance our foreign policy objectives through our development efforts. I commit to working with the Administrator, the State Department, and Congress to ensure USAID is well-prepared to respond not only to the impacts of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, but also to broader events across the region where there are challenges and opportunities to advance American values. I will ensure that USAID effectively manages the resources Congress allocates and takes decisive proactive steps to safeguard those resources against diversion.

I have long appreciated the bipartisan support for USAID's work in the Middle East and North Africa. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and others in Congress to continue to secure and advance U.S. interests.

I am mindful of the immense scope of challenges the United States faces not only in the Middle East, but across the globe. At this critical time, all eyes are on U.S. leadership. USAID offers hope, but more importantly, tangible alternatives to malign influences in the region. I believe

USAID can advance a U.S. vision that offers opportunity, peace, prosperity, and security. I am honored to be considered to work with you in this capacity.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.