

**Ambassador Matthew H. Tueller**  
**Nominee for Ambassador to Yemen**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**February 13, 2014**

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Risch, Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Yemen. I am grateful to the President for his nomination and to Secretary Kerry for his continued trust and confidence. If confirmed, I will work steadfastly to advance critical U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in Yemen. In service of those U.S. interests, my top priorities will be to support the people of Yemen in their ongoing transition to democracy, bolster U.S. security cooperation with the Yemeni government to foster greater regional and global stability and combat the threat posed by al-Qa'ida, and, of course, ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens and Embassy employees.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has a strong and growing partnership with Yemen. Yemen, itself, is in the midst of an historic transition. Since the November 2011 signing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-brokered political transition initiative, the people of Yemen have accomplished what many thought impossible. Under the leadership of President Hadi, Yemen has embarked on a serious reform effort to better meet the needs of its citizens, facilitate a democratic process, and participate more fully as a partner in supporting regional security. If confirmed, I will work to expand our broad engagement to continue promoting the various political, economic, and security sector reforms underpinning this transition, which support our U.S. foreign policy and national security interests of a stable, secure, and democratic Yemen. The ultimate success of Yemen's transition will not only impact our interests in the region, but also our domestic security as the Yemeni government develops its capacity to directly counter the significant threat from al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and root out the underlying causes of violent extremism, in part, through a bolstered ability to meet Yemeni citizens' economic, humanitarian, and political needs.

On January 25, the people of Yemen achieved a critical milestone in their ongoing transition process, with the conclusion of the National Dialogue Conference. The dialogue marked the first time representatives from diverse segments of Yemeni society – including political elites, tribal elders, women, youth, civil society, former disenfranchised southerners, and religious minorities –

met for substantive discussions about the country's political future. This conversation represented a sea-change in Yemeni politics. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that these varied groups continue to have a voice in the political process – particularly since it is these voices that call most loudly for equality, for prosperity, and for the rights of women, children, and other vulnerable groups. In addition to working to ensure that these groups have a voice in the political process, I will also work to ensure that the rights of women, children, and all individuals in Yemen are respected and protected.

As Yemen works to shape its future, I will work to guarantee that the United States and the international community – particularly Yemen's GCC neighbors – remain firmly supportive of Yemen's efforts, despite the myriad hot-spots in the region. U.S. and international engagement will continue to be essential as Yemen moves forward with the next steps in the transition process, including constitutional reform, a constitutional referendum, and, ultimately, national elections, expected within the next year.

A democratic, unified, and stable Yemen will also be able to participate more fully as a partner in supporting regional security and combating terrorism. Yemen continues to face frequent terrorist attacks by AQAP operating within its borders. President Obama underscored in May that AQAP is the most active organization plotting against the United States – and that this threat emanates from Yemen. The Yemeni people have borne the brunt of AQAP's vicious attacks. The assault on the Ministry of Defense hospital in December 2013 underscored the deplorable tactics employed against civilians by this terrorist group. The Yemeni people and the international community were horrified at video footage of terrorists shooting unarmed patients in their beds, viciously murdering doctors and nurses, and stalking through hallways to kill survivors. President Hadi and the Yemeni people stand strongly committed to stamping out this threat to the safety of their families, the peace and security of their country, and the citizens of its international partners.

If confirmed, I will work to deepen our two nations' commitment to close coordination in this shared fight against terrorism. To this end, our assistance programs to Yemen seek to develop the capacity of Yemen's security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations and to secure maritime and land borders and territorial waters. We also support programs to counter violent extremism in Yemen, including a focus on the role that civil society can play in speaking out against violence. And we are assisting Yemeni efforts to build the capacity of law enforcement to better respond to the security concerns of Yemeni communities.

The United States will continue to employ the full range of counterterrorism tools to support Yemen's fight against AQAP.

With U.S. support, President Hadi has also taken important steps toward restructuring the military and security services and to enhance the professionalism and capacity of Yemen's armed forces. If confirmed, I will encourage the Yemeni government to continue progress on this important aspect of the transition, which will strengthen Yemeni capacity to secure the country against threats and enhance regional security. I will also support international efforts to assist the Yemenis in countering the spread of violent extremism. The establishment of a credible, sustainable extremist rehabilitation program would be an important step for the Yemeni government toward bolstering its counterterrorism capabilities.

