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**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

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Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Risch, and Members of the Committee, I am honored by President Obama's nomination to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I also would like to thank Secretary Kerry for his support and the confidence he has shown in my nomination. Serving as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia would be a great honor and I am humbled by the opportunity to continue my career of public service. If confirmed, I will represent the United States and the American people to the best of my ability, advancing American political, security, and economic interests with a key ally in the region and continue to strengthen our strategic relationship.

I have devoted my career to public service, both in government and academia. Most recently, I have had the great honor and privilege of working to support our brave men and women in uniform as they serve our nation at home and abroad. In my current position as the Under Secretary of the Army and its Chief Management Officer, I am responsible for managing one of the world's largest organizations during a period of significant change, great budget uncertainty and continued threats to our national security. Managing the globally-deployed U.S.

Army and the large number of our forces serving in the Middle East has given me insights into the complexity of this strategic region's environment. This vital area is beset by change and turmoil, and is undergoing historical transformations in its social, economic and political development.

As the Chief of Mission in Saudi Arabia, I will prioritize taking care of our people. Only nine years ago, our Consulate General in Jeddah suffered a terrorist attack in which five local staff members lost their lives. The safety and security of our mission, its employees and family members in Riyadh, Dhahran, and Jeddah will be my top priority, as it is for President Obama and Secretary Kerry. I will work with you and my colleagues at the Department to ensure that our mission personnel have the correct security posture and necessary resources to do their jobs safely and effectively. To that end, the safety and security of all Americans will be my uncompromising priority.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have a long and enduring partnership which, contrary to some press reports, continues to be strong and resilient. In addition to numerous visits by senior Administration officials and Members of this Committee, the President now plans a visit in March to reinforce our broad cooperation. If confirmed, I will work across the wide set of our national priorities to advance critical U.S. interests through our diplomatic, security, and commercial engagements.

Saudi Arabia is a crucially important partner in the region. We share important interests in confronting regional challenges, including the crisis in Syria, Iran's nuclear program and regional aspirations, and providing support for democratic and economic development in Yemen. Saudi Arabia's important role in the Gulf Cooperation Council and our strong desire to see the Council be "an anchor for regional stability," as Secretary Hagel stated in his Manama Dialogue speech, means that if I am confirmed by the Senate, I will work to reinforce this important multilateral framework.

We also have a critical security partnership; Saudi Arabia is our largest Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customer, with 338 active and open cases valued at \$96.8 billion dollars, all supporting American skilled manufacturing jobs, while increasing interoperability between our forces for training and any potential operations. We saw the importance of this as our forces stood together during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. On counterterrorism, our countries are very aware through tragic experience of the threat posed by al-Qa'ida terrorists, and we have forged a critical partnership with the Saudis on this issue, which I will discuss further.

Apart from political and security cooperation, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia enjoy robust commercial and business relationships, and I look forward to further strengthening trade and promoting American exports. On energy, the United States

and Saudi Arabia share an interest in maintaining stable, reliable sources of oil and price stability. We also are committed to working with the government of Saudi Arabia on its efforts to diversify energy sources and reduce domestic oil consumption. If confirmed, I will engage proactively in all aspects of energy policy and sustainability of mutual interest to the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Secretary Kerry in his speech of January 24 in Davos stated, “you cannot find another country...not one country...that is as proactively engaged, that is partnering with so many Middle Eastern countries as constructively as we are on so many high stake fronts. And, I want to emphasize that last point: partnering.” I will emulate the Secretary’s active approach in strengthening our partnership with Saudi Arabia, engaging Saudi officials and the Saudi people to advance the policy objectives of the Administration and the Congress.

Earlier in this statement, I mentioned Saudi Arabia’s importance in regional politics. This is a region beset by change and great turmoil but also great opportunity. If confirmed, I will work closely with governmental and non-governmental entities in Saudi Arabia to find constructive and collaborative means to achieve security, peace, economic prosperity, and the advancement of human rights. This includes expanding opportunities for women to participate fully in society, politics, and the economy. I will promote transparency, friendship, and

proactive engagement in the relationship while working with my colleagues in the region to safeguard U.S. interests.

There are many ways our mutual interests converge and I will briefly explain our coordination with the Saudi leadership as we advance U.S. policy priorities:

First, the United States is committed to political transition in Syria and a new government that is representative of the Syrian people. The Saudi government shares this goal and has contributed over a billion dollars to support Syrian civilian and refugee needs, while supporting non-extremist opposition groups under the political umbrella of the Syrian National Coalition. The Saudis share our commitment to ensuring that international assistance does not fall into the hands of violent extremists, including groups connected to al-Qa'ida. We may have tactical differences in our approaches to Syria at times, but Saudi Arabia shares our goal of ending the horrible violence in Syria through a political transition to a representative government, and has exercised positive influence in Geneva as we strive to achieve common goals. Additionally, the Saudis have publically endorsed the international effort to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the related OPCW Executive Council decision, while emphasizing the need to hold the Asad regime accountable for barbarically using these weapons against the Syrian people.

