

Testimony of David Hale
Nominee for Ambassador to Pakistan
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 23, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the next American Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. I am humbled by the confidence President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If I am confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working with the Senate on how best to advance U.S. interests in Pakistan.

I have had the privilege of serving in the Foreign Service since 1984. Most of my career has been spent advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East and the Muslim world, including most recently as Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic. Before that, I served as the U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, and earlier, as Ambassador to Jordan.

During my previous tours as ambassador, my highest priority was the safety and the security of all American personnel, information, and facilities, as well as the safety and security of American citizens. If confirmed, I will have no higher priority in Pakistan.

Pakistan is a strategically important country for achieving U.S. national security interests. We have a strong stake in Pakistan's ability to combat militancy and strengthen its democratic institutions. Broadly speaking, the United States has four core interests in Pakistan: first, defeating al-Qa'ida and countering militancy; second, non-proliferation and nuclear security; third, political and economic stability which includes respect for human rights; and fourth, regional stability, including improved relations with Afghanistan and India.

While there is more to be done on all fronts, the last few years have witnessed progress toward these goals as the United States and Pakistan have built a more stable, forthright relationship. With regard to counterterrorism, Pakistan has taken important actions that have brought to justice several senior al-Qa'ida leaders. It launched a significant military operation in North Waziristan last June, capturing large weapons caches and closing safe havens for multiple terrorist groups. We welcome Pakistan's commitment to target all militant groups on Pakistani soil equally – an objective that is absolutely in the interests of the United States, and one on which, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Pakistani government to advance. We and the Pakistanis also share deep concern and must remain vigilant for any sign that ISIL is gaining a foothold in Pakistan. Our shared, strategic interests extend well beyond any particular group; it is from the ungoverned spaces in remote parts of the border region that spring a multitude of threats, both militant and criminal, affecting Pakistan, the region, and the broader world, including the U.S.

We are also actively engaged with Pakistan on strategic stability and non-proliferation issues. While our governments do not see eye-to-eye on all issues, we share a number of common interests including the high importance of ensuring nuclear security and preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. We are pleased that Pakistan is fully engaged with the international community on nuclear safety and security issues, including as an active partner in the Nuclear Security Summit process.

At the same time, Pakistan is an often boisterous democracy of nearly 200 million people with a growing economy. In 2013, it completed its first democratic transition from one elected civilian government to another. The Government of Pakistan has made real strides in unlocking Pakistan's growth potential, and is working to advance an economic reform program in close collaboration with the International Monetary Fund. Just last week, Moody's recognized the government's progress by raising its sovereign credit rating. Still, there is work to be done. Rule of law, tolerance, and respect for the rights of all citizens are guiding principles for all thriving democracies.

Relations with its neighbors play an important part in Pakistan's security and prosperity. Pakistan has undertaken important outreach to Afghanistan following the Afghan election, and the two countries have made some progress against terrorist safe havens on both sides of the border. Given the drawdown in U.S. forces in Afghanistan, it is all the more critical that relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan be strong and cooperative, and that Pakistan continue to put pressure on the Taliban to join an Afghan-led peace process. Pakistan's relationship with India is critical to Pakistan's future. The normalization of relations between the two countries is vital, both to them and to the region.

Experience has demonstrated that sustained, consistent engagement with Pakistan provides us with the best chance to address challenges and advance our core interests. The U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue is the mechanism that underpins our cooperation in areas of shared interest, from counterterrorism to energy, from economic growth to defense and security; all six of the Strategic Dialogue working groups¹ have met within the last year.

U.S. civilian assistance to Pakistan has delivered impressive results and must continue. Our signature projects in Pakistan have added over 1,500 megawatts to Pakistan's electric grid, and built over 1,100 kilometers of road. Each year, the United States sponsors thousands of Pakistani exchange students to the United States – including a larger investment in the Fulbright Program than anywhere else in the world. These are long term investments which advance bilateral people to people exchanges, Pakistan's stability and growth, and help promote a pluralistic and tolerant society.

U.S. security assistance to Pakistan is equally important and is directly supporting Pakistan's ability to conduct counter-insurgency operations, clear terrorist safe havens, and stem the flow of deadly improvised explosive devices (IEDs) which have killed far too many civilians and security personnel. Our security assistance, like our civilian assistance, is geared directly toward meeting critical U.S. national security objectives.

Should I be confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and this Committee, our extraordinary team in both Washington and Pakistan, who are dedicated and accept risks in order to achieve the goals of the American people, with the government and people of Pakistan, and with the community of Americans of Pakistani descent here in the United States. Mr. Chairman,

¹ *Law enforcement and counterterrorism; economics and finance; energy; defense; strategic stability and non-proliferation; and education, science, and technology.*

Ranking Member Murphy and Members of the Committee, let me reiterate how deeply honored I am to be nominated as the Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Thank you very much for considering my nomination. I would be pleased to answer your questions.