

**Statement of Jess Baily**  
**Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Macedonia**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**September 17, 2014**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of United States Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, and I am grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress to advance and protect U.S. interests in Macedonia.

I am proud to be accompanied by my wife, Capie, a former Foreign Service Officer; our son, Noah, who just began his sophomore year as a Navy ROTC student at Yale; and my sister, Mary. Unfortunately, my parents Joan and Oliver Baily, who did so much to nurture my enduring curiosity about the world, were not able to attend. Diplomatic service is a team effort. My family has provided me unwavering support through 29 years of moves around the world, often in challenging places and uncertain times. To Capie and Noah, I owe my enduring thanks for sharing with me the joys and hardships of this fantastic and rewarding career.

Having returned last week from serving three years as Deputy Chief of Mission in Turkey, I am as aware as you that we face a worrisome set of global challenges in which effective diplomacy is essential to defeating the forces that threaten democracy and peace. As Russia sows conflict in Ukraine and ISIL terrorizes fragile societies and preys on vulnerable recruits internationally, the United States must fortify relationships with friends and partners to achieve our shared goals of peace, security and prosperity. While Macedonia has not yet achieved full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community – and certainly work remains to be done as it continues down that path – we share the goal of forging a Europe whole, free and at peace and confront together global challenges.

Macedonia has been a steadfast partner in international security operations: this past July, 153 Macedonian soldiers deployed in the country's 17<sup>th</sup> rotation to Afghanistan to provide force protection at International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul. Macedonia is one of the highest per capita contributors to ISAF. It has affirmed its willingness to stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014; and it supports the EU peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UN mission in Lebanon. In March, Macedonia voted in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. And earlier this month, Macedonia's Parliament passed legislation to address the problem of

foreign fighters. As our committed friend and partner, Macedonia deserves our assistance in achieving readiness for NATO and EU membership. It is in the United States' and Europe's interest that we continue to lend that help.

Mr. Chairman, we are all familiar with the long-standing dispute between Macedonia and Greece over the former's name and with the resulting stagnation for Macedonia's NATO and EU accession processes. If confirmed, I pledge to bring my diplomatic experience to bear on helping Macedonia as it works with Greece to find a mutually agreeable solution. When Macedonia and other countries of the Western Balkans gathered in Berlin two weeks ago, they declared that this dispute "must urgently be resolved by a willingness to compromise on all sides." Six years have passed since NATO's Bucharest Summit Declaration promised an invitation to Macedonia as soon as the name issue was resolved. A resolution will be a key step toward increased stability and security in Macedonia, in the Balkan region and across Europe.

Even as we encourage resolution of the name issue, our Embassy in Skopje works daily to increase security, promote the rule of law and fundamental rights, combat terrorism, and expand trade and investment – in partnership with our European allies. My experience in leading complex missions in Ankara and Erbil

and in working with Europe and the United Nations has prepared me to help Macedonia confront the challenges it faces today. The 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the civil conflict in 2001 by providing a plan for ensuring equal rights for citizens of all ethnicities, just passed, but there is more work to be done on implementation of the agreement. Although the largest ethnic Albanian party is in the ruling coalition, gaps persist between the ethnic Albanian and Macedonian populations, as evidenced by protests this summer. If confirmed, I would build on the efforts of our Embassy team to encourage all parties to bridge these ethnic divides and to call on leaders from both sides to increase inter-ethnic communication and understanding.

And while Macedonia has developed strong democratic structures, the United States, the European Union, other friends of Macedonia, and – importantly, its own citizens – have expressed concerns about the freedom of the Macedonian press, the independence of the judiciary, and the transparency of government finances. As Assistant Secretary Nuland said at the Croatia Forum in July, “as we look to shore up the values at the core of the transatlantic community, the fight against corruption and democratic backsliding must now be an equally frontline concern.” The United States is already a partner in confronting these challenges. Should I be confirmed, I will engage with leaders and the public on Macedonia’s reform

agenda, and not only because that agenda advances its European Union candidacy. A free media, an independent and impartial judiciary, and transparent government decisions strengthen the democracy and promote the economic prosperity to which Macedonians aspire. Along with Macedonia's economic reforms, they are critical to opening up new opportunities for bilateral trade and investment, another U.S. priority.

Of course, while working to help Macedonia reinforce its democratic institutions and achieve its full Euro-Atlantic aspirations, I will always remember that my top priority is to serve and protect U.S. citizens, whether colleagues working in our Mission, U.S. investors and exporters, or your constituents in need of help. Such service remains a core task of our overseas Missions.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you very much for this opportunity to appear today. I look forward to working with you if confirmed and to answering any questions you may have for me.