

**Statement by  
Robert Stephen Beecroft  
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Iraq  
Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
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Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,

It is a distinct honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. I am deeply grateful to the President and to Secretary Clinton for the opportunity to serve my country in this capacity and, if confirmed, I will work closely with you to advance our many interests in Iraq and in the region.

I would like to begin my testimony by taking a moment to acknowledge my colleagues who perished in Benghazi only a few days ago. Those four brave public servants represent the best of the United States and I feel their loss keenly. My thoughts and prayers remain with their families and friends.

Mr. Chairman, I have spent most of my career working on the Middle East, including assignments in Syria and Saudi Arabia and as Ambassador to Jordan. For much of my career I have been immersed in Iraq issues, from the Iraq Desk in Washington, D.C. to recently serving as Deputy Chief of Mission and now Chargé d'Affaires in Baghdad. I stand on the shoulders of the thousands of brave and committed Americans who have worked, fought, and died to help the Iraqi people achieve our shared goal of a united, federal, and democratic Iraq. If confirmed, I would commit to continuing their work to build a lasting partnership with Iraq. In so doing, I would labor alongside a team of able and dedicated personnel who understand the importance of achieving success. While the size and nature of our presence may have changed, our interests and commitments remain the same, and Iraq continues to be a top priority for the United States.

Today, the United States is engaging with an evolving Iraq. The country is only now emerging from over 50 years of isolation, fragmentation, and war. We now have a strong relationship with a democratically elected government. As President Obama stated last year, our relationship with Iraq is a "normal relationship between sovereign nations, an equal partnership based on mutual interests and mutual respect." This relationship is based on a shared vision of the future and a concrete, common roadmap of how to get there. This fundamental accord is

codified in the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), a comprehensive document that structures our bilateral commitments across the fields of defense, economics, justice, diplomacy, education, and energy. Through the SFA, we support and assist the Iraqis in building a united, federal, and democratic country that is a strong partner that can play a vital and constructive role in the region. I am confident that our policy based on the Strategic Framework Agreement offers a new window of opportunity for sound relations with Iraq for years to come. If confirmed as ambassador, I will deploy all the tools available to me to this end.

Strengthening our partnership with Iraq will help us to advance significant U.S. national interests, including counterterrorism cooperation against threats to our national security and that of the region, economic growth and the stabilization of global energy markets, and the development of democracy during this historic moment of transition in the Middle East. I would like to share with you some of my views on the work ahead and on the priorities that we have in Iraq.

### **Security and Counter-terrorism**

Terrorists and extremists in the region continue their destructive efforts to hinder the great strides made by the Iraqi people to put aside violence. The Iraqi Security Forces are aggressively pursuing and disrupting these enemies, but Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and other militant groups continue to pose a threat to the Iraqi people and to U.S. personnel working in Iraq. The Department is taking all possible measures to mitigate the threat to our personnel and facilities in Iraq and we continuously monitor security conditions throughout the country. However, terrorist violence still occurs on a regular basis in Iraq and presents an inherent risk and threat to our Mission, which will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

We share a common goal with the Iraqi people – to ensure that Iraq does not become a land that provides safe haven to those who mean harm and to those who seek to reverse the progress that has been made. While some significant attacks continue to take place in Iraq, security today is nonetheless far better than in 2006 and 2007, and we must be mindful of this strong progress as we work to understand the reality of the situation on the ground. These gains were achieved through a strong partnership with the Iraqi government and engagement on a wide range of counter-terrorism and security-related efforts that aimed to provide an environment of safety and stability for both the Iraqi people and for U.S. personnel and interests in Iraq. This partnership continues to this day. It is in our strategic interests that Iraq is now defending itself, as the Embassy's Office of Security

Cooperation in Iraq helps train and professionalize Iraqi defense forces, and the Police Development Program and the Anti-Terrorism Assistance program advises and trains Iraqi law enforcement units. No one wants peace in Iraq more than the Iraqi people, and we will continue to work with the Iraqi government and security forces towards that goal.

## **Economy**

Although security often dominates what we hear and read about Iraq, I would like to draw attention to the remarkable progress made to spur the growth of the Iraqi economy. Iraq's oil production recently passed 3 million barrels per day, a level it had not achieved for more than three decades. The influx of revenue from increased oil production and exports is driving growth in all sectors of the Iraqi economy, which is expected to continue to expand at double-digit growth rates in the next few years. With the third largest conventional oil reserves in the world, Iraq's potential is extraordinary, and we are working closely with the Iraqis to help them reach this potential.

We are working with the government and private firms on initiatives to more transparently manage Iraq's oil revenues, enhance Iraqi entrepreneurialism and integration into the global economy, and reduce its dependence on the oil and gas sector. Iraq's growth and potential also offer exciting opportunities for U.S. firms. We are encouraging and working with U.S. businesses, universities, and other institutions to partner with Iraqi organizations and find new opportunities that will bring benefit to all sides and to remove barriers to deeper economic ties. The response has been strong, both from Iraqis and from Americans.

## **Services**

We are working with Iraq to ensure that the benefits of growth accrue to all Iraqis in all corners of the country. The Iraqi people, through their votes and their voices, have demanded better access to water, electricity, and other important services. The Iraqi government, working to address the concerns of its people, created a five-year national development plan that includes more than 2,700 projects valued at about \$186 billion — including projects to support its utilities infrastructure, transportation network, education, health care, agriculture, and telecommunications systems. In the 2012 budget alone, the Iraqi Government has allocated \$32 billion dollars for public investment. Still, there is much more work needed to be done by the Iraqi government to give the Iraqi people what they deserve — a stable, secure nation where basic services are readily available and one in which they can build a prosperous future.