Finally, there still remains the significant challenge posed by the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. More than half of the remaining detainees at Guantanamo are Yemeni nationals. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration and with Congress to support efforts to responsibly close the facility while protecting our U.S. national security interests.

Despite Yemen's transition accomplishments to date, significant challenges remain. The gains in political and security sector reform have not yet translated into large-scale improvements in the daily life of average Yemenis. Almost 15 million Yemenis – over half the population – are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. More than 13 million do not have access to safe water and sanitation, 10.5 million are food-insecure, and more than one million children do not have access to education. As the result of years of conflict, there are also more than 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are in desperate need of assistance. Large scale migration will continue to present humanitarian and security challenges. There are nearly a quarter million refugees and 147,500 migrants, mostly from the Horn of Africa, many of whom arrive destitute and in poor health. In addition, Yemen is now coping with the return of approximately 400,000 Yemeni laborers recently deported from Saudi Arabia.

Yemen's transitional government is working to address these issues, but the support of the international community will remain critical in the near-term to help meet acute needs and prevent them from overwhelming the transition process. If confirmed, I will continue our efforts to address Yemen's most pressing needs to create the space for the transition to succeed, through bilateral assistance and partnership with the international community through the Friends of Yemen and the UN Humanitarian Response Plan. Focusing on the longer-term, I will also

work to assist Yemen on its path to sustainability and self-sufficiency through economic reform and development.

Economic reform will be an essential underpinning of the ongoing transition's ultimate success. Without significant structural reform and the development of a sustainable private sector, many of the Yemeni citizens' key economic demands will not be met. These key reforms will include rebalancing government spending priorities, transitioning toward a more targeted and efficient social safety net, and increasing investments in long-term growth. The development of a robust private sector will also be critical to addressing Yemenis' demands for jobs and economic development. I will steadfastly support the President and Secretary's agenda in bolstering regional economic integration and reform. I will build on my predecessor's successful efforts at expanding ties between the Yemeni and American business communities. I will also look for ways to maximize the benefit from Yemen's WTO accession as an opportunity to boost regional economic development cooperation. Economic development and reform will not only help the Yemeni government meet the needs of all Yemeni citizens, but it will also empower Yemenis to build better lives for themselves through private enterprise while developing long-term relationships with American and international partners across the fields of science, health, technology and commerce.

I take seriously our obligation to protect our embassies and embassy staff abroad and am satisfied to know that, if confirmed, I would lead an Embassy with an excellent security team. We must continue to have a strong presence in Yemen, despite the threat environment, and remain firmly committed to our comprehensive partnership with President Hadi and the Yemeni people.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the extraordinary privilege of serving as a Foreign Service Officer for nearly 30 years, currently as Ambassador to Kuwait. Growing up as the dependent of a Foreign Service Officer, I learned early of both the privileges and responsibilities that come from a commitment to service to one's country. My formative years growing up in North Africa, Europe, and Latin America inspired a strong desire to pursue a career building ties between the United States and partners around the world. Service in Baghdad, Riyadh, and Cairo, among other challenging posts, has helped prepare me to represent our country in Yemen.

In October 2000 after the attack on the USS Cole in the Port of Aden, I was given the task of opening and leading a U.S. Office in Aden in support of the

investigation into the attack. For me, that was an early indicator of the pressing need to develop partnerships across the region so that the U.S. could meet the threat posed by violent extremists. Serving in Riyadh on September 11, 2001 highlighted for me that the threat to our interests and our citizens posed by terrorists was a critical foreign policy priority and that our ability to counter this threat would be enhanced by the extent to which we could engage our partners in the region in standing with us against the threat. It is gratifying to see how much progress has been made in this respect in our counterterrorism cooperation with the Government of Yemen. I am proud to say we enjoy a close partnership with President Hadi and the Yemeni government, and we share a commitment to a democratic transition and regional security. If confirmed, I pledge to continue this important work in Yemen, furthering U.S. interests there and in the region.

Again, I am honored by this nomination and greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions. Thank you.