

Testimony of Norman Eisen
Ambassador-Designate to the Czech Republic
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Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to be here again in connection with my nomination by President Obama to continue serving as the United States' Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am honored to have the confidence and trust of the President and Secretary Clinton in representing our country. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would like to introduce my wife, Lindsay Kaplan, an Associate Professor of English at Georgetown University and our daughter Tamar. Representing the United States in Prague is a team effort and I believe the Czech people have come to appreciate my family as much as I do.

When I was last before the Committee, I reflected upon my extraordinary good fortune as a first-generation American. From the vantage point of our small fast-food restaurant in Los Angeles where I grew up, my mother, a Czechoslovak Holocaust survivor, and my father, an immigrant from Poland, could never have imagined their son would someday serve as a United States ambassador. As my mother put it recently, "the Nazis took us away in cattle cars, and now my son has returned representing the greatest nation on earth." As that anecdote suggests, my mission in the Czech Republic is strongly informed by my deep sense of obligation to America.

Since my arrival in Prague in January, I have worked with a strong Embassy team – Americans and Czechs – in three principal areas: defense and security; commercial and economic; and shared values, particularly the shared values of good governance and civil rights for all. In each area the relationship was good—and we worked with the Czech government across the political spectrum, and with Czech civil society and the Czech people to make it great.

In the defense and security realm, the Czechs are staunch allies. Over the past year, they increased their contributions in Afghanistan to over 700 soldiers and civilians. Czech personnel operate in some of the most dangerous parts of the country, and have suffered numerous casualties there. When I recently visited Afghanistan to thank Czech and U.S. personnel for their service, U.S. soldiers gave

the Czechs high praise and General Petraeus explained the critically important responsibilities our Czech allies are carrying out.

The Czechs are also a staunch friend of Israel and strong supporter of U.S. policy towards Iran; they are one of our very best allies in Europe. In their own neighborhood, the Czech Republic is a leading advocate within the European Union for countries like Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova through the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative. Elsewhere, whether in Cuba, Burma, Belarus, or North Korea, the Czechs are champions of human rights and we in Embassy Prague are proud to work with them on those issues.

Looking ahead to the future of our defense and strategic partnership, we are broadening our security cooperation and developing an approach that goes beyond any single narrow focus to one with multiple areas of specialized cooperation where the Czechs excel. The Czechs are world-class strategic partners in areas ranging from training Afghan helicopter pilots and crews to Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) mitigation to Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan.

In economic and commercial ties, Embassy Prague has actively advocated for American business during my tenure. We have an open door for U.S. firms, and I have met with dozens of American companies, from the largest to the smallest. When they have problems, we vigorously work to resolve them, engaging all the way up to the highest levels of government. I have encouraged Czech investment in the U.S., travelling with government officials and Czech businesses to scout business opportunities here that will generate jobs.

We have particularly emphasized civil nuclear cooperation. The Czechs have six operating nuclear reactors and are planning an expansion worth up to \$27.5 billion that is one of the largest opportunities for U.S. business of its kind in the world. If the U.S. competitor wins the bid, it will mean an estimated 9,000 new, high-paying jobs in the United States. To support that, we have adopted a whole-of-government approach to establish a broad civil nuclear strategic partnership between our two countries. From fostering new relations between U.S. and Czech R&D facilities, to regulatory exchanges, to working together to improve nuclear safety, we are building a model civil nuclear relationship for the 21st century.

My third area of emphasis has been the shared values that bind our two countries together. Czech and Slovak national aspirations in the 20th Century were first realized by the Pittsburgh and Washington declarations signed in the United States

after WWI by President Wilson's great friend and Czechoslovakia's first president, Tomas Masaryk. The United States helped liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, supported the resistance against Communism, and helped transform the goals of the Velvet Revolution into reality. I have carried that message the length and breadth of the country, visiting almost 20 cities and regions outside of Prague in just six months on the job.

My message is one of warm friendship and also candor: I have supported the initiatives of those in the Czech government, the opposition, NGOs, business and the public who are working for good government and against corruption. I believe we are building a model in Prague of how to respectfully engage on those issues.

We have also worked with the Czech government to promote equal rights and opportunities for all Czech citizens, irrespective of their origin or faith, including the Roma. My presence in Prague as the child of a Czechoslovak victim of persecution is by itself a powerful message in the fight against extremism and for human rights. Working with the talented interagency team at Embassy Prague, I have taken every opportunity to engage with the Czech people and their government to advance our common goals and values.

I am so honored to be asked to represent our country and our government. Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.