## **Diplomatic and Political Support**

Iraq's diversity has made it a unique and important nation in the Middle East for thousands of years. This same diversity now serves as one of the most important tests to democracy in the region. As with all democracies, Iraq's government contains a myriad of differing opinions regarding the rightful direction of the country. Sectarian friction remains strong and often threatens to derail negotiated accords and institutional progress. There is no denying the tensions between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central government, even as increased dialogue to discuss these issues appears possible. The lack of a hydrocarbon law feeds this tension and unsettles Iraq's oil sector and thereby its primary source of income. Factional feuding in the Council of Representatives has slowed the organization of provincial elections scheduled for early 2013. Tensions with Turkey, the conflict within Syria, and Iraq's neuralgic relationship with Iran all fan anxiety and complicate our relationship with Iraq. My colleagues and I at Embassy Baghdad and its constituent posts have no illusions about the difficulty of addressing these challenges.

Nevertheless, developments in Iraq give me reason for optimism. Despite disputes and disagreements, Iraqi leaders have worked within the political process and have chosen to use dialogue and negotiation rather than resort to violence. Iraq's government institutions, like those of any democracy, are far from perfect, but they have become an important space where both agreement and dissent can be raised and discussed – a far cry from the dictatorial domination of the past.

The United States continues to play a central role in facilitating dialogue between the various political parties and leaders in Iraq. We assume this role while remaining clearly cognizant of the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty. We are not in the business of telling the Iraqi people what they can and cannot do. Instead, working closely with all Iraqis, including ethnic and religious minorities, displaced persons, widows, and other populations, we help ensure that all groups in Iraq, no matter how large or how small, have a voice. Our efforts seek to promote important issues such as human rights, anti-corruption, religious freedom, economic development, political openness, and opportunities for women. Through a range of programs and initiatives, we strive to increase the capabilities of Iraqi government institutions to ensure that the decisions that affect the fate of the Iraqi nation are not made at the whim of individuals, but through the deliberative process laid out in Iraq's constitution.

## **Regional Relations**

Turning to the region, the U.S. effort in Iraq has far-reaching effects as Iraq remains vital to U.S. interests in the Middle East. Strategically positioned between Syria and Iran, bordering regional powers and important U.S. partners in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait, Iraq plays a vital role in a wide range of U.S. interests and in major foreign policy priorities throughout the region.

It is clear that Iraq is growing stronger, and there is no doubt that it will become a major power in the region as it continues to ascend. It is developing its own unique identity, one that is fiercely protective of its sovereignty. Iran will continue to try to exert influence on Iraq but, the stronger and more cohesive that Iraq is as a nation, the more resistant it will be to unwanted pressure. Maintaining Iraq as a strong, stable, and strategic partner will help the United States maintain visibility and influence in this dynamic and vitally important region for years to come.

### **Embassy Management**

To better achieve our policy goals and to pursue our national interests in Iraq, we must maintain a strong, safe presence capable of addressing the many facets of our strategic partnership. If confirmed as ambassador, I assure you that my number one priority will be to ensure the safety of Embassy personnel and U.S. citizens living in Iraq. Nothing is more important to the President, the Secretary, or to me personally.

As we planned and executed the transition to a wholly civilian-led presence in 2011, we began looking at the next phase of our transition to the post-Security Agreement era. We prudently built a robust structure to cope with the enormous uncertainties in the wake of the withdrawal, but we always anticipated streamlining and normalizing our operations in a methodical, phased fashion to something more consistent with our other missions around the world.

With our personnel safely in place, we will do our best to carry out the mission we were sent to do; the mission I have described in my testimony. Let me speak for a moment about the resources required to make all this happen. Earlier in my testimony I noted that the U.S. relationship with Iraq is transitioning. Our Embassy footprint reflects this, in tandem with our bilateral relationship. As Charge d'Affaires, I am continuing the glide path process begun by Ambassador Jeffrey earlier this year. As part of that effort, we have already made significant cuts in our staffing and contractor support and will further reduce our footprint without compromising our mission and security.

Managing our presence and efforts in Iraq also takes a significant degree of coordination between leadership here in Washington and those working on the ground. Our effort in Iraq is still very much a collaborative process with a wide-range of U.S. departments and agencies working together to provide the expertise needed to support our policy and goals. I would like to thank all involved for their continued support in Iraq. To succeed in Iraq, it will continue to take a whole-of-government approach to make sure we have the right expertise, the right resources, and the right policies.

If confirmed as ambassador, I will continue the rightsizing effort, matching resources to mission, and will work closely with the Congress to ensure that we have what we need to reach our policy objectives and support the national security interests of the United States.

It is a tremendous honor to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Should I be confirmed, I will seek to expand and deepen our collaboration with Iraq and its people and to secure our vital interests. We accomplish our work ever mindful that our country has given much in support of our objectives in Iraq. Although our troops have departed Iraq, we will never forget their sacrifices and accomplishments. Working side by side with hopeful Iraqis, they created an Iraq with a brighter future. And for those who gave their lives for this cause and their families who bore the brunt of our nation's loss, we will continue to work to build a lasting and successful relationship with Iraq that pays tribute to and honors their sacrifice.