

**Testimony of Ambassador Peter Bodde
Ambassador-Designate to Libya
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
October 28, 2015**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Murphy, Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Libya. I am grateful for the trust placed in me by President Obama and Secretary Kerry. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and colleagues from across the U.S. Government to promote a strong relationship between the United States and Libya during this challenging moment in Libyan history.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my family this morning -- my wife Tanya, a retired career foreign service employee, and my son Christopher, are here with me today. My father, Ambassador William Bodde, is also here with me today. Thirty-six years ago, I sat where he is when he appeared before the late Senator Paul Tsongas during my dad's first confirmation hearing prior to becoming Ambassador to Fiji.

Four years after the uprising of the Libyan people led to the fall of Qadhafi and his brutal dictatorship, Libyans continue to face enormous challenges as they work to establish a Government of National Accord (GNA) and build institutions that are inclusive and representative of all Libyans. The Libyan political dialogue has required determination and compromise at every stage, and the process of political reconciliation in Libya will be a long journey. The recent October 8 announcement of proposed leadership for a Government of National Accord resulting from these Libyan negotiations was a welcome step in the process, and we urge all parties to endorse the agreement as quickly as possible.

The rise of ISIL-aligned groups and other extremist organizations, the coercive power of militias over Libyan civilians and government institutions, the consistent harassment and targeting of civil society activists, and dramatically reduced oil production demonstrate the immediate need for a unified national Libyan government that can effectively partner with the United States and the international community to begin the hard work of restoring peace and security in Libya.

In 2011, the Libyan people summoned the courage to stand up to a brutal dictator after forty-two years of manipulative and violent rule. The United States supported Libyans then, and we must stand by our Libyan friends now. With the support of

Congress we have allocated resources to enable the United States to support Libya's democratic transition, when conditions allow. We will continue to work with our international partners and the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to focus on the key areas that will enable a Government of National Accord (GNA) to respond to the urgent needs of the Libyan people. It will be incumbent on members of the international community and regional partners to assist a new Libyan unity government in its early days while building capacity so Libyans can sustainably take on the tough work of border security, counterterrorism, and effective governance in the future.

In the absence of an effective central government that can secure Libyan territory, violent extremist groups have proliferated. Terrorist groups operate freely in Derna and Sirte and have mounted attacks in Tripoli and other Libyan cities. Parts of southern Libya are plagued by tribal fighting, banditry and general lawlessness. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Al-Sharia elements, and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-aligned groups have all been operating in Libya. These terrorist groups have raided unprotected stocks of weapons, using them in Libya and smuggling them across the region. These groups have also attacked oil facilities and vital economic infrastructure in an effort to undermine a political solution to the instability that allows them to thrive. The presence of ISIL-aligned groups challenges the stability of Libya and our partners in the region and Europe, and is a very real threat to U.S. national security. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to coordinate resources and strategies across the U.S. government to respond to the threat ISIL and other terrorists pose to Libya, the region, and our U.S. national security interests.

Human smugglers have also capitalized on the absence of effective law enforcement and Libya's porous borders. In 2015 alone, over 120,000 people have attempted to enter Europe by crossing through Libyan soil, and nearly 3,000 of them have perished in that attempt.

Peace is not just a political imperative, but an economic one as well. In 2011, Libyans exported 1.6 million barrels per day of oil. Today, that number stands at just 430,000, below what a Government of National Accord will need to cover current spending, much less the reconstruction and development that the country will require to recover from this period of strife. Getting back to historic production levels will be critical to rebuilding Libya's economy, achieving national reconciliation, and equipping a Government of National Accord for the many challenges Libya faces.

Over the course of my career, I have led interagency teams in challenging environments, and I understand the difficulties and opportunities ahead. My experience as U.S. Ambassador to Nepal during and after the tragic earthquake in April, as Assistant Chief of Mission for Assistance in Baghdad, and as Deputy Chief of Mission in Pakistan confirmed my belief that strong interagency coordination and a cohesive Country Team are the foundations of successful United States missions overseas. Chairman Risch, I make it a point to come to the Hill when I am back in Washington and I believe that regular interaction – whether at post or in Washington – is critical to our continued success. Frank exchanges of accurate information that build trust are essential for the Congress to make difficult resource and policy choices. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing this relationship.

I have always been deeply conscious of the most important duty I have as a Chief of Mission- ensuring the safety and security of all Americans in Libya, in particular those serving under my leadership. While our mission is no longer physically located in Tripoli, balancing safety considerations with a deep desire to engage Libyans will be an essential task, one for which, if confirmed, I will be responsible and accountable.

Libya has the potential to play a vital role in regional security cooperation and trade over the long term. Establishing a safe and secure environment must be the first step Libyans take to move their country forward. Continuing to support the establishment of a stable, prosperous, and democratic Libya is consistent with the values and strategic interest of the United States. If confirmed, I will work with Libyan partners to assist in the establishment of that environment.

In closing, I want to note that anyone who represents the United States abroad has a unique responsibility. More often than not, we are the only nation that has the will, the values, and the resources to solve problems, help others, and to be a positive force for change in our challenged world. Being nominated to serve as an Ambassador representing our nation is in itself an incredible honor. With the consent of the Senate, I look forward to assuming this responsibility while serving as the next U.S. Ambassador to Libya. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to answering your questions.