

Prepared Statement of C. Stewart Verdery, Jr.  
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Homeland Security for Policy and Planning,  
Border and Transportation Security Directorate,  
Department of Homeland Security  
Senate Governmental Affairs Committee  
June 5, 2003

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Lieberman, and members of the Governmental Affairs Committee, it is a great honor to be before you today as the nominee to be an Assistant Secretary for Homeland Security for Policy and Planning at the Border and Transportation Security Directorate. It's an unwieldy title, but perhaps it is indicative of the challenges that this new department will encounter in its first year as the primary face of our country's efforts to deter, detect, and defend against acts of terrorism.

I am grateful for the introductions by two of my former bosses, Senators Warner and Nickles. Senator Warner was kind enough to give me my start in public service, and his career, especially the three decades of leadership on national security issues, is a particular inspiration to those of us who grew up in Virginia. Later, as his general counsel, Senator Nickles and I worked together through impeachment, Columbine, campaign finance, and other issues and events big and small. Each day in the Capitol with him was a day I loved coming to work.

The most memorable of those days, of course, were those following September 11, 2001. We all remember well the bipartisan effort which spawned a host of responses to the terrorist attacks, including the PATRIOT Act and the creation of the Transportation Security Administration. Those days exemplified the kind of public service which is truly gratifying. In that spirit, I hope and believe that this new Department of Homeland Security will embody a national endeavor to secure our borders, our economy, our freedoms, and our lives.

Before turning briefly to my background and the position for which I have been nominated, I would like to recognize my family members who have supported me with love and understanding. My wife Jenny is here, with our two children Isabelle and Chase. Thank you, Jenny, for bearing the sacrifices that my work has and will create for you. My parents, Charles and Linda Verdery, and a number of other family members and friends have traveled to see the Senate in action. Thank you for being here.

The Office of Policy and Planning, which I would direct if confirmed, occupies a key role in DHS and specifically in the Border and Transportation Security Directorate (“BTS”). The office’s charge is to develop, evaluate, and coordinate policy for BTS. In advising the BTS Under Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for policy is responsible for working on a day-by-day basis with the agencies which comprise much of the “meat and potatoes” of homeland security. Thus, the policy office will seek to ensure that the policies implemented by BTS component agencies – the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and the Office of Domestic Preparedness -- are designed to fulfill BTS’s responsibilities. This office will also coordinate BTS policy initiatives with other agencies within DHS, such as the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, and outside DHS, such as the Departments of State and Justice. To address these duties, BTS is building a top-notch staff of policy professionals with deep experience in immigration, customs, transportation, international affairs, and strategic planning.

The Office of Policy and Planning will develop policy initiatives to address the same issues with which the Congress and this Committee, in particular, have grappled the past several years:

- ? Identifying and denying entry to or detaining those attempting to enter the country illegally or to do us harm, without hindering the flow of legitimate foreign visitors so crucial to our economy, culture, and educational system;
- ? Identifying and seizing the implements of terrorism, without hindering the flow of commerce indispensable to our standards of living;
- ? Securing our transportation systems, including aviation, rail, mass transit, highways, and seaports, from terrorist attack, without hindering the flow of people and goods to, from, and within our country;
- ? Constructing our anti-terrorism efforts so that they enhance, not diminish, the traditional missions assigned to BTS agencies, such as enforcement of immigration and customs laws and combating importation of unlawful goods and narcotics;
- ? Providing the funds and training to states and localities to assist their ability to respond to terrorist incidents;
- ? Training our law enforcement officers to handle these missions, new and old, in the most efficient and effective ways possible;
- ? Developing organizational structures for the new BTS Directorate and its component agencies; and
- ? Fulfilling all of these responsibilities within the bounds of the law, with respect for our foreign neighbors, and with appropriate communication with the Congress and the public at large.

I am confident that, if confirmed, my experience, both in the public and private sectors, will serve me well in this new endeavor. While serving as counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee and in the Senate leadership staff, I tackled complex public policy issues including numerous law enforcement and terrorism initiatives, such as the PATRIOT Act and counter-narcotics legislation. I officially worked at different times for three Senators and two committees, but in many respects I worked for dozens of Senators and members of the House, helping to negotiate and enact meaningful public policy across the aisle and across the Capitol.

I joined DHS as a consultant in April while my nomination was pending before your committee, and each day I have seen first-hand the skill and determination of accomplished public servants such as Secretary Ridge, Under Secretary Hutchinson, my colleague Michael Garcia, and rest of the DHS leadership. These officials, of course, are represented in the field by over 170,000 professionals dedicated to protecting our nation. I am extremely excited about the opportunity, if I am confirmed, to travel to our border crossings, airports, sea ports, and other sites on the front lines to learn from those agents and inspectors who form our homeland security backbone.

Lastly, having been a creature of the Congress, I believe in Congress's prerogative to obtain timely and accurate information about executive branch activities. If confirmed, I will make every effort to work with this Committee and those other Committees which create the authorities and budgets under which we operate.

Thank you again for the chance to appear before you today and I look forward to any questions you might have.