

Statement of John Roth

Nominee to Serve As Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

January 8, 2014

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Committee. It is an honor to be considered by this Committee as the President's nominee for Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security.

I would like to recognize and thank my very supportive family. My wife Monique is here. We met almost 20 years ago, literally, on the courthouse steps in Miami, when we were both Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the Southern District of Florida. She continues with her public service in the Department of Justice and is not only my better half, but the better lawyer in the family.

Also with me are my two sons, John and Michael. I have learned more about integrity and leadership from my children, and from raising my children, than I could possibly have imagined. They have helped keep me grounded and serve as a reminder of the importance of what we do.

My parents, Richard and Corinne Roth, who have been married to each other for over 60 years, could not make the trip from Colorado to be here today, but I know that they are watching, and I am grateful for the qualities they instilled in me – honesty, perseverance, and a strong work ethic. I would also like to acknowledge my four siblings -- Tom, Tim, Michael and Mary Kathryn -- for their support.

I have here with me today my father- and mother-in-law, Frank and Raquel Perez. Frank Perez is a retired career Foreign Service Officer and a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force. Among his notable achievements was being nominated by President Carter and confirmed by the Senate to be Minister Counselor at the SALT II talks in Geneva, serving as the head of State Department's Office for Combatting Terrorism in the late 70s and 80s, and Deputy Chief of Mission in Turkey during the 80s. Even today, he works part time at the State Department in their FOIA office, capping over 60 years of government service.

I want to thank Members of the Committee and their staff for taking the time to meet with me. If I am confirmed, I look forward to continuing this dialogue.

I am under no illusions about the challenges the next Inspector General will face. Ten years after its creation, DHS is still finding its way. GAO reports, DHS Inspector General reports, and congressional hearings lay out the many outstanding issues that need to be addressed. Should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed as Inspector General, I will initiate the kind of oversight work that ensures the Department is running effectively and handling taxpayer resources efficiently; ensure that the Office of Inspector General produces timely, credible reports that

contain realistic, actionable recommendations; and build healthy working relationships between the Office of the Inspector General and Congress, the Department, and other stakeholders. Focusing on these basic but important functions, the Office of the Inspector General can help Congress and Department leadership help DHS meet the wide range of challenges it faces now and will face in the future.

One insight I gained from working on the 9/11 Commission is that, particularly as it relates to counterterrorism, government needs to be sufficiently nimble to recognize and adapt itself to meet changing threats. For DHS, the challenge is twofold - terrorism poses an existential threat to our country; at the same time, the current fiscal situation compels us to find better ways to conduct the government's business. DHS needs to get this right, and the Office of Inspector General can help.

If confirmed, I welcome the challenge. I have a quarter-century of experience as a prosecutor and manager at the Department of Justice and as the leader of FDA's criminal enforcement efforts. My experience ranges from investigating violent drug gangs in Detroit, to leading a team of prosecutors in Miami investigating cartel-level South American drug traffickers, to managing the Department of Justice's policy and operations portfolios for international counter-drug and anti-money laundering, to investigating fraud and public corruption in the seat of the federal government at the U.S. Attorney's Office blocks from here, to investigating international pharmaceutical counterfeiters and running a law enforcement organization. This has given me an analytical mind, a nose for facts, and judgment tempered by years of experience to be able to draw solid conclusions from those facts.

I have unique experience in examining and assessing government programs. I led the team on the 9/11 Commission looking into the U.S. Government's preparedness for and reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks as it related to the financing of terrorism. It was perhaps the largest such undertaking of its kind, and we sifted through hundreds of thousands of pages of materials, and interviewed hundreds of people. Our review encompassed the entire range of government activities: intelligence, law enforcement, diplomatic, and regulatory. In the end, our team produced a specialized analytical work on terrorist financing, describing where we had been, the efforts to date, and the unique challenges involved in the terrorist financing area. That report was universally acclaimed for its accuracy, its conciseness, and its utility by several committees of Congress, by the administration, and by outside experts.

Moreover, I have experience and insight into the financial audits that every inspector general's office conducts. As chief of the Fraud and Public Corruption Section at the U.S. Attorney's office in the District of Columbia, we employed a team of auditors to help us unravel complex fraud schemes. Many of our accounting fraud cases presented highly complex issues regarding the appropriate accounting treatment of certain financial transactions. As chief of the Department of Justice's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section, and later as an adviser on international anti-money laundering matters, I was required to understand and direct investigations involving highly complex financial matters.

I have long involvement with the Inspector General community as well. As chief of the fraud and public corruption section here in the District of Columbia, our office was "IG central," in

that we had active investigations with the entire range of IG offices, including those at State, Labor, Interior, Justice, Education, Homeland Security, U.S. AID, Defense, Transportation, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, General Services Administration and a host of others. The matters we investigated included program fraud involving millions of dollars and corruption matters and ethical lapses by government personnel, including agency heads. In my current position at the FDA, we conduct numerous joint investigations with our partners in the Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General. Finally, as part of the senior management team in a number of roles at the Justice Department, I had the opportunity to observe firsthand a well-respected and effective Inspector General.

Each of my positions has given me the insights into effective management and leadership. I have faced a variety of leadership challenges in which I was called on to turn an organization around. Each time, I was able to create a cohesive, high-functioning team, focused on the mission at hand. Because each circumstance was different, the methods used were different. But in every instance, my goal was the same: To do whatever I can to allow those under my direction to succeed. Effective leadership matters. Integrity and transparency matter. Employee engagement and morale matter. Ultimately, the people I lead must understand and be excited by the mission they are called on to do, have the tools to do the job well, and know that the person leading them believes in them and will make fair and transparent decisions that support Office of Inspector General mission objectives. If confirmed, that is what I will do.

The Office of Inspector General has endured a tough couple of years. I have read the media reports and publicly available Congressional correspondence regarding the issues surrounding the Office. Morale – historically high within the Office of Inspector General – is down and the risk of attrition is very high. I have absolutely no doubt that the office is filled with dedicated public servants who believe in the vital mission that the Office of Inspector General serves, and if I am confirmed I will pledge to ensure that the Office of Inspector General is viewed as the independent credible voice that it was designed to be.

I want the men and women who work in the Office of the Inspector General to be proud of where they work. If confirmed, I will work to restore the trust of this Committee, Congress as a whole, the Administration, and the American public in the work of the DHS Office of Inspector General. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the employees within the organization are empowered to succeed and that we focus on things that matter. If confirmed, I will listen to those, inside and outside the organization, who are working to make the office better so that we can make government more effective, efficient and responsive to the American taxpayer. If confirmed, I will ensure it becomes a more transparent place, a better place to work, and one that provides real value to the DHS mission. Finally, and most importantly, and on which I will never compromise, I will ensure that we are scrupulously objective and independent in everything we do.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.