

**Statement of David Hale  
Ambassador-Designate to Lebanon  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
July 30, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am deeply honored and humbled by the privilege to appear before you today and by the trust that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have bestowed upon me. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with the Senate on how best to advance U.S. interests in Lebanon.

I have had the honor and privilege of serving my country in the Foreign Service since 1984. I have devoted my career to advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East. Lebanon and its people have been a part of my life for decades. I was first assigned to Beirut just after the civil war ended and Lebanon lay in ruins. Years later, I returned as the Deputy Chief of Mission in a brighter time, as the country rebuilt. I learned a lot from the Lebanese people, particularly from their unflagging endurance and aspirations. I was proud to help build partnerships between America and Lebanon, as we supported Lebanese efforts to regain true independence, sovereignty, and unity, to restore stability and security throughout the country, to revitalize their economy, and to build strong state institutions accountable to all Lebanese citizens. This work is ongoing, and furthering that partnership remains a priority for the Obama Administration, because it is in the U.S. national interest. If confirmed, I will devote myself to working with the Lebanese to advance these common goals.

If confirmed, I will have no higher priority than the safety and security of American personnel, information, and facilities in Lebanon, as well as that of all Americans there. My overseas career since 1990, including as Ambassador to Jordan, has been at high-threat posts in the Middle East. That experience has taught me to guard against complacency, to minimize risk, and to ensure that we have the resources and practices needed to conduct America's business as safely and securely as possible.

The Syria crisis is having a profound effect on Lebanon. The spillover threatens to disrupt Lebanon's progress toward democracy, independence, and prosperity. There are those who would drag Lebanon into the Syrian conflict. Hizballah is putting its own interests and those of its foreign backers above those of the Lebanese people. Hizballah's active military support for the Syrian regime contradicts the Baabda Declaration, violates Lebanon's disassociation policy, and risk Lebanon's stability. My mission, if confirmed, will be to do everything possible to support the Lebanese in their policy of disassociation from the Syrian conflict, help them maintain their sovereignty, and ensure that America is helping to meet the humanitarian and economic challenge posed by refugee flows into Lebanon.

Violence is already spilling over. The work of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces to protect Lebanon from these consequences reminds us that U.S. security assistance is a pillar of our bilateral relations and serves U.S. interests. We work with these two institutions to fight common terrorist threats. We have a strong commitment to support the Lebanese as they

build-up these institutions so they can project state authority to all corners of Lebanon. Only with such institutions can Lebanon ever attain stability, sovereignty, and security.

There are over 700,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict in Lebanon, a nation of four million. The strain is great. Our humanitarian aid helps the refugee population as well as Lebanese host communities, many disadvantaged themselves, with food, shelter, healthcare, and schooling. If confirmed, I will seek new ways to support Lebanese protection and assistance for those fleeing the terrible violence next door.

Lebanon's banking sector is the backbone of its economy. For the financial sector to continue to attract capital, it must meet international standards on countering money laundering and terror financing. If confirmed, I will work with the Lebanese banking community to ensure that it remains a stabilizing force for the economy.

It is now more important than ever to promote Lebanon's democratic traditions. The decision to forego elections and extend the current Parliament for nearly two years undermines Lebanon's democratic practices and stability. We recognize that this is a Lebanese process. But, Lebanese political leaders should respect the electoral process and the constitution, crucial bulwarks for Lebanon's democracy. These institutions are cherished by the Lebanese people.

Lebanese-American relations are more than a bilateral tie between governments. There is a strong, proud, energetic community of Lebanese-Americans who have contributed much to our country. Many of these Americans are committed to the development of their land of origin as well. I am proud of my ties to a community that has done so much for both the United States and Lebanon.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to be here. If I am confirmed, I hope to see you and your staff soon in Beirut. I look forward to your questions.