Similarly, the United States and Saudi Arabia are both committed to ensuring that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. We share the long-term goal of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Saudi Arabia remains as concerned as we are about Iranian activities in the region. The Administration has made it clear to Saudi Arabia and our other Gulf allies that progress on the nuclear issue will not lead to a decrease in U.S. concern about, or in action to deter and combat, Iran's destabilizing activities, whether its support for the Asad regime in Syria, or its lethal aid and training of militants in Yemen and Bahrain. The United States and Saudi Arabia also want to counter Hizballah's attempts to undermine the Lebanese government; we both support building up the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

In Egypt, we believe that the Egyptian people should be represented by an inclusive, democratically-elected, civilian government. Secretary Kerry, Secretary Hagel and other senior Administration officials continue regular high-level discussions with Saudi leaders about how best to influence progress towards this objective. In the last year, Saudi Arabia has provided Egypt's interim government with over \$2 billion in grants, deposits, and energy credits, and billions more in investments, while encouraging large contributions from other Gulf states. We continue to engage the Saudi government on how best to build Egypt's economy,

while emphasizing to all parties that Egypt's economic success requires stability that only will be achieved by inclusive democratic institutions.

On Middle East Peace, as Secretary Kerry noted in recent meetings with King Abdullah, we value Saudi Arabia's support for continuing negotiations to achieve the Administration's goal of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a permanent status agreement, and to bring stability to the region. We are counting on Saudi Arabia to help build support for our shared efforts, and to continue financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Saudi Arabia also has played a critical role in stabilizing, launching and promoting a successful political transition in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is the largest international assistance contributor to Yemen, and shares our important interest in combating al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and other violent extremists groups, while assisting efforts to provide security, support economic development, and address critical humanitarian challenges.

The reemergence of violent extremism in Iraq also is a critical concern for the United States, and one for which we believe Saudi Arabia can play a constructive role. As Ambassador, I will encourage productive relationships and open dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, including support for Iraq's efforts to flush the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) out of Anbar Province – a

conflict that has broader implications for the region. I will reinforce our message that progress on current problems is not gained through rehashing conflicts of the past or drawing sectarian lines, but by finding areas of mutual interest, and that violent extremist groups are a threat to us all.

The Syrian crisis, turmoil in Iraq, transition in Yemen, and the role of al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups demand stronger, coordinated efforts to combat terrorism in the region. The government of Saudi Arabia values our combined efforts in counterterrorism, and sees al-Qa'ida as just as much a threat to Saudi Arabia as to the United States. I note that the Saudi government actively discourages its citizens from participating in foreign conflicts, and issued a new law in early February that provides for long prison sentences for those who join jihadist groups in Syria or elsewhere. If confirmed, I will work diligently through our interagency process to strengthen further our counterterrorism cooperation and our overall security relationship.

We have built durable and critically-important security and counterterrorism ties with Saudi Arabia, with a range of programs that protect the citizens and institutions of both of our countries. These include coordination to stem the abuse of financial and charitable channels that fund terrorism in the region and beyond, and cooperation on combating violent extremist messages. If confirmed, I intend to



work with the leadership of Saudi Arabia to further build our partnerships in these areas.

As mentioned, another key priority I will work toward is growing U.S.-Saudi economic and commercial ties. Saudi Arabia is our 10<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner; in the first three quarters of last year, bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia amounted to approximately \$52 billion. I will work to expand and diversify our bilateral trade and help create new opportunities for American business in Saudi Arabia.

We also have a significant interest in stable energy markets and prices. Today we import approximately about 1.3 million barrels per day of crude oil from Saudi Arabia which represents 15% of Saudi Arabia's total global exports. This makes Saudi Arabia our second largest oil supplier, after Canada. As the world's only current oil producer with significant spare production capacity, Saudi Arabia plays a critical global role in price stability. The price our trucking companies and airlines pay for fuel, and the price the American consumer pays at the pump, are heavily influenced by trends in global oil markets. As two of the largest oil producers in the world, the United States and Saudi Arabia have a mutual interest in ensuring that energy markets remain sufficiently supplied and support global economic growth.

Shifting to education, I first observe that the quality of American educational institutions is well-known and highly prized among Saudis. I note that over 74,000 students from Saudi Arabia now study in the United States. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of U.S. education in developing the skills and perceptions of the next generation of Saudi leaders. Students will return home with a better understanding of the United States and our people, and will bring back American ideals that can be an important influence as Saudi society develops.

Saudi Arabia is a young country, with nearly two-thirds of the population under 25. Saudi youth expect their leadership to adapt and respond to the whole population's needs, including the fifty percent that's female. I believe the Saudi leadership understands these challenges. King Abdullah has taken important steps, such as scheduling another round of municipal elections for 2015 in which women can vote and run as candidates, and decreeing that at least 20 percent of appointees to the national consultative council should be women. I look forward to monitoring these developments with my team. The Saudi leadership also has expanded scholarship opportunities, including for women, and sponsored interreligious dialogue. More than 40% of students receiving the King Abdullah Scholarship for study abroad are women. However, much more needs to be done to ensure expanded opportunities for Saudi young people, for women, and to increase

citizens' roles in government affairs. I look forward to working with the Saudi leadership to help them provide these opportunities.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I will not shy away from topics where we disagree, such as promoting women's full participation in society, supporting the rights to religious freedom and free association, or encouraging greater respect for labor rights and protections for the country's foreign workers. As Ambassador, I will support home-grown reform efforts and will be an advocate for full respect for the basic rights of all citizens and residents. I will provide public support for Saudis' rights to freely associate, to report corruption, wrongdoing, or abuse by public officials, and to petition their government for redress of grievances. We will make it clear that basic human rights are universal and we advocate that Saudi Arabia meet its international commitments.

Allow me to close by noting that, although American society differs greatly from that of Saudi Arabia, we cannot allow our differences to prevent solid continuing cooperation on political, security, and economic challenges and opportunities. The ties between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia are deep and historic, and serve core American interests. I look forward to strengthening these relationships while maintaining frank and productive dialogue for issues where our views do not fully align.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today and I